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Title	Understanding gender in conflict-affected Timor-Leste: Women's voices on marriage, motherhood and the gender-poverty-violence nexus
Author(s)	O' Keeffe, Clíonadh
Publication Date	2017-06-29
Item record	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10379/6735">http://hdl.handle.net/10379/6735</a>

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**Understanding Gender in Conflict-Affected Timor-Leste:  
Women's Voices on Marriage, Motherhood and  
the Gender-Poverty-Violence Nexus**

A thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD to the  
National University of Ireland, Galway

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June 2017



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**DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE**

I, hereby, declare that this thesis is my own work and effort, and that it has not been submitted elsewhere for an award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged:

Signature .....

Date .....



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Undertaking and completing this research would not have been possible without the support and solidarity of many people, all of whom I am grateful to for accompanying me on this rich and rewarding journey. First and foremost I wish to thank the Timorese women who participated in the research, for their interest and for generously sharing and entrusting me their personal stories, perspectives and life experiences. I am grateful to my Timorese colleagues for their companionship, stamina and dedication to the project and in making the fieldwork happen. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my host family and my friends in Lautem for 'taking care of me' and making me feel at home. I wish also to acknowledge the support I received from those working for Irish Aid and Timorese NGOs in Lospalos and Dili, for always going out of their way to impart their knowledge and help and guide me. In Ireland I am grateful to the Conflict Resolution Unit of the Department of Foreign Affairs, whose grant, administered through the Irish Research Council supported this project. As a Timor-Leste scholar, I was privileged to have been awarded a scholarship named in honour of Irish UN worker Andrew Grene who died tragically in 2010 and had worked for peace and reconciliation in Timor-Leste in the late 1990s. I wish to acknowledge the support I received from colleagues across NUIG, in particular the School of Political Science & Sociology. I would like to profoundly thank my supervisor Dr. Su-ming Khoo for believing in me and in this project, for providing me with invaluable guidance and exceptional rigour throughout. Su constantly pushed me to aim for the highest standard of independent scholarship possible whilst also guiding me when I went through stages of self-doubt and despair. I wish to acknowledge Su's kindness, solidarity and pragmatism. On a personal note, I wish to thank my friends including those in the scholars' 'cave' for their humour and support. Finally I owe my deepest gratitude to my family and especially my parents Catherine and John to whom I dedicate this research. Peace to All,

Clíonadh



## ABSTRACT

This research addresses conceptual dilemmas facing gender mainstreaming that impede its transformative potential to end gender inequality. It explores meanings of gender underlying women's subjective experiences of everyday family life in the conflict-affected context of Timor-Leste. Grounded in the standpoint of Timorese women, this qualitative solidarity-based research focuses on marriage and motherhood as *the* dominant constructs underpinning the empirical themes constituting the complex gender-poverty-violence nexus. How gender is reproduced and sustained in these two interrelated yet distinct domains shaping women's lives is thus an important but still under-researched area of inquiry.

The research is specifically concerned with the conceptualisation of gender in gender mainstreaming, a highly contested theory and practice that is at once, a radical philosophy/transformational frame of analysis and a de-politicised technical policy instrument. Gender mainstreaming is often critiqued for relying on universalised and uni-dimensional framings of gender that render the transformation of inequitable gender relations problematic. An exploration of women's lived realities is necessary to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

In Timor-Leste there is a tendency within orthodox development and democratisation processes to neglect the socio-cultural-historical and *affective* dimensions of local context. This can generate inadequate awareness of gender specificity and reinforce essentialised conceptions of gender. This is an obstacle to achieving gender equality. A deep and culturally nuanced analysis of the subjective experiences of women like those in Timor-Leste is required if the forceful institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming into state-led processes is to address existing needs and transform gendered structures of inequality.

This study seeks to provide the relevant academic, policy and practice communities with a contextualised meaning of gender. It hopes that a more nuanced reading will contribute towards the resolution of some of the key tensions surrounding the

## ABSTRACT

conceptualisation of gender mainstreaming and the implementation of emancipatory gender policy and effective feminist praxis.

## GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

### Glossary

Suku	Village
Aldeia	Hamlet or sub-village. The lowest level of government structure
Barlaque	Marriage custom establishing mutual obligations between families
Lia na'in	Holder of the words: traditional leader, senior member of a clan
Liurai	King, ruler of a kingdom
Lisan	Traditional law, customary practices guiding everyday way of life
Malae	Foreigner
Tais	Traditional hand woven cloth
Xefi suku	Village chief or leader
Xefi aldeia	Hamlet chief or leader

### List of acronyms

ADB	Asia Development Bank
BpFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CAVR	Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in Timor-Leste
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
EWR	Elected Women Representative
FALINTIL	The armed wing of the pro-independence movement
FOKUPRES	The East Timorese Women's Communication Forum
Fretilin	Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor
GAD	Gender and Development
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GMPTL	Women's Parliamentarian's Caucus
GoTL	Government of Timor-Leste
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting

## GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

GRC	Gender Resource Centre
GWG	Gender Working Group
LADV	Law Against Domestic Violence
LDP	Local Development Programme
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MSS	Ministry of Social Solidarity
NAP	National Action Plan
NDHS	National Demographic and Health Survey
NDP	National Development Plan
NDS	National Directorate for Statistics
NGO	Non governmental organisation
OMT	Organisation of Timorese Women
OPMT	Polular Organisation of Timorese Women
OPE	Office for the Promotion of Equality
PDD	Decentralised Development Programme
PNTL	National Police Force of Timor-Leste
RDTL	Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
Rede Feto	East Timorese Women's Network
SDP	Strategic Development Plan
SEPI	Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality
SIP	Sector Investment Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
VPU	Voluntary Persons Unit
WID	Women in Development

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## **1.1 The Context, Rationale and Significance of the Research**

### **1.1.1 Why Gender Mainstreaming?**

This research project takes the present-day case of Timor-Leste to explore what women's routine experiences of family life can tell us about gender, a key concept fundamental to gender mainstreaming. Adopted across the world including in Timor-Leste, this established public policy instrument is under harsh criticism for not living up to its feminist expectations to end gender inequality. Developments such as gender mainstreaming increase pressure on national governments to apply gender perspectives and gender-sensitive strategies to interventions that tackle gendered violence and poverty (Gizelis and Pierre 2013). However the critical gender mainstreaming scholarship has detected both its successes and failures to transform structures of inequality, frequently characterising gender mainstreaming as a paradox - given its rapid global diffusion and subsequent failure to transform structures of inequality. Despite the attention paid to this persisting paradox, the tensions and disappointments surrounding the concept, its implementation and consequences for gender equality have yet to be resolved (Squires 2005; Sweetman 2012; 2013; van Santen 2014; Walby 2005a; 2005b). This is pushing feminist scholarship to seek out further explanations uncovering the impediments to its substantive implementation (Caglar 2013). Whilst intense criticisms centre around its transformative potential (Sweetman 2013), even so, what remains under-theorised within these critiques are conceptual notions underlying the transformative agenda of gender mainstreaming (Davids *et al* 2014). Joining Daly (2005), Walby (2005a; 2005b) and Squires (2005; 2007; 2008) all of whom have been calling for a better theoretical grasp of the meaning of this highly contested and widely used term, are other scholars such as Davids *et al* (2014), who identify a need to interrogate ideas about the nature and process of transformation that gender mainstreaming is supposed to bring about to gender relations. This study is motivated by their calls for a better theoretical grasp of the meaning of gender.

The project is further motivated by the reflective studies reviewing gender

mainstreaming where its theoretical anomalies and cleavages seem to be borne out in its implementation. Whilst in theory, a transformative notion of the concept of gender mainstreaming is thought to challenge patriarchal structures and the 'gender contract', the literature is particularly concerned with it as a strategy, and its weak institutionalisation and inability to challenge those structures and practices that reproduce gender inequality. Rather than addressing core issues of concern to women, it is suggested that gender mainstreaming tends to be used more as an umbrella term for a broad range of activities, from collating sex disaggregated data to making women more competitive in the labour market (Cornwall *et al* 2007). Daly contends that the strategy, when implemented, is frequently an attempt to re-model existing policy approaches that rarely distinguishes gender as a societal problem or an analysis of gender inequality as a structural phenomenon (2005). The critical gender mainstreaming literature persistently points to weak implementation and criticises gender mainstreaming for its vulnerability to de-politicisation, technocratisation, and evaporation (Moser 2005; Obiora 2004). On the ground, the concept is known to become de-politicised and mal-defined (Cornwall *et al* 2007), leading to problems with the application of 'gender' in gender mainstreaming blue-prints and imported tools that can reproduce rather than eradicate gender inequalities (Moser 2005). According to feminist critiques gender mainstreaming provides evidence of yet another Eurocentric development paradigm (Woodford-Berger 2004). Concerned with the evaporation of gender in institutions, Mukhopadhyay (2004; 2014) coined the strategy as 'away-streaming', whilst Zalewski (2010), viewing gender mainstreaming as an absurdity, remarked whether only 'good' versions of gender should be mainstreamed. This literature concludes with further questions asking whether gender mainstreaming is a dead-end street or on a road to nowhere (Davids *et al* 2014). There are even claims of gender mainstreaming being post-feminist or un-feminist leading some to suggest taking a break from feminism altogether (Davids *et al* 2014; Halley 2006; McRobbie 2009).

### **1.1.2 Why Study Gender in Conflict-Affected Contexts?**

The study is particularly influenced by recent conclusions arrived at by the gender and

conflict-affected development scholarship that, despite the diffusion of the concept and terminology of 'gender', and the widespread adoption of gender mainstreaming, its transformative potential is limited (Gizelis and Pierre 2013; Ní Aoláin *et al* 2011; True and Parisi 2013). Ní Aoláin *et al* assert that gender mainstreaming is said to 'lack a feminist social critique and reform agenda, and it has often devolved into a toothless 'technical project' with the potential of actually weakening feminist advocacy in post-conflict settings (2011, p.14). The scholarship relates this to the limited understanding amongst researchers and policymakers about the concept of gender and of the relationship between gender equality and the economic and social conditions underlying conflict-affected settings (Gizelis and Pierre 2013). Furthermore less well known are the conditions under which gender mainstreaming policies can be successfully implemented in societies undergoing transitions (Duflo 2011). According to Gizelis and Pierre, 'systematic research is almost non-existent in this area' which is essential for policy, given the lack of substantial knowledge about the effectiveness of various gender mainstreaming approaches for national policy and development in post-conflict settings (2013, p.602). Further according to Handrahan:

'[...] with the exception of Cockburn & Zarkov 2002, little feminist academic work has examined gender in post-conflict environments. Rather, it is feminist practitioners who seem to be producing the defining material on gender and post-conflict [...]. Notwithstanding this comprehensive body of work, international development agencies routinely ignore gender and women's issues when designing and implementing post-conflict development programmes' (2004, p.431).

This is the overarching issue dealt with by the study. Its aim is to address the prevailing knowledge lacuna by exploring the gender dynamics and structural inequalities underpinning what women raised as the most important issues for them in their daily lives, namely the burden of family responsibility and the difficulties and inequalities they experience rearing their families amidst on-going poverty and gender-based violence (GBV). The objective is to make explicit the ways in which gender structurally influences these key interdependent aspects of women's everyday lives so as to inform

and strengthen the potential of gender mainstreaming to transform unequal gender relations in conflict-affected societies and bring about gender equality for all. It thus seeks to contribute to the gender equality and conflict literature that asserts that currently, there is a 'mismatch' 'between policy priorities and women's needs and aspirations' within post-conflict processes (Justino *et al* 2012). Justino *et al* link this to the persistent lack of rigorous understanding of gender, of the consequences of armed-conflict on gender relations and the subsequent inability of post-conflict policy approaches to adequately assess their impact on gender equality (2012), which according to its definition is a fundamental requirement of any gender mainstreaming strategy. Feminist scholarship has always drawn attention to the interaction between gender equality, development and long-term peace, and repeatedly emphasises the opportunities offered by the post-conflict processes to transform gender relations (El-Bushra 2007; Gizelis and Pierre 2013). It has been suggested that gender equality promotes long-term peace and security whilst the opportunities offered by the cessation of violent conflict and post-conflict processes to transform gender relations are also often emphasised (El-Bushra 2007; Gizelis and Pierre 2013; Hudson 2012).

Despite their potential however, such opportunities are frequently missed, owing to the gendered dynamics of post-conflict processes. Fragmented rather than holistic approaches to gender, poverty and violence, severely limit the potential of policy interventions to advance substantive gender equality (Fiske and Shackel 2015). Overall there has been either scant or misguided attention within policy approaches to the relationship between gender equality and post-conflict social and economic development (Sambanis 2006 cited in Gizelis and Pierre 2013). Despite decades of research and claim-making by feminist scholars and the widespread advocacy to mainstream gender, gender issues are frequently misunderstood, overlooked and inadequately accounted for and women are all but absent from post-conflict governance and development processes (Harriss 2004; Rubio-Marin 2006). For example orthodox development policy and interventions frequently ignore the impact of the complex interaction of gender, poverty and violence on women's lives, treating each as separate rather than mutually reinforcing aspects of women's lives (Fiske and

Shackel 2015). Some feminist literature traces the ways in which these key elements are interconnected dimensions, interacting in productive ways that reinforce cycles of violence and inequality and shaping women's social and political status (Fiske and Shackel 2015). However this too is limited and when thinking about GBV there has been a tendency not to reflect on women's poverty, standards of living, and other economic and social rights and well-being issues such as the unequal distribution of burdens related to unpaid domestic care work. Likewise GBV has remained relatively absent from concerns with human development (Kabeer 2014) and unequal care relations. True (2012) recently reflected on whether a relationship exists between women's gender relations, their poverty and their likelihood of experiencing GBV, and asked what this connection might look like. Known as the gender-poverty-GBV nexus, the present research attempts to examine this important question through the paradigmatic constructs of marriage and motherhood. The empirical context is a society affected by brutal regimes of colonial oppression and violent political conflict. This study is interested in the links between GBV and non-material issues often considered the central energy force integral to the human condition and quality of life within the family, affective dimensions which include love, care, intimacy, affection, support and concern for others (Lynch and McLaughlin 1995). I propose that the presence of multiple forms of gendered poverty in Timor-Leste – underpinned by a patriarchal gender order constituting institutionalised gender inequalities – could be a major aggravating condition for persistent and egregious GBV. I posit that it is the interpersonal, institutional and structural forms of GBV which deepen women's poverty and perpetuate gender inequalities between women and between women and men.

Women's lived experiences also demonstrate that these dynamics are exacerbated in situations of armed conflict and also in post-conflict settings when societies strive to re-build sustainable peace and development (Fiske and Shackel 2015). Drawing on empirical research conducted in conflict-affected countries of Uganda, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Fiske and Shackel argue that this unidimensional approach to gender essentialises women's lives (2015). El-Bushra (2007) cautions that

essentialising and over-generalising the impact of conflict leads to misunderstandings about gender relations and the dynamics of power inherent in any situation. 'Feminist research has established that men and women experience conflict and post-conflict situations differently owing to issues of identity and power' (Handrahan 2004, p.429). Policies that are informed by essentialist notions about women's and men's experiences of conflict fail to recognise and address gender and power dynamics embedded within unequal social and economic structures that give rise to women's everyday hardships, most of which remain invisible and/or irrelevant to development and peacebuilding interventions (Fiske and Shackel 2015).

A salient finding in the gender equality and conflict scholarship is that the end of war can provide unique opportunities to challenge unequal and unjust gender norms and socio-cultural institutions. Meanwhile these opportunities can also be severely limited by pre-conflict conditions and post-conflict processes (Bruck and Vothknecht 2011). Indeed, the post-conflict period may present more of a threat than 'formal' conflict to women more so than to men (Handrahan 2004). The scholarship therefore places a strong emphasis on the complexity of context, on understanding the convergences between 'gender' and 'conflict', on how women and men are 'differently violated by war' and how pre-conflict and post-conflict conditions act for or against gender equality (El Jack 2003; Justino *et al* 2012). It is important to highlight that the horrors of war affect women and men including death, severe injury, rape, abuse, poverty, depression, disease, loss of loved ones, destruction of livelihood assets and resources (Handrahan 2004). The feminist scholarship also points to sharply different gendered effects of war. Men overwhelmingly suffer grotesque violence and death during war (Handrahan 2004). The direct physical impacts of war on women are also serious in the extreme, permeating all aspects of their lives, threatening 'women's security at the deepest levels and in the broadest ways' (El-Bushra 2007, p.134). Amongst others, Rehn and Sirleaf (2002) have documented the torture, displacement and horrendous levels of sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) endured by civilian women. Women also suffer disproportionately from the indirect effects of war (Petesch 2013). War triggers social change. It affects demographic imbalances and household composition seen in

the staggering increases in the incidence of female and widow-headed households (El-Bushra 2007). Such harsh conditions of conflict induces livelihood adaptation strategies, forcing changes to traditional gender divisions of labour. Women may be compelled to take on greater responsibilities and new roles as breadwinners and heads of households in the absence of men during and after the conflict (Justino *et al* 2012). Also the crippling effects of war and its aftermath on men's agency leave women with little choice but to pull their households through very difficult times (Petesch 2013). Women may come to assume increased shares of both productive work and unpaid labour and family responsibilities. This is most often in the absence of commensurate increases in 'respect, recognition or resources' (El-Bushra 2007). Such trends are widely evident in the emerging policy-oriented and in-depth research such as those conducted in Afghanistan, Liberia, Sudan, West Bank and Gaza (Muñoz Boudet 2013) and in Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Georgia, Guatemala respectively (Justino *et al* 2012).

However the scholarship also cautions against essentialist views that over-generalise such effects and stereotype women and men, as these direct post-conflict policy responses to sideline women's strategic interests and focus mainly on their practical needs (El-Bushra 2007). For example whilst both trauma and resilience feature prominently in women's experiences of war and its aftermath (El-Bushra 2007), it is not enough just to view women as victims of male violence and conflict-affected social change. To do so misses the complex realities of women's experiences, denies them agency, ignores their active roles in the conflict and in maintaining family survival, and in assuming leadership roles and making decisions about their lives (El-Bushra 2007). Wars inflict unspeakable suffering, cause widespread destruction and impose highly stressful and insecure environments (Green 2013). The period during and after the violence presents dangers as well as opportunities for gender equality, frequently opens up space for gender norms to relax or even change (Petesch 2013), causing social, cultural and political structures to radically shift out of dire necessity across private and public spheres (Abdullah *et al* 2010; Green 2013). Thus the shock of conflict and the disruption it causes to local norms and structures provides unique

opportunities during post-conflict periods to promote development in ways that advance gender equality. Generally restrictive to women's and men's roles in their societies, altered norms provide women with the space to exercise more voice and authority in their households, gain more economic independence and increase their public presence in their community as they are forced into exerting extraordinary efforts to meet the needs of their families and take over many of men's responsibilities (Abdullah *et al* 2010; Bouta *et al* 2005; El Jack 2003). The literature especially notes that changes in gender norms and new forms of labour have resulted in a significant rise in female employment during and shortly after the conflict across conflict-affected contexts and that it is easier for women to enter urban informal labour markets than men (Justino *et al* 2012). In addition to increased burdens of unpaid and paid work, women participating in research conducted by Boudet *et al* (2013) also reported gaining power, despite the presence of conservative gender norms, religious traditions, poor security and weak economies. Petesch too has documented how the relaxation of gender norms in post-conflict Liberia enabled many women to accumulate resources and enjoy freedom of choice and positions of powerful leadership (2013).

In the longer-term, in post conflict contexts, the evidence however is mixed as to what actually happens to women's empowerment. Important as positive social changes may be for women's lives, there is little evidence that increases in women's economic participation and authority in the household are capable of accelerating the type of profound change in inequitable gender norms needed to bring about sustaining gender equality (Petesch 2013). A salient point emerging from the scholarship is that women's empowerment – or what is perceived as women's empowerment – is an insufficient force on its own for transforming existing gender relations in post-conflict societies (Abdullah *et al* 2010; Justino *et al* 2012; Petesch 2013). The experience of many such countries bears this out, where gender-based violence (GBV) against women continues to prevail (Abdullah *et al* 2010) despite the cessation of war and indications of women's empowerment. Thus whilst conflict affects gender relations and gender roles, exposing women to greater levels of economic, social and political engagement, the

literature also seems to suggest that such effects remain ambivalent for gender equality (Justino *et al* 2012).

Much of the scholarship has brought to the fore how women experience extreme forms of inequality after the conflict which is also exacerbated by pre-existing gender relations (Petesch 2013). True (2013) describes the harsh post-conflict environments as characterised by crime, corruption and dire poverty and reminds us of their prominent gendered features including staggering numbers of women heading up households, women's extreme income inequality, their work and exploitation in the most precarious of employment positions such as in the sex industry, and women's displacement and resettlement in urban slums. Handrahan also informs us how women's insecurities are heightened and their unequal status exacerbated in post-conflict settings. Widowhood represents severe forms of economic insecurity and loss of status and identity for women who lose husbands during the war. Widowed women's vulnerabilities are further heightened when, having served their country and expected to provide for their families, returning combatants are said to be given jobs first 'whilst widows are given second priority' (Handrahan 2004, p.435). There are also numerous reports of women experiencing horrendous forms of exploitation and sexual violence perpetrated by male members of the international peacekeeping forces (Handrahan 2004). This, along with the lack of gender mainstreaming and the refusal of the international development community to take gender issues seriously leads Handrahan (2004, p.436) to assert that it is not so much the national male leadership that closes off opportunities for gender liberation but rather the failure of the international community to consider 'its own patriarchy and the damage this does within international development paradigms'. Meanwhile Boudet *et al* found that the conflict can perpetuate pre-existing gender segregation in the labour markets in the conflict-affected economies of Afghanistan, Liberia, Sudan, West Bank and Gaza (2013). In countries where post-conflict economic growth is followed by decline, women tend to be the first to lose their jobs in the formal sector (Kumar 2000 cited in Justino *et al* 2012). Gender equality and women's empowerment is also severely constrained by the types of employment available to them in the post-conflict period. Justino *et al*'s study

concludes that women's new roles have the potential to increase their vulnerability (2012). Despite positive examples of women benefiting from new post-war economic opportunities, what most of the literature seems to suggest is that women's livelihood options tend to be very limited, low paid and low skilled in the informal sector, hazardous to their safety and far from advancing gender equality (Abdullah *et al* 2010; Justino *et al* 2012; Petesch 2013; True 2013). Petty trading and home-run small-scale businesses come to represent highly significant income generating activities for women during the post-conflict period as such activities do not require women to have land rights, or risk investment of large amounts of credit. Indeed it is women's pre-existing limited access to credit that increases their reliance on petty trade to generate family income (Allden 2008).

In addition to precarious post-conflict conditions, women continue to face pre-conflict legacies of inequitable social and economic development in such areas as housing, food, water and land and property (True 2013). Pre-war social and cultural institutions tend to constrain women's access to resources such as education, credit and formal employment (Bruck and Vothknecht 2011). Therefore whilst the economic opportunities induced by the dire conditions of war may cause certain gender norms to relax, as larger numbers of women enter into informal and formal work, pre-war traditional patriarchal values restrict women's access to new opportunities in the post-conflict period (Handrahan 2004) forcing them to revert back to traditional pre-war roles. Limited gains towards gender equality during times of conflict may disappear in the post-conflict period as women are often expected to return to the domestic sphere amid political pressures to achieve some semblance of 'normality' and reintegrate large numbers of demobilised soldiers into the economy (Pankhurst 2012). Indeed, gender relations frequently expect men to resume positions of leadership in the household, community and government and women, who contributed to regime change and lead families and communities through the war, to take-up pre-war gender roles and status in the family (Ramisetty and Muriu 2013). 'Women and female leaders who have managed homes and/or the community during the absence of the males may experience conflicting emotions as their decision making and authority become

secondary to those of the returning men. Men may be shocked at how 'empowered' the women have become as a result of the war' (Handrahan 2004, p.435). Enloe (2004) links the persistence of gender inequalities to the celebration of a kind of 'militarised' or 'hyper' masculinity'. Rather than fading away with the end of war, these forms of 'aggressive and frequently misogynist masculinity' (Theidon 2009 cited in Kent and Kinsella 2014) may become further entrenched due to policies and practices that privilege men (Enloe 2004, p.221-223). A militarised construction of masculinity exacerbates gender inequality in part because it rests upon a particularly constraining vision of femininity: a view that women's proper place is within the domestic rather than public spheres. In other words a militarised construction of masculinity reinforces a problematic binary construction of 'men as combatants and political actors' and women as 'naturally' peaceful homemakers and nurturers who require men to act as their protectors. Enloe describes the gendered effects of the militarisation of society as follows:

Persistent militarisation in a postwar society serves to re-entrench the privileging of masculinity – in both private and public life. Thus, if we lack the tools to chart postwar militarisation, we will almost certainly be ill equipped to monitor the subtle ways in which -democratic rhetoric notwithstanding – masculinity continues to be the currency for domination and exclusion.... Militarised masculinity is a model of masculinity that is especially likely to be imagined as requiring a feminine complement that excludes women from full and assertive participation in postwar public life (Enloe 2004 p. 217-218).

Economic opportunities open to women are shaped foremost by culture and tradition, education and access to land and resources (O' Connell 2011) and there may be a backlash against changes in women's traditional gender roles. For example during the aftermath of the war in Rwanda, little had changed for married women who continued or reverted back to domestic household roles and subsistence farming. Young unmarried women conformed more closely than other women with traditional expectations in a bid to find a husband and widows engaged even more intensively in income-generating activities than other women (Schindler 2011, cited in Herbert 2014).

The positive impact of conflict-induced changes to gender roles also remains highly debatable in contexts reporting high levels of GBV. Reports about increased levels of women's decision-making power and economic participation must be considered within the broader context, where prevailing gender norms sanction GBV against women. Domestic tensions and violence are said to increase for women whose male combatant relatives return home after the war (Handrahan 2004). In addition to finding no positive impact of women's increased labour participation on women's empowerment and gender equality, some studies note increased levels of domestic violence in the wake of conflict (Justino *et al* 2012). Calderon *et al's* study (2002 cited in Justino *et al* 2012) suggests that instead of well-paid jobs, women's increased contributions to household income was due to longer working hours. The authors also detected a link between women's economic participation with increased levels of GBV which they associated with male frustration, the stress of poverty and the legacies of violence. In post-conflict Sierra Leone, Abdullah *et al* also found that GBV continued despite the end of the war. The growth in economic opportunities for women, many of whom headed up large families living in poverty, were mainly provided by the presence of UN peacekeepers who fuelled the increase in sex work (2010). Meanwhile alternative forms of employment available to Sierra Leonian women were constrained by their pre-existing limited access to productive resources such as farmland and credit. When implemented, 'add-ons' such as microcredit loan schemes did little to change the prevailing gender regime. Whilst triggering improvements in standards of living and women's economic and political participation, such changes were insufficient and incapable of transforming gender relations and challenging the existing gender structures ordering Sierra Leonian society, leading the authors to associate the prevalence of GBV against women with deep-rooted postwar structural inequalities (Abdullah *et al* 2010). They conclude that whilst the effects of the war opened up opportunities for gender equality and led to the adoption of gender bills and a gender equality infrastructure, state-led gender mainstreaming policies were poorly implemented (Abdullah *et al* 2010).

The phenomenon of GBV is widespread and endemic and is recognised in the literature

as embodying... 'the imbalances inherent in patriarchal society', and a reality in all societies regardless of whether or not armed conflict is taking place (O'Connell 1993 cited in Green and Sweetman 2013). It remains a common denominator in the lives of women in the developing and the developed countries and during conflict and during so-called non conflict periods (Handrahan 2004). Despite the consensus that outbreaks of conflict lead to increased GBV in the post-conflict period, there is a view of GBV as occurring on a continuum, from armed conflict to ostensible 'peace' where '[...] much of women's experiences during and following periods of extensive violence are informed by pre-existing, peacetime, inequalities' (Boestan and Wilding 2015, p. 74). However the links between the two are complex and difficult to separate out from other factors as the causes and consequences of GBV are multifaceted and rooted in context, thus complicating analysis (Green and Sweetman 2013). The scholarship concludes that inequalities and intersecting forms of discrimination cause GBV (Manjoo and McRaith 2011; Herbert 2014). Several studies provide evidence of severe and in some societies rising problems of GBV in the wake violent conflict (Bruck and Vothknecht 2011; Petesch 2013). They find that conflict can intensify aggressive forms of masculinity and give rise to increased levels of GBV in the post-conflict period when men try to adapt to their new economic context and to women's new gender roles (Bouta *et al* 2005). War often intensifies civilian men's use of violence 'as a way of maintaining a sense of power and control' (Petesch 2013) where their authority is challenged and they endure disempowerment, as conflict crushes their roles as leaders, protectors, and providers of their families (Bouta *et al* 2005). Because their status and sense of identity relies on their access to jobs, many experience emasculation as their livelihoods and opportunities to earn an income severely deteriorate due to conflict (Justino *et al* 2012; Petesch 2013). Assets and resources critical for men's pre-war livelihoods such as land and animals are often destroyed by conflict causing them to rely financially on women and accept menial jobs (Justino *et al* 2012). Indeed several studies illustrate the truism that in many conflicts and their aftermath, men tend to lose self-esteem and the motivation and will to take initiative. Meanwhile women acquire such qualities, since they are forced to assume many of

men's responsibilities, responding to crises by exerting extraordinary efforts to meet the multiple needs of their families including food, shelter and security (El-Bushra 2007).

Petesch (2013) argues that it should come as no surprise then if men are unwelcoming of women's increased economic participation and if women's new roles do not transform inequitable gender norms and structures. In Afghanistan, Sudan, West Bank and Gaza, the relaxation of restrictive gender norms, seen particularly in urban areas, was not accompanied by expected changes in attitudes toward gender equality. Although women report empowerment in exerting extraordinary efforts to ensure family survival during and after conflict, 'gender norms and women's empowerment do not necessarily change together. How local opportunity structures are affecting men's agency also seems to matter greatly' (Petesch 2013). In particular, conflict-related changes to power hierarchies and gender norms governing structures in society do not necessarily provide non-elite women and men with opportunities supportive of gender equality. Gender norms remain unequal for those with little power (Petesch 2013). As in many other conflict contexts, in Liberia, where gender relations remained tense in urban areas, non-elite men reported feeling powerless, citing women's gains as both challenges to their authority and causes of their loss of power whilst women were frustrated with men's inability to take initiative and adapt to women's new roles and the economic environment (Petesch 2013). Alternatively, in one particular context, where women and men were provided with opportunities to exercise economic agency, men reported being at ease with changes in gender roles and welcomed women's economic and political empowerment, indicating that:

'[...] the normative framework shaping gender roles and behaviours and local level institutions seems to have changed to allow for more productive gender relations [...] Women and men's empowerment 'seem to be interdependent and together shape the potential for gender norm relaxation and change' (Petesch 2013, p.24).

Overall, conclusions emerging from cases of gender, conflict and development are that conflict unwittingly tends to break down patriarchal structures. This can lead women to

experience some degree of gender liberation. But whatever women experience, it is often short-lived as the presence of international patriarchy and the re-assertion of national patriarchy push back the fortuitous gains women made during and in the wake of conflict, re-positioning women in pre-war 'normal' positions of subordination (Handrahan 2004). Whilst conflicts unintentionally trigger gender role change in households and communities, and relax restrictive gender norms governing structures of society, the evidence in the literature concludes that gender identities and inequitable gender relations remain largely unaltered in the longer run (Justino *et al* 2012). The prevalence of GBV in post-conflict societies bears this out (Green and Sweetman 2013), despite adoption of progressive laws (Ramisetty and Muriu 2013). There are numerous case studies showing that an end to conflict and new gender roles do not translate into a reduction in GBV or improvements in women's status. Women's new roles and activities tend to be socially acceptable on a temporary basis and so long as they serve the dire survival needs of their families and the recovery of their nation states. El-Bushra and Sahl stress that:

'Important though these changes are, they remain at the level of everyday practice and do not imply radical shifts of values. Men are still expected to use their power and resources to protect and provide for their families and women are still expected to ensure care and provisioning – through long hours of hard unfamiliar work if necessary' (2005, p. 88 cited in Justino *et al* 2012).

This study seeks to contribute to the most recent feminist scholarship and case-study literature on gender, violence and war. It examines the claims that feminist scholarship has been making for decades about GBV during so-called non-conflict periods – that structural inequalities represent the root cause of GBV (Green and Sweetman 2013). With regard to key issues critical for policy responses and interventions addressing post-conflict GBV, in addition to a gendered understanding of peace and a recognition of the critical role of women's movements (Arostegui 2013), the literature therefore strongly suggests the need to identify and tackle the root causes of inequitable gendered power relations and for approaches that aim for long-term transformation of *gender norms and relations* (Ramisetty and Muriu 2013; Thomas 2013). In Cockburn's

view this must include challenging dominant notions of masculinity and femininity (Cockburn 2013).

### 1.1.3 Why Study Gender in Timor-Leste?

The project is also justified by calls from within the critical Timor-Leste scholarship for academics, the GoTL, policy makers and development practitioners to enhance our understanding of the multidimensionality and relationality of the Timorese local customary context so that it can be brought in from the sidelines and integrated into current paradigms guiding development policy and praxis in Timor-Leste. This is important, particularly when Timorese values and customary mechanisms remain so deeply embedded in family and community life, affording them power, durability and reach such that they continue to underpin social and political order across the country (Brown 2015; Cummins 2010; 2011; 2013; Niner 2011; 2012; Trindade 2015). Critically, this study responds to particular debates within the scholarship linking the pervasiveness of gendered poverty and GBV in Timor-Leste to tensions between 'traditional social structures' that remain ingrained in the post-independent liberal state and more orthodox development and democratisation frameworks that are said to be eviscerating cultural cathexis and neglecting *subjective* and *relational* dimensions of Timorese social relations, values and the everyday 'ways of being' (Carroll-Bell 2012; 2015; Trindade 2015). Since independence, the principle of gender equality has been guiding Timor-Leste's path towards building peace and democracy and ending poverty. Important has been the implementation of state-led gender mainstreaming aimed at such processes as the 2002 National Development Plan (NDP) and its successor the MDG aligned Strategic Development Plan (SDP). However according to Niner significant gaps exist between formal programmes for gender equality at the national level – that include gender mainstreaming - and the 'lives of the majority of women who live rurally as subsistence farmers' (2011, p.427). In Timor-Leste as greater value and higher status are typically afforded to male gender roles and what men do rather than to female gender roles and thus what women do, gender inequality of some calibre must persist (Corcoran-Nantes 2009). However so far there appears to be little scholarship exploring the meaning of gender in the context of contemporary Timorese family life

and its underlying role in the social construction of differential worth and women's inferior status. Amongst others Olsson contends that still missing from the discourses and emergent research and analysis in Timor-Leste is more detailed empirical knowledge and awareness of gender-specificity. For example not much analysis has been found paying attention to the manner in which interrelated cultural norms and gender relations underpin concepts of obligation and responsibility and shape Timorese morality, social institutions and women's everyday experiences of motherhood and married life. Notwithstanding their centrality to women's lives and their potential to reinforce female subjugation (Jackson 2012; Johnson 1998) the social institutions such as *marriage and motherhood* and the relational and affective dimensions of women's conflict-affected gender identities seem to be almost entirely ignored in the gender and mainstream Timor-Leste scholarship. Overall the present study has found little in-depth nuanced analysis of gender relations and the interrelatedness of different socio-cultural, economic and family norms post-independence. There is also limited consideration for the varieties of Timorese femininities post-independence, how these relate to the varieties of masculinity and patriarchy and how women oblige or disoblige the interests and desires of men by employing strategies beyond compliance and cooperation such as resistance (Connell 1987; Shippers 2007). Furthermore in-depth understandings of Timorese male gender identities tend focus on urban militarised and violent masculinities in the public domain found mostly in the work of Myrntinen (2010;2012). Attention to broader understandings of how different Timorese masculinities are constructed in the family and in relation to caregiving and unpaid domestic work remain wholly inadequate. For example, there is a paucity in the literature on breadwinning masculinities or men's caregiving identities and how the social and cultural constructions of fatherhood might be (re)produced or even changing in the Timorese family and post-conflict context. Thus not much is known about the multiple dimensions of gendered poverty, particularly from a care perspective, neglecting the complex relationship between gender, poverty and GBV. This lack of understanding of the problematic of gender and gender inequality in Timor-Leste and the cultural complexities that permeate them

renders a Timorese-centered conceptualisation of gender mainstreaming nebulous and elusive. This study takes up the salient point made recently by Olsson about gender equality in Timor-Leste that: 'we need to improve our competence on gender to be able to accurately address existing needs' (Olsson 2009, p.184).

Drawing on local women's voices, the present study takes up these theoretical and empirical demands by exploring the problematic of gender and gender inequality that is based on the perspectives of the women who experience them. The study is timely as it seeks to engage with and enhance the current dialogue between gender mainstreaming theory, policy and practice. Theoretically the analysis aims to contribute to a more nuanced debate which can help address gender mainstreaming's conceptual deficiencies. Empirically the analysis aims to enhance gender sensitive policy-making by providing Timor-Leste's policy-makers with an East Timorese women-centered meaning of 'gender' and 'gender (in)equality' so that they may develop an informed position on what exactly it is that they are mainstreaming when they mainstream 'gender'. By positing a locally grounded concept of gender in/equality, the project seeks to help avoid the emergence in Timor-Leste of the ongoing pitfalls associated with gender mainstreaming implementation that have limited potential to transform the lives of poor women.

## **1.2 Research Questions and Avenues of Inquiry: Understanding the Gender-Poverty-Violence Nexus**

Broadly speaking, this thesis argues that the transformative potential of Gender and Development (GAD) policy interventions - such as gender mainstreaming - is undermined by de-politicised, fragmented and individualistic policy approaches to gender equality. Such interventions often rely on inadequate analysis of the multiple and intersecting constructions of gender and of how violent conflict structures gender inequality. More specifically, the thesis argues that inadequate gender analysis risks essentialising the category of 'women'. It invisibilises key issues for women, ignoring inconvenient realities of their family and married lives. Side-lining complex hierarchies or keeping women's unpaid labour off the policy table neglects structural problems

underlying gender inequality. This leads to *avoidable* failure of public policy to transform gender roles, relations and identities. The thesis therefore contends that, clarifying the meaning of gender – the central aim of the study - is critical, if analysis is to make the conceptual leap from WID to GAD and inform policy intended to transform women's lived realities.

The central line of enquiry in this study therefore is the problematic of gender, specifically the multiple dimensions and interconnections between gender, poverty and violence. Based on women's standpoint, it seeks to bring meaning to Kabeer's view of GBV as a *relational* vulnerability, 'reflecting women's subordinate status within hierarchical gender relations and the dependencies associated with it' (Kabeer 2014, p.2). This implies understanding gendered poverty and violence not so much as episodic shocks and stresses but rather as endemic to women's everyday family and married life and reflective of their subordinate and *relative* position. A fundamental requirement of theorising this complex gender-poverty-violence nexus therefore is to bring an analysis of gender relations in as a multifaceted form of explanation. The study focuses on women's *inter-subjectivities* rather than single factors or individual-level variables and on how marriage, motherhood and the family - key structures and institutions – actually shape their everyday lives. This type of investigation means digging deep to see what lies beneath the multiple dimensions of women's poverty and beyond the material to include important gendered concepts of love, care, sharing, togetherness and dependency (Lynch *et al* 2009) in other words affect, power, recognition and obligation (Chant 2007). The final element pursued by this multifaceted approach is to try to understand how women's subordination, gendered poverty and persistent and egregious GBV are intertwined with the wider context shaped by culture and the legacy of conflict. The following 5 questions are designed to guide this line of enquiry.

- How do we operationalise solidarity-based feminist standpoint perspectives in order to understand the gender-poverty-violence nexus?

- What are individual women's experiences of the gendered continuum of poverty, *affective* inequality and GBV?
- What is gender and how do the structures of gender relations shape women's multi-subjective experiences of poverty, violence and family life and contribute to the reproduction of women's subordinate status and gender inequality?
- What does the interdependency between norms, structure and agency tell us about the ways in which gender interacts with other markers of women's identities, their localities and wider context shaped by culture and affected by war and violent conflict?
- What do the diversities of Timorese women's insights and experiences of everyday life tell us about the conceptual challenges facing gender mainstreaming in transforming oppressive social relations and making the leap from WID to GAD?

### **1.3 The Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. This first chapter has situated the study in its theoretical and empirical context. It has also highlighted its relevance and rationale and explained the research question. Chapter two presents relevant information about Timor-Leste including the historical, socio-cultural and post-independence democratisation and development contexts. Chapter three elaborates on the theoretical foundations of the study. It also provides the analytical framework where the different conceptual components are assembled to facilitate the empirical study. Chapter four then describes how I collected and analysed the data. It delineates the constructivist feminist standpoint research paradigm, the qualitative methodology, research design, methods and various ethical dimensions associated with the fieldwork in the four study sites. The findings are then presented and analysed in the next three chapters through the paradigmatic lens of marriage and motherhood. Chapter five, a descriptive chapter, provides the empirical backdrop to the thesis by presenting the

major themes emerging from the fieldwork. These were about women's encounters with gendered poverty and GBV as they went about caring for their families on a daily basis. Pursuing a gendered ecological structuralist approach, chapter six analyses the forces shaping women's experiences of gendered poverty – *as mothers* - with an emphasis on the reproduction of intrahousehold gendered care relations. Chapter seven, the last of the three empirical chapters, focuses on women's experiences of GBV through the paradigmatic context of marriage. Following the same approach as chapter six, it analyses the multiple forces underlying women's vulnerability and responses to GBV when making themselves and their children safe. Chapter eight, the concluding chapter of the thesis, critically discusses the contributions of the study, keeping in mind the 'gender dilemma' troubling gender mainstreaming theory and praxis in situations affected by conflict and the avenues of enquiry seeking to understand gender and more specifically its complex and mutually constitutive relationship with poverty and violence.

## CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT

### Development, Democratisation and Gender Relations in Timor-Leste

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides relevant information on Timor-Leste given the research question and the emphasis on context that underpins the research paradigm and conceptual framework. A central argument of the study is that without consideration for the socio-cultural-historical-political-economic aspects of women's wider environment, neither the concept of gender can be understood adequately nor gender equality guaranteed. Following on from this, the study argues that to have a holistic and nuanced analysis of contemporary gender relations in Timor-Leste, we need to keep in mind their profound disruption and evolution resulting from years of colonialism and violent conflict, the effects of which deepen existing levels of gendered poverty and aggravate inequitable gender norms and practices. This causes women to suffer disproportionately but can also open up opportunities for their emancipation.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first provides an outline of watershed events in the history of Timor-Leste and briefly reviews the current socio-demographic situation including the multiple dimensions of poverty experienced by the vast majority of the population. The second section synopsis the contemporary modern democratic governance landscape. It also introduces the mainstream state-led development frameworks and the gender mainstreaming approach seeking to safeguard the interests and rights of Timorese women led by the Government of Timor-Leste (GoTL) during the first decade of independence (2002-2012). The third section turns to the overall poverty situation and the status of Timorese women compared to men, focusing on gendered poverty and GBV that are reported to be severe, ubiquitous and persistent. Conceptualising the current socio-cultural landscape in Timor-Leste is the focus of section four. Following a review of the strong process of cultural cathexis taking place during the first decade of independence (2002-2012), the section pays attention to Timorese gender relations in indigenous socio-cultural and

political structures. It specifically reflects on some of the effects foreign influences - specifically the violent Indonesian occupation - have had on their evolution. It concludes by reflecting on the re-vitalisation of *lisan* and its significance for Timorese people in the post-independence era in contra-distinction to the liberal democratic framework promoting gender equality particularly in the domain of the Timorese family and intra-household gender relations.

## **2.1 Background to Timor-Leste**

Timor-Leste is a small democratic state occupying the eastern half of Timor island located in South-east Asia. The island itself is situated north-west of Australia, to the west of Papua New Guinea, and to the east of Indonesia. It is surrounded by the Timor Sea which is rich in oil and natural gas and has and continues to be an area of strategic interest in the Asia-Pacific region (Reid-Smith 2006). Timor-Leste formally re-gained its independence and assumed its official name, the *República Democrática de Timor-Leste* (RDTL) on May 20<sup>th</sup> 2002. Timorese culture and society have been highly influenced by the past, not least the country's history of conflict and colonialism such that nowadays poverty alongside a 'culture of poverty and violence' - both general and gendered - pervades everyday life where people have become accustomed to living with violence on a daily basis (Niner 2017). Prior to independence, from the mid-sixteenth century to 1974 Timor-Leste endured 400 years of Portuguese colonial rule (Cristalis and Scott 2005). In late 1975, following the withdrawal of Portugal it experienced a short-lived period of independence and a brief but damaging civil war. It was invaded that December by the Indonesian military forces. A violent occupation and brutal armed-conflict ensued for the next 24 years leading to massive displacement, starvation and the death of one quarter of the pre-invasion Timorese population. Discrimination and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against Timorese women and girls was widespread during the period of Indonesian occupation including rape and sexual slavery perpetrated by the Indonesian military forces (CAVR 2005). The occupation came to an end in August 1999 when 78.5 percent of the East Timorese electorate voted in a UN-sponsored referendum in favour of independence from Indonesia. In the weeks following the vote, the Indonesian military and pro-

integrationist East Timorese paramilitaries unleashed a violent rampage leading to the death of between 1,000 and 2,000 East Timorese civilians, SGBV against Timorese women, widespread displacement and massive destruction of private dwellings and public infrastructure all over the country (CAVR 2005).

On October 31<sup>st</sup> 1999 the Indonesian army and security forces left Timor-Leste and immediately after the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) was established, assuming sovereign powers over the territory, providing security, overseeing reconstruction and preparing for independence. The election of the Constituent Assembly and the adoption of a constitution -both in 2001- and the presidential elections held the following year paved the way for the restoration of independence in 2002. The Constituent Assembly became the National parliament, and the first constitutional government was sworn in under the leadership of Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri (Anderson and Huybens 2014). Since 2001 national elections have been held every five years to elect the President and national parliament (Leach and Kingsbury 2013; Molnar 2010). In 2006, political-military crisis erupted and led to the deaths of 35 people, widespread displacement and destruction to property and many government ministries and state services were badly disrupted for much of 2006 and 2007 (Anderson and Huybens 2014). In 2008 instability arose again when there were assassination attempts on the Prime Minister and President respectively (Leach and Kingsbury 2013). In 2012 largely peaceful parliamentary and presidential elections were held followed by an orderly transition to a new government (Anderson and Huybens 2014). In the same year the UN peacekeeping mission ended, after a gradual hand-over of control of the police force to the Timorese authorities.<sup>1</sup>

Timor-Leste is divided into thirteen districts, made up of sub-districts, *suku* (villages) and *aldeia* (hamlets). One of its 2 official languages is Tetum which is also the country's national and main language and is spoken by 91 percent of the population. The other official language is Portuguese which is not widely used as an everyday language of

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1 For a detailed examination of developments in East Timorese politics from 2002 until 2006 and 2007 to 2013 see Kingsbury and Leach 2007 in *Introduction in East Timor: Beyond Independence* and Leach and Kingsbury 2013 *Introduction: East Timorese Politics in Transition*.

communication. It is spoken by 13.5 percent who are mainly elite Timorese members of the older generations (Molnar 2010). Major ethno-linguistic groups include the Bunaq, Mambai, Tetum, Kemak Galoli and Fataluku (Molnar 2010). All rural women participating in this study identified as belonging to the latter, with Fataluku being their dominant language of communication. Many Timorese continue to live according to the spiritual power of the sacred and ancient animist belief system referred to as *Lulik*, with traditional religions, mainly animism focused on the ancestors, still being practised in some parts of the country alongside or in combination with Catholicism. Ninety-six percent of the population identify as being Roman Catholic (NSD 2011) and there are also small Protestant and Muslim minorities. In 2014 Timor-Leste's population was 1.16 million with women constituting almost half (ADB 2014). The annual population growth rate is 1.18 percent, more than 40 percent of the population is under the age of 15 years and 70 percent of the population live in rural areas. On average there are about 6 people per household. Sixteen percent of households are headed by women (ADB 2014).

Timor-Leste has one of the fastest-growing economies in the Asia-Pacific region and the country was raised to a lower middle-income status in 2011 due to the exploitation of petroleum deposits in the Timor Sea that has generated new income (Niner 2016). However poverty levels remain persistently high across Timor-Leste (Anderson and Huybens 2014) with two-thirds of the population experiencing intergenerational poverty, relying on subsistence food cropping in a largely cashless informal economy (McWilliam 2012; Niner 2016; UNICEF 2006). The country remains one of the least economically developed in the region to the extent that economic growth has not resulted in the replacement of the impoverished, largely undeveloped and informal economic structures pre-dating independence (Niner 2016). In 2011 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) had reached \$4,400 million, with almost 80 percent originating from the petroleum sector (RDTL 2013). In 2012 inflation had risen to 11 percent and the domestic economy struggles to absorb the portion of state spending which increased to 31 percent per year during 2010-2012. Today people's cash incomes are at best modest and irregular as economic prospects remain poor (Niner 2016). The formal

sector employment provides few opportunities for women and men to make a living and provide for their families (ADB 2014). In 2010 less than half of the working age population were participating in the labour force with significant gender differences – 27 percent women and 56 percent men of working age. Nearly 80 percent of the poor overall, and 90 percent of the poor in rural areas depend on farming for their livelihoods (SEPI 2014). In rural areas, an overwhelming majority of the population are underemployed and face employment insecurity. In urban centres unemployment rates exceed 40 percent (Carroll-Bell 2013). Meanwhile subsistence farming continues to dominate (Niner 2016). Agriculture accounts for 20 percent of GDP and the sector's productivity remains extremely low (CEPAD 2014).

## **2.2 State-Led Democratisation, Development and Commitments to Gender Equality**

### **2.2.1 Mainstream Democratisation and Development Post-Independence**

Timor-Leste is characterised by the dualistic structure of international market exchange and what is still a substantially subsistence economy and by the interaction of liberal norms and a bureaucratic-legal model of government with local, customary, forms and values of governance (Brown 2015). Described later in section 2.4, post-colonial society continues to retain its indigenous political and social structures where most aspects of everyday life and social order continue to be governed by customary law (Brown 2012; Cummins 2010; 2011; Niner 2011; 2012; 2013; Wigglesworth 2012; 2013). Nevertheless dominant representations of political life of Timor-Leste centre on the state and nation focusing mostly on state institutions and the state elite, invisibilising popular and everyday constructions and dynamics of power which tend to be described simply as 'cultural' (Brown 2015). Formal democracy and modern governance includes a semi-presidential system and an electoral system based on proportional representation that also addresses gender concerns through a quota system. Members of parliament are elected through a closed-party list that is required to include one woman for every group of three candidates (Wigglesworth 2013). The head of state is a directly elected President who along with the Prime Minister, government and cabinet constitute the executive branch of government (Molnar

2010). Most power remains at the central level of governance (ADB 2014). Sub-national level government consists of district administrations reporting to line ministries which retain power over policy making, budgets, public expenditure and so forth. A process of decentralisation began in 2003 with initial stages of implementation still delayed in 2012 (Leach and Kingsbury 2013). At *suku* (village) level, *suku* councils were established in 2004 to provide the link between government and society and the interface between processes of development, democratisation and more customary ways of life (Brown 2012). This community leadership structure is legally tasked to: resolve disputes, establish prevention mechanisms and protection for victims of domestic violence and engage in consultation and discussion with the whole community to plan and implement community development activities. The *suku* council constitutes *xefi suku* (elected village chiefs), two elected women representatives (EWR), two youth representatives (one male, one female), the *xefi* of each *aldeia* (hamlet) and a *lia-na'in* (Brown 2012) who are customary elders, 'owner of the words' and spiritual leaders (Tilman 2012).

Sources of modern law include the Constitution, legislation enacted by Parliament and decree laws issued by the GoTL. The two main branches of the law enforcement authority are the Public Prosecution Service and the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL). Within the PNTL, the Vulnerable Persons' Unit (VPU) was established at national and district levels in 2001 to assist victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse (CEPAD 2014). The non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector represents a significant part of civil society that is committed to advocacy and broad and sector-based development and gender equality (Wigglesworth 2007). At a national level, constructively critical bodies play an important advisory and monitoring role, holding the government accountable in areas of human rights, (Associcao HAK), justice (Judicial System Monitoring Programme), gender awareness (AlFeLa, Fokupers, Rede Feto), and government planning and international assistance (La'o Hamutuk) (Wigglesworth 2007). In 2000 Rede Feto the national women's umbrella network was established. It comprises some 18 member organisations who are concerned with the main programme of advocacy for gender equality and women's rights. They face

numerous challenges including weak solidarity amongst women, major resource constraints, and societal, religious and political opposition in a deeply patriarchal militarised context. In Timor-Leste any understanding and acceptance of gender inequality is still far removed from the collectivist cultural norms (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). However Rede Feto and its individual organisations have contributed significantly to formal legal and political gains made to advance gender equality since their establishment (Niner 2011; Rede Feto 2000). Not least is the adoption of the principle of gender equality in the Constitution and its implementation through a number of national policies such as the Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV) (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015).

The first constitutional government of Timor-Leste (2002-2007) was primarily concerned with building the state and elaborating its legal and administrative architecture at the national and sub-national levels. Its effectiveness was curtailed not least by the size and complexity of the task it was confronted with but also the low capacity in public financial management and slow execution of national budgets (Anderson and Huybens 2014). From 2007-2012 the focus of government was on resolving grievances and rebuilding public trust by increasing public expenditure and establishing a generous, yet poorly administered and targeted social protection system to address the demands of veterans – predominantly male - and the needs of the elderly, the disabled and poor families (Anderson and Huybens 2014). During this time growth in Timor-Leste was largely driven by an expansion in public spending of income generated from the state monopoly Petroleum fund. Owing largely to increased public expenditures political stability was established and a distinct urban middle class emerged. Meanwhile agriculture, the primary source of income for most households was characterised by low productivity and public institutions remained weak raising concerns over corruption (Anderson and Huybens 2014).

Since independence the GoTL has focused on alleviating poverty through its macro economic and social policies and the implementation of state-led development and poverty reduction plans. At the national level this process is currently being led by the

2011–2030 Strategic Development Plan (SDP) which builds on the 2002 National Development Plan (NDP). Based on the principle of gender equality, the NDP had two goals, namely the reduction of poverty in all sectors and the promotion of economic growth that is sustainable. Supported by international donors and implemented by relevant ministries Sector Investment Programs (SIPs) were developed in 2004 as a means for implementing the NDP and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. Key elements included the provision of basic social services and security of person and property. The provision and effective use of basic social services - food security, water supply, sanitation and housing - in urban and rural communities is considered an important means of reducing poverty. Meanwhile the government also adopted the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which the 2011–2030 Strategic Development Plan (SDP) is aligned. The SDP's goal is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 by addressing three key issues: social capital including education and health, infrastructure development including water and sanitation, and economic development including agriculture, rural development and private sector development.

In 2008, based on the constitutional right of all citizens to social security and assistance, the GoTL - through the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS) - initiated a number of small-scale social protection programmes to assist vulnerable groups including veterans, elderly people, people with a disability, and vulnerable households with children (ADB 2014). Income security for children is provided through the *Bolsa de Mãe* scheme of which 90 percent beneficiaries are female-headed households. Supported by the UNDP and the World Bank this is a small conditional cash transfer (CCT) scheme established in response to the effects of years of conflict on widows and orphans. It involves a monthly cash transfer conditional on children attending school and health clinics in order to help women cope with hardships and be less vulnerable to poverty and exploitation (UNWOMEN 2013). The *Bolsa de Mãe* scheme consumes less than 2 percent of the annual social assistance budget and is the only social assistance scheme that currently uses poverty as part of the eligibility criteria (SEPI 2014). Income security for the working age population is provided by the *Transitional Social Security* Scheme which has been implemented since 2010 for civil servants

already at retirement age. This is to be replaced by a universal contributory social insurance system in 2016 (UNWOMEN 2013). However as women are over-represented in the informal economy they are likely to be excluded from contributory social insurance systems and thus have little or no entitlement to universal contributory social insurance system, reinforcing Timorese women's dependence on men, which further limits full economic participation (UNWOMEN 2013). Meanwhile a government-funded and SEPI-led Women's Economic Empowerment Programme provides training and cash transfers to a number of rural women's groups to start small businesses across the 13 districts (ADB 2014). Beyond social protection, non-state microfinance services are also in operation, reaching approximately 5 percent of those aged 15 – 64 years – 3 percent men and 7 percent women. They include BNCTL, three specialised NGOs, credit unions and microfinance institutes (MFIs), namely *MorisRasik* a rural MFI and *Tuba RaiMetin* (TRM) that have been providing loans to individuals in rural and urban areas. Ninety-three percent of of MFI borrowers are women and the average loan per borrower is USD\$270 and is used mainly to support income generation and supplement consumption (house repairs or education costs) (SEPI 2014). Even though in 2012 approximately 10 percent of the state budget was allocated to social assistance (ADB 2014), overall Timor-Leste's social protection floor<sup>2</sup> remains nascent (UNWOMEN 2013) and its approach to tackling entrenched intergenerational poverty is limited to economic strengthening and does not include family dynamics, parenting skills and socio-cultural norms, despite the multidimensionality of gendered poverty and violence which has been acknowledged by the GoTL.

At the sub-national or district level, community development initiatives follow 2 state-led development programmes, namely the Local Development Programme (LDP) and the Decentralised Development Programme (PDD). LDP became nationwide in 2010 and provides community development block grants to support small-scale physical infrastructure projects. PDD which represents another physical infrastructure and

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2 The ILO's Social Protection Floor covers healthcare, income security for children, older people and people living with disabilities, and assistance for unemployed and poor people.

capital works package began distributing developmental capital grants in 2009 and aims to mobilise the private sector and engage local communities in national development. At the level of the *suku*, governance reforms have established community leadership structures and also introduced gender electoral quotas. The *suku* council – the official Timorese local governing body established in 2004 remains outside of the public administration has a limited budget, and its legal and policy restrictions also confine its role and functions to specific domains.<sup>3</sup> Prior to 2009, there has been limited deployment of public resources to *suku* (village) communities and apart from those engaged in the LDP pilot schemes few communities benefited from state-led local development initiatives until LDP and PDD became nationwide around 2010. Opportunities for community development at *suku* level remain limited to these two state-led models, until central government implements the National Programme for Village Development (PNDS). Administered through the proposed municipalities PNDS is to provide *suku* councils with grants to execute infrastructure projects that aim to help eliminate poverty and improve people's living standards particularly in rural areas. It is intended that gender will be mainstreamed and women will be involved in every stage of PNDS cycle.

### **2.2.2 Timor-Leste's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy**

To address gender inequality and safeguard the interests and rights of women, a number of state-led commitments and measures have been undertaken to varying degrees during 2002-2012, including key legislative, policy and social service initiatives and a complex mix of gender mainstreaming, women's policy agencies and affirmative action. By 2012 the GoTL had laid down the basic groundwork for a national gender mainstreaming strategy for government policies, plans and programmes (Corner 2010). Its main pillars include policy and legislative reforms, the introduction of institutional mechanisms, and raising public awareness (SEPI 2014) with the emphasis mainly on 'capacity building'. This institutional focus aimed to strengthen government ministries

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3 These include (a) maintaining peace and social harmony (b) population census registration (c) civic education (d) promotion of official languages (e) economic development (f) food safety (g) environmental protection (h) education, culture and sport, and (i) assistance in maintenance of social infrastructure.

to integrate a gender perspective in public policies, programmes and approaches in accordance with Timor-Leste's Constitutional and international instruments ratified by the GoTL. Timor-Leste has set out a number of constitutional guarantees for gender equality (Costa 2009). In section 17 it is written that 'women and men shall have the same rights and duties in all areas of family, political, economic, social and cultural life (RDTL 2002). Section 16 states that 'all citizens are equal before law' and that 'no-one shall be discriminated against on grounds of ... gender'. The explicit gender equality discourse suggests a definitive stance and real commitment for the principle (Geraghty 2013). Also a significant step in Timor-Leste's commitment to gender equality has been its ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Also ratified are CEDAW's Operational Protocol as well as other international conventions, treaties and declarations that place certain gender-related obligations on Timor-Leste including the adoption of gender mainstreaming (Costa 2009). These include the Beijing Platform for Action (BpfA), the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), and the Millennium Declaration (2000). However whilst Timor-Leste's Constitution guarantees Equal Rights between women and men, the State has not yet created a Gender Equality Law (JSMP *et al* 2015; Geraghty 2013). Various pieces of electoral legislation require that one quarter of lists and one third of seats be reserved for women on *suku* council.

Timor-Leste's national gender mainstreaming strategy comprises a number of institutional elements (ADB 2014). Within government this includes a national women's machinery which in 2012 was known as the Secretary of State for the Promotion of Equality (SEPI) (formerly OPE). Since its establishment in 2001 it has been responsible for coordinating gender mainstreaming efforts undertaken in the different government departments, ensuring that approaches are in accordance with the national gender policy and the international instruments ratified by the government such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action (BpfA). Other institutional elements include within Parliament, the Cross-Party Women's Caucus (GMPTL), the Gender Resource Centre (GRC), and the Specialised Committee for Poverty Reduction, Rural and Regional Development and Gender Equality (CEPAD 2014; Costa 2009).

The GoTL's gender mainstreaming entails three distinct components of work. The first is the mainstreaming of gender across line ministries and also in the government's machinery. The second component targets building the institutional capacity of key agencies, particularly the women's machinery to coordinate all state-led gender mainstreaming activities in the line ministries and secretariats at national level and in the districts. The third necessitates engendering and subjecting key state-led development instruments, such as the State of the Nation Report (2008) and the National Development Plans (NDPs) to gender analysis (ADB 2014; CEPAD 2014; SEPI 2013). To date, the basic groundwork to mainstream gender into government policies, plans and programmes across line ministries has taken place in four key areas to varying degrees, namely health, education, agriculture and justice (ADB 2014). This has resulted in the production of sector-based gender assessments and sector-specific gender policies. A number of technical tools and mechanisms are being used to support this process, including the establishment of gender units, working groups and task forces supported by expertise provided by international Gender and Development specialists (GADS). Gender advisers have been appointed in key ministries to increase gender awareness and ensure public administration is gender sensitive. They bring expertise on how to incorporate gender issues into planning, budgeting, and policy and programme development (ADB 2014). In 2008 gender focal points were appointed as part of the gender-related coordination mechanisms established across government ministries and agencies. Seen as lacking in authority these were replaced in 2011 by Gender Working Groups (GWGs) which are now functional across the 13 districts and a further 15 have been established in various government agencies at national level including the ministries of security and social solidarity. GWGs are responsible for ensuring gender sensitivity through gender strategies or incorporating gender analysis in work plans. However in 2014 gender strategies had been developed only in a few line ministries and none had progressed beyond draft stage (ADB 2014). To consolidate sector-based gender mainstreaming efforts, strong links have been established between the national women's machinery and institutions within government and also important actors beyond the state. Some of these include the National Directorate of

Planning and Coordination of External Assistance (NDPEAC), the Ministry of Justice, the national police (PNTL) and the National Statistics Directorate. The national women's machinery also relies on consultation mechanisms with civil society, women MPs and international agencies (Costa 2009). It attempts to advance women's economic empowerment through public transfers to women's groups (Hedditch 2010) at community level. It raises awareness of gender equality among stakeholders and the general public by organising such events as Fair Days and International Rural Women's Day across the districts to highlight the work done by rural women and their contribution to the economic development of the country. It uses such platforms to also raise awareness amongst communities about the harmful effects of GBV on women and about the role of the PNTL in addressing such issues (personal observation at an International Rural Women's Day event organised in October 2012 by SEPI in *suku Tutuala*).

The gender mainstreaming strategy also targets institutional capacity. In 2009 the government introduced gender-responsive-budgeting (GRB) (SEPI 2013). Training and awareness raising initiatives for government, civil society and parliament on GRB have been implemented since 2003 as an avenue to implement gender mainstreaming approaches (Costa 2009). Officers responsible for programming and planning in ministries and departments have also received training on the concept of gender and equality and the application of other key gender mainstreaming tools such as gender awareness, gender analysis and gender-responsive planning (ADB 2005; UN 2007). This has also been extended to governance structures at the local level, targeting elected women representatives (EWRs) on *suko* councils, to members of Parliament who also benefited from policy advice on how to ensure scrutiny of the budget through a gender lens (Costa 2009).

The third component of the GoTL's strategy necessitates engendering and subjecting key state-led development instruments to gender analysis. The State of the Nation Report developed throughout 2008 involved a series of consultations with women at district level. This resulted in a section on gender equality within the report and sector

specific analysis of the disadvantaged situation of women and the challenges of achieving gender equality. Gender features in Timor-Leste's first National Development Plan (NDP 2002-2007), in the 2011-2030 Strategic Development Plan (SDP) and some Sector Strategic Plans are currently being engendered (RDTL 2010). The SDP includes a vision of a: 'gender-fair society where human dignity and women's rights are valued, protected and promoted by our laws and culture' (RDTL 2010, p.49-51). It reiterates the Constitution's rationale promoting an equality of rights in 'familial, political, economic, and social and cultural life' (RDTL 2010, p.49). Within the SDP, the GoTL states that it has prioritised implementing gender mainstreaming, combating GBV, increasing women's economic empowerment and changing attitudes and behaviours towards gender equality (ADB 2014). The state budget is also required to mainstream gender via a gender-responsive-budgeting (GRB) strategy. Gender equality is a guiding principle of the Technical Inter-Ministerial Working Group, a mechanism set up to accelerate community development under the National *suku* Development Programme (PNDS) (SEPI 2014). Out of three representatives from among the members of *suku* council representing for Sub-district Development Commissions, at least one must be female (O' O'Dwyer 2013).

Gender mainstreaming in Timor-Leste generally follows WID's *integrationist* approach, drawing mainly on the expert-bureaucratic model that is largely driven by efficiency goals wider than gender equality, as it attempts to introduce a gender perspective into existing policy paradigms without questioning them (Lombardo *et al* 2012) or without challenging wider gender relations that underlie gender inequality. For example as part of its Strategic Development Plan 2011-2030, the government's National Policy of Food and Nutrition Strategy aims to ensure that programmes are gender sensitive and gender responsive by paying special attention to women's role in family household management and food production (SEPI 2014). A notable feature of gender mainstreaming therefore is that it is not grounded in a GAD discourse about gender and equality and does not depart from an analysis of gender inequality as a structural phenomenon (Daly 2005). Indeed gender mainstreaming is conceived in National Development Plans as an instrumental strategy to reduce poverty (UN 2007),

evidenced for example in OPE guidelines that stated 'that poverty reduction planning is the immediate priority, with agriculture, trade, education and health listed as key sectors where gender mainstreaming is central to effective planning' (UN 2007, p.77).

Supposed to aid the move from WID to GAD, horizontalisation or transversalism (Daly 2005) is a further distinguishing feature of gender mainstreaming in Timor-Leste. Rather than leaving the task to one department such as the government's women's machinery, responsibility for gender is spread in multiple ways across government ministries, units and departments who draw on training and other forms of support to integrate a gender perspective in their programmes and policies (UN 2007). Whilst the women's machinery is tasked with overall coordination responsibilities, a broad range of actors, heretofore not associated with gender, are involved in the policy process. This represents a significant move towards gender mainstreaming and away from WID-oriented practices of treating gender as a separate area of policy-making (Daly 2005). Preferred methods of spreading responsibility ARE through the 'transversal' action plan, where different ministries assume objectives in relation to gender equality as part of an overall plan, and through the use of dedicated means and methods such as gender analysis tools in the design and implementation of policies of ministries and public authorities.

Another distinguishing feature of gender mainstreaming in Timor-Leste is its tendency toward *technocratisation*, where the strategy might correspond more with a mode of delivery than a policy agenda or programme in its own right (Daly 2005). A related feature of the East Timorese approach to gender mainstreaming, is that it draws largely on the 'expert-bureaucratic' model. As mentioned earlier the dominant gender mainstreaming approach in Timor-Leste over the period under study is grounded, to varying degrees, in a range of technical activities and use of tools designed to dismantle gender inequality, including the use of gender impact assessment tools, policy analysis, gender budgeting and to a limited extent the production of gender disaggregated statistics. It has involved the establishment of GFPs and working groups in each ministry, state secretariat and district administration; the development of

training courses to enhance the skills of the GFPs and key staff in the ministries; the strengthening of ministries' capacities in the priority areas to promote gender equality; and the coordination of efforts within the different government departments to ensure that the approaches to gender mainstreaming are aligned with national and international commitments. However, despite such efforts, there is a noted absence of analysis as to how gender inequality is perpetuated in Timor-Leste, such that, agencies have selected and applied tools and techniques in an 'a la carte' fashion, without an overall framework that appreciates and accepts a critique of the root causes of gender inequality as a structural phenomenon. This is what the literature describes as the 'technocratisation' of gender mainstreaming (Beveridge and Nott 2002). The result is an excessive focus on policy-makers acquiring skills, following several steps and implementing a set of methods and procedures according to a set template or blueprint that seek to 'improve governance' rather than end gender inequality.

A final distinguishing feature of gender mainstreaming is that in certain instances it combines an agenda-setting with the participatory-democratic model involving inputs from the women's movement and approaches which attempt to destabilise policy making structures (Jahan 1995; Squires 2005). Thus, the expert-bureaucratic/participatory-democratic affinity in Timor-Leste is more than a matter of degree of distinctness (Squires 2005) as gender mainstreaming practices blends both 'expert-bureaucratic' with 'participatory-democratic' models. This is most clearly demonstrated in the implementation of GRB that relies on the contribution and participation of a cross-section of actors, namely the technical input of financial budget experts and consultations and scrutiny from experts within community groups.

A key substantive focus of the GoTL's mainstreaming strategy has been GBV which remains a major challenge and concern for Timor-Leste, particularly domestic violence which has increased significantly since 1999 (Harriss-Rimmer 2009). Successive governments have acknowledged the scale of the problem which is being addressed through the adoption of a number of legislative, policy and social service initiatives, the framework for which is based on state obligations under international conventions and

new domestic legislation and reforms (Haider 2012). A key institutional actor and coordinator of the GoTL's gender mainstreaming strategy, the national women's machinery has been the main government body addressing GBV. Its focus is on strengthening national capacity and much of its work is supported and funded by international development agencies and INGOs who also support Timorese civil society organisations working on GBV issues. The national NGOs focusing on substantive equality in relation to the GBV legal framework and who also provide support and service activities to women and girls are: *Fokupers* - Forum Komunikasi Perempuan Lorosa'e (East Timorese Women's Communication Forum) - *PRADET* - Psychosocial Recovery and Development in East Timor – and *AlFeLa Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no Labarik* (Women and Children's Legal Aid –) which is part of the Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP). All are based in the capital city Dili and provide some outreach in rural areas. *Fokupers*, provides front-line services including shelter, specialised counselling, legal advice and court accompaniment to victims and survivors of GBV and their families (Haider 2012). *PRADET* provides psychosocial support to those suffering from GBV-related trauma and a crisis service of counselling, medical care and forensic documentation. The JSMP engages in court monitoring and judicial analysis, legal support, training and advocacy whilst *AlFeLa*, the only entity providing free legal aid to women and children was established in 2012 and provides legal education and advocacy in all thirteen districts. In terms of prevention activities, the Association of Men Against Violence, *AMKV* works to sensitise young men and raise awareness in the community about the harmful effects of GBV (Haider 2012).

Key components of the legal and policy framework for GBV include: the Constitution; the Penal Code (Law No. 19/2009); the Civil Code (Law No. 10/2011), the Law on Protection of Witnesses (Law No. 2/2009) and the Law Against Domestic Violence (Law No.7/2010); the criminal justice system made up of national and districts courts and the 2 main branches of law enforcement - the Office of the Prosecutor-General and the National Police Force (PNTL). Meanwhile, under the Decree Law on the Authority of Communities (No.5 of 2004), and the Law on Community Leaders and their Elections

(Law No 3/2009),<sup>4</sup> local leaders including *xefi suku*, whilst having no legal authority to resolve cases of GBV, are expected to play a key role in the prevention of GBV in their community (SEPI 2014). In 2009 the GoTL made GBV a public crime and Law No.7/2010, the Law against Domestic Violence (LADV) was promulgated in 2010, marking a shift from traditional conflict resolution to a formal criminal justice system (JSMP 2013; SEPI 2013; 2014). The LADV is not derived from Timorese cultural values (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). It uses a broad internationally familiar definition of domestic violence, including psychological violence, neglect and abuse of economic dependence. Domestic violence including marital rape must be processed through the formal justice system and is not dependent on the victim making a personal complaint. Until it was passed, cases involving gender-based-violence against women (GBVAW) were dealt with according to pre-existing Indonesian legislation, which in practice has meant using a threshold of 'whether blood flows' from a beating to determine whether it is a case for police action. Though included in the LADV, marital rape has not yet been criminalised in the Penal Code itself (NGO Working Group of the CEDAW Shadow Report 2015). The concept of 'marital rape' is new in Timor-Leste and has been a taboo topic, rarely featuring in public discourses about gender in-equality until the promulgation of LADV (SEPI 2013). There is no specific law against incest. It is covered in some form by several articles within the current penal code. However there is no law preventing incest when the victim is over the age of 16 and says that they have consented to sex (PDHJ 2015).

The LADV is intended to provide the legal framework to the government's National Action Plan on Gender-based Violence (NAP-GBV), a 3 year strategy (2012-2014) that includes measurable targets and goals in four main priority areas namely the prevention of GBV, service provision to victims of GBV, access to justice for victims of GBV, and coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the NAP (PDHJ 2015; SEPI 2014). The LADV is expected to effectively prosecute cases of domestic violence, prevent

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4 Law 3/2009 requires *xefi suku* to: promote the creation of mechanisms for preventing domestic violence; support initiatives directed at monitoring and protecting the victims of domestic violence and dealing with and punishing the aggressor; request the intervention of the security forces in the event of disputes which cannot be settled at local level, and whenever crimes are committed or disturbances occur.

domestic violence and provide assistance to survivors (JSMP 2013). Training and information about the law has been provided to local authorities, *xefi suku*, traditional leaders and communities across all districts (SEPI 2014). Inherent in this legal development is the shift from traditional dispute resolution mechanisms to the formal justice system. The LADV is considered a milestone in the evolution of Timorese law concerning women's rights, since domestic violence is in the majority of reported cases gender-based-violence against women (GBVAW) (Belton 2011). According to Article 2 of the LADV there are 4 types of domestic violence: physical, sexual, psychological and emotional (Belton 2011; Kovar 2012). It defines domestic violence as any act or a sequence of acts committed within the family context, with or without cohabitation, by a member of the family against another family member, namely physical or economic ascendancy in the family relationship, or where there is an intimate relationship between one person or the other, that results in or could result in physical, sexual, economic or psychological injuries or suffering [Article 2 of the LADV] including threats, intimidation, physical harm, assault, coercion, harassment or deprivation of freedom of movement (Belton 2011). Meanwhile offences such as threats, coercion and serious coercion or property damage cannot be prosecuted as a crime of domestic violence (JSMP 2013). Although defined elsewhere in the Penal Code, 'suffering', 'threats', 'intimidating acts', coercion', 'harassment' or 'deprivation of liberty' are not defined in the LADV (Kovar 2012).

The LADV requires the government to provide 'civic education, develop and provide a free system of support to victims which includes shelters, medical services, legal representation, counselling, protection and provision of basic needs where necessary. It also gives the victims the right to seek maintenance from the perpetrator, to support her/his needs and that of her/his children. The police are required to investigate and report to the public prosecutor quickly, within five days' (SEPI 2013). In accordance with this requirement, and led by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MSS) and SEPI - the Women's National Machinery - the *Rede Referál* (Referral Network) has been established representing a joint effort by State institutions and civil society organisations to coordinate the referral pathway to ensure adequate responses in cases

of domestic violence. At the moment safe houses or shelters (*uma mahon*) for victims shelters are available in 6 out of the 13 districts. The MSS plans to establish 4 additional shelters in 4 districts and meanwhile works closely with the NGO Fokupers who runs 2 permanent and 4 transitional safe houses for women and children in Dili (PDHJ 2015).

In sum, throughout the first decade of independence, gender has been a priority area within formal democratisation and development frameworks and activities and considerable effort and investments have been made to address women's position within gender-based relations. Not least has been the complex mix of gender mainstreaming, women's policy agencies and affirmative action and the significant strides that have been made, laying down the basic groundwork for a national gender mainstreaming strategy. However despite this plethora of activities and state-led commitments to gender equality, Timorese women experience profound levels of deprivation and GBV on a daily basis. Many continue to face a life-time of poverty and discrimination, more so the case for older women, widows, women living in rural and mountainous areas and female headed households (UN 2012). Following a short overview of the general poverty situation in Timor-Leste post-independence, the following section delineates the inferior status and adverse situation of women particularly in relation to the multiple dimensions of gendered poverty and GBV.

### **2.3 Gendered Poverty, GBV and the Status and Situation of Timorese Women**

According to the 2012 Country Mission Report of the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, no substantial progress was seen in poverty alleviation in Timor-Leste between 2001 and 2011 (UN 2012). In 2011 Timor-Leste ranked 147<sup>th</sup> out of 187 countries in the UN Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP 2011c). Forty-one percent of the Timorese population live in absolute poverty surviving on US \$3 a day or less and almost half live below the consumption poverty line (Inder 2014). One third of all households rely exclusively on subsistence cultivation. Seventy-five percent of the poor live in rural areas the vast majority of whom are 'entrenched in inter-generational cycles of poverty' (UN 2012). Extreme poverty affects 22 percent of urban households

compared with 37 percent of rural households (ADB 2014). Wide income disparities exist between Dili and rural areas and high rates of chronic poverty and food insecurity are much more prevalent in rural areas as are far lower health and education outcomes (UN 2012). Using the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), - a broader measure which identifies multiple deprivations in the same household, - the reality is even bleaker suggesting that Timor-Leste is the poorest nation outside of sub-Saharan Africa (Inder 2014). That poverty is multidimensional implies that a significant percentage of households fail to achieve the minimum standards relating to multiple components or indicators (Inder 2014). Based on 2009/2010 Demographic and Health Survey data (DHS), the MPI found that 68.1 percent of the population in Timor-Leste experience multiple deprivations and are classified as poor (NSD 2010). Hence poverty in Timor-Leste is both multi-dimensional and pervasive extending to the vast majority of the population, not just to those living on the margins.

Moreover, Timor-Leste ranks 118 out of 149 countries on the gender inequality index (GII)<sup>5</sup> which for 2009-2010 is 0.547. This is attributed to high maternal mortality (557 maternal deaths per 1000,000 live births) and the large gender gap in labour force participation. It would be even higher were it not for the fact that 38 percent of parliamentarians are women (ADB 2014).

### ***2.3.1 Health, Hunger and Living Conditions***

Timor-Leste's development challenges are enormous with nutrition and living conditions representing the highest levels of deprivation (Inder 2014). A most recent UNDP report (2013b) describes life expectancy at birth – 62.9 years – as amongst the lowest in the region (UNDP 2013b). Meanwhile Timor-Leste's maternal mortality rate of 557 maternal deaths per 1000,000 live births – one of the highest in the world - is closely linked to high fertility and the frequency of childbirth, poor maternal health and nutrition, limited access to health treatment and services, poor housing and lack of

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5 The GII (gender inequality index) was developed by the UNDP. It uses data on reproductive health, political participation, education attainment, and labour force participation to calculate an index between zero and one. A result close to zero is the aim. A number close to one indicates high gender inequality (ADB 2014).

clean water and sanitation (Carroll-Bell 2013; UNDP 2011a). Women in urban areas have a higher probability of giving birth in a health facility compared with women in rural areas (PDHJ 2015). Housing poverty remains a serious concern affecting the majority of Timorese families and households (UN 2012). Forty-three percent of households do not have access to clean water and seventy-four percent of households do not have access to improved sanitation (NSD 2010). A large number of families live in insecure dwellings to which they do not hold a legal title or which is claimed by several parties. Forced evictions, lack of ownership and complex land titling issues continue to pose serious impediments to the realisation of the population's right to adequate shelter especially in urban areas. The GoTL's *Millennium Development Goals Suku Programme* adopted in 2011 has made little progress addressing households' serious lack of adequate housing. The 2011-2030 Strategic Development Plan also fails to make explicit reference to the right to adequate housing (UN 2012). A third of Timorese women are underweight and malnourished, almost one third of pregnant women are anaemic and malnutrition is much higher in rural than urban areas (NSD 2010; UN 2012). These health outcomes are associated with widespread poverty and hunger which are attributed to food insecurity, vulnerability to food price spikes and low agricultural productivity (UN 2012). Timor-Leste's chronic food security problem is now well acknowledged and the hunger situation was recently rated by the 2013 Global Hunger Index as 'alarming', with a hunger index of 29.6 in 2013 – worse than any other country in Asia (ADB 2014). The UNDP *2011 Timor-Leste Human Development* report found that seventy percent of the population are reported to be without adequate food during the annual 'lean season', lasting about three months (UNDP 2011a) due to a highly variable agricultural sector coupled with limited employment and income generating opportunities. Whilst high rates of chronic poverty and food insecurity are much more prevalent in rural areas (UN 2012), Peake argues that, even if not as extensive as in rural areas, food insecurity in urban areas is possibly deeper and more complex (Peake 2005).

Timor-Leste's high maternal mortality rate (MMR) is matched by one of the highest fertility rates in the world which in 2009-2010 was 5.7 children per East Timorese

woman (Pappa *et al* 2013). More than two-thirds of Timorese women become mothers by the age of 25 and 'many rural women [...] move directly from childhood to marriage (Wigglesworth 2012, p.40). Teenage pregnancy is a serious issue and 6 percent of teenage women are already mothers. Rural teenagers are twice as likely to be mothers as their urban counterparts. It is common for women to be pregnant at the time of their marriage, which some Timorese have explained as young women's self determination to circumvent their family's imposition of a forced marriage or an objection to women's own choice of spouse (Wigglesworth 2012). Alongside inadequate sanitation and GBV, early pregnancy has been identified as *the* major factor contributing to girls leaving their pre-secondary, secondary and tertiary education early (UNICEF 2014). The high rate of early school leaving amongst girls and teenage women is a serious issue amongst adolescent mothers especially in rural areas (PDHJ, 2015). Fear, shame and discrimination has lead to a high drop-out rate during and after pregnancy (ADB 2014) and there are reports of schools refusing to allow pregnant girls to attend school during and after their pregnancy (PDHJ 2015).

A low usage of contraception in Timor-Leste has been noted with one out of five currently married women using some form of contraceptive (ADB 2014). According to the 2009-2010 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) twenty-one percent of currently married women and 13 percent of all women use a modern method (NSD 2010). Thirty-one percent of women report an unmet need for family planning (World Bank 2001 cited in Pappa *et al* 2013). Twenty-one percent of those without access to family planning counselling and service delivery have an unmet need for birth spacing, 10 percent for limiting future child-bearing, and 35 percent do not want more children (NSD 2010). There is a limited focus on information and services for youth within sexual and reproductive health programmes (Wayte *et al* 2008). Consequently 14 percent of women give birth by age eighteen, nearly half by age twenty-two, and two thirds by age twenty-five (NSD 2010). The median birth interval is twenty-nine months. Lack of exposure to family planning messages, counselling, and service delivery partly explains the low rate of contraceptive use. Eighty-six percent of Timorese women and 59 percent of men have never received relevant information on family planning and

contraceptive use (NSD 2010; Pappa *et al* 2013). There has also been a limited interest amongst Timorese women and men to have fewer children, a legacy of the war that resulted in the tragic loss of family members and the profound influence of the Catholic Church. Traditional attitudes that emphasise marriage and fertility and limitations in economic opportunities also encourage women to marry and commence child-bearing at a relatively young age, resulting in a high level of fertility (SEPI 2013).

There is limited state support and protection for Timorese women who are pregnant and without a father to take responsibility for the baby (Belton *et al* 2009). Therefore women in such circumstances often use traditional mechanisms to mediate. Currently the Church and customary law and traditional leaders such as *lian nain* remain the arbiters of moral and legal view points on such matters as abortion and unplanned or unwanted pregnancies (Belton *et al* 2009). In Timorese society rape infers a loss of female dignity and it is common for women's families to be financially or materially compensated through customary processes. Unwanted pregnancy and high levels of pregnancy related illness are linked to unsafe abortions and early pregnancy losses particularly amongst unmarried young women (Wigglesworth 2012). Abortions are practised in clandestine ways across the country owing to legal restrictions where abortion including in cases of rape and incest. Assisting abortion is a criminal act according to the Criminal Code Art 141. There are calls from within the women's movement for government to ensure that services including termination of pregnancy are available to women, considering the high number of sexual assaults and incest and the failure of men to share responsibility for the pregnancy. Meanwhile Belton *et al* argue that legal reform alone is insufficient to reduce unsafe abortions (Belton *et al* 2009).

### **2.3.2 Marriage and Family Life**

In post-independent Timorese society, marriage is a strong marker of adulthood and collective cultural norms continue to place it at the heart of social arrangements, binding not only wife and husband but also their families (Molnar 2010). Women are also considered responsible for family life, rearing families and having many children

which parents consider their greatest asset partly because children are highly valued in a country that lost many of its people throughout the war (Niner 2016). In 2011 the Civil Code established the legal age for marriage to be seventeen for men and women or, with the guardian's consent, 16 years. This is an improvement for women for whom, prior to this, under the Indonesian Civil Code, the minimum legal age was 15 compared to 18 years for men (SEPI 2013). Despite raising the minimum legal age, the median age at marriage has actually *decreased* over the last few decades from 22 years among women currently aged 45-49 to 20 years among women currently aged 25-29 (SEPI 2013). Almost one quarter of Timorese women marry before age eighteen, compared to only 5 percent of men, with urban dwellers tending to marry later (Pappa *et al* 2013). Pappa *et al* (2013) have raised the deleterious effects of early marriage on young women's health, status, power, and autonomy within the household, as newly married young women are often under pressure to begin childbearing immediately upon marriage. Meanwhile traditional marriage arrangements are also being challenged by changes in society where the majority of girls now go to school and young women are developing different expectations about their futures and aspiring to professional roles outside the domestic sphere. According to Wigglesworth *et al* this is creating tensions for women fulfilling the role of the 'good wife' (2015).

Three different forms of marriage are legally recognised within the Civil Code: Catholic marriage, civil marriage and *barlaque* based marriage. The law does not recognise *de facto* relationships or same sex marriages (SEPI 2013). Many women in Timor-Leste live in *de facto* unions some of which are *barlaque* based<sup>6</sup> (NGO Working Group of the CEDAW Shadow Report 2015). Though subject to civil registration, traditional or church marriages are rarely registered with the Civil Registry office (PDHJ 2015). Polygamy<sup>7</sup> is not recognised in formal law though it remains recognised by customary law. Though there are little data on its prevalence, some of the grey literature report it to be a very common practice (World Bank 2010). However the 2009-2010 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that just 2 percent of currently married women are in a

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6 Not yet married in accordance with the law.

7 Polygamy is the practice of men having more than one wife.

polygamous union (NSD 2010). The government recognises its harmful effects especially on 'first' wives and families who are neglected as husbands' time and money are typically spent with and on new families (World Bank 2010). Alongside early marriage and childbearing, the practice has been identified by the women's movement as harmful towards women as it reinforces and exacerbates GBV and can lead to economic instability, frustration and psychological problems among women and children (SEPI 2013). According to Corcoran-Nantes (2009) possibly the most significant cultural practice affecting gender relations is *barlaque*, a marriage custom practised by patrilineal and patrilocal societies and currently featuring in about half of all marriages in Timor-Leste (Niner 2012). The Civil Code now provides for divorce. According to *Rede Feto*, Timorese women wanting to end their marriage and obtain a divorce often do so on account of violent marriages. However the movement has also highlighted several issues and problems women face when attempting to obtain a divorce including the lack of benefits from their spouse and lack of access to legal advice which is considered wholly inadequate. Furthermore a stigma is still attached to divorce where it is considered socially unacceptable and remains a sensitive issue (NGO Working Group of the CEDAW Shadow Report 2015).

Recent research confirms the durability of indigenous belief systems that reinforce male dominance and female subjugation within the family (Grenfell 2015; Wigglesworth 2012; 2015). Despite the raft of progressive gender policies adopted in Timor-Leste since independence, the lives of most Timorese women remain dominated by the expectations of marriage and traditional attitudes underlying a resilient gender order restricting women to the private sphere and a domestic role. Explained below by a Timorese male activist this binary is maintained by the powerful role afforded by *lisan* to male and female elders:

'Timorese culture is patriarchal – we always treat women as second class. So women may be a very young age but as soon as they are married, society considers they must stay at home to do the cooking, look after the children and do housework. Everything is decided by the elders' (Wigglesworth 2013, p.242).

In contemporary Timor-Leste, though culturally meaningful to many Timorese, *lisan* and indigenous political and social structures are thought to disadvantage women as they often contradict with international human rights' universalist norms and standards (Belton *et al* 2009; Mearns 2002). As well as drawing attention to the pervasive structural discrimination that women continue to face, *Rede Feto*, the modern women's movement, has been particularly critical of certain aspects of Timorese tradition and culture underlying gender roles which it views as dramatically impeding women's ability to participate and benefit from education and political representation, limiting their rights over land and other resources and ultimately posing as obstacles to women's rights and gender equity (Corcoran-Nantes 2009). Many women in Timor face GBV daily and also live a life of material poverty especially poor women living in the mountains and highland areas, female heads of household, widows and older women (UN 2012). Customary practices identified as having a negative impact on women are found mostly in patrilineal societies and maintained by the persistence of traditional beliefs such as the idea that: *feto hakat klot; mane hakat luan* (a woman is born for narrow steps while a man is born for wide steps). These serve to uphold patriarchal systems and restrict women to a life of domesticity rather than autonomous participation in public and political life (Niner 2011). Within the family domain, whilst providing more senior women with significant power within their households, the assignment of the full burden of domestic chores and childrearing to women curtails their economic and political participation (Niner 2013).

*Barlaque*, early marriage and polygamy are also considered to be harmful to women as they can lead to acts of discrimination and GBV (SEPI 2013). The practice of *barlaque* is a particular area of common controversy as it presents both risks and protection to women within marriage (Grenfell 2015). Built around communal values binding families together marriages established on *barlaque* practices typically involve mutual but unequal exchange between the two families (Wigglesworth and dos Santos 2015). Since independence exchanges have become excessively monetised and frequently infer a sense of 'ownership' that can lead to GBV if a wife does not comply with standards or meet expectations of her husband (Niner 2012). Fitting in with a global

feminist critique of traditional marriage practices as ways for men to control and exploit women, modernist-feminist NGOs blame *barlaque* for the subjugation of women (Niner 2012) who view it as one of the root causes of GBV against women (Cristalis and Scott 2005; Ospina 2006) and the pressure on married women to produce children against their will (Niner 2013). According to Khan and Hyati's research, though it is not perceived directly as the trigger, Timorese women's vulnerability to GBV is increased when *barlaque* is exchanged (2012). Despite many Timorese women's demands to abolish the practice it has been included in the Constitution and it also remains a cornerstone of indigenous culture and engenders a deep sense of identity amongst most Timorese (Niner 2012).

The resilience of patriarchal architecture within *lisan* in the post-Independence period also enables Timorese men to maintain control over the family and their role as key decision maker and household head (de Araujo 2004; Wigglesworth 2013). For example it is common to expect wives to assume a subordinate position to husbands who typically are considered as '*chefe [xefi] familia*, as stronger than women [who] are expected to be good, responsible wives and mothers and serve their families' (Wigglesworth 2015, p.318). This requires being passive, submissive and obedient towards their husbands and in-laws. Such norms of female subservience limit women's decision-making in the family which is not considered egalitarian even where matriliney occurs (Thu 2007; 2012). According to the 2009-10 DHS (NSD 2010) most men believe the husband and wife should decide jointly on almost all of the following issues: 'major household purchases', 'daily household purchases', 'when to visit the wife's family or relatives', 'what to do with the money the wife earns', and 'how many children to have'. Less than half of men expect to be involved in the decision concerning daily household purchases (SEPI 2013). Thus Timorese men consider women's participation in household decision-making essential. However this is not necessarily the case *in practice* where male controlling behaviours remain a serious issue in Timor-Leste. Typically women's decision-making role varies depending on the type of decision. Though many are said to have a dominant role in the day-to-day running of the household and managing the household budget, this does not

necessarily extend to all aspects of family finances. Less influential than men, women's decision-making mainly relates to small day-to-day expenditures on essential items such as food and clothing but 'spending large amounts is in the hands of the men' including contributions into the customary economy and major expenditures on children's school fees (Grenfell *et al* 2015). Furthermore women's control over their earnings, a critical marker of empowerment, is not uniform or a given in Timor-Leste. Just 36 percent of married Timorese women in receipt of cash earnings are the primary or sole decision-makers regarding how their earnings are used, whilst 58 percent decide jointly with their husbands. Younger women are less likely to be involved in decisions about how their earnings get used (NSD 2010).

As well as reinforcing the gender binary and women's association with the domestic sphere, women's responsibility for the successful financial management of the domestic domain exposes them to 'blame' and harsh physical violence when there is inadequate money to cover essential day to day items (Grenfell *et al* 2015). Thus financial responsibility does not translate into female authority as women are still held to account, potentially violently, for shortfalls during periods of financial duress. Some research concludes that women's participation in family decision-making is thought to put them at risk of GBV as it represents a move away from the 'passive, demure, domesticated model of femininity' and angers husbands by threatening male privilege and upsetting family power structures (Victorino-Soriano 2004 cited in Wigglesworth 2012). The 2009-10 DHS provided further evidence of husband dominance and controlling behaviours. For example one third of women reported that their husbands insist on knowing where they are at all times, get jealous or angry if they talk to other men. Fifteen percent women reported being accused of marital infidelity by their husbands, whilst nine percent of women are forbidden by their husbands to meet their female friends. Eight percent said that their husbands do not trust them with money (SEPI 2013). Controlling behaviour is higher among urban women (25 percent) than rural women (10 percent). Men in Dili (30 percent) and Lautem (16 percent) - the two districts participating in this study - are more likely to exercise controlling behaviour over their wives than in other districts. Interestingly the DHS provides evidence that

women in urban areas more often face GBV than women living in rural communities (NSD 2010; SEPI 2013).

Land rights remain a major issue for women in post-independent Timor-Leste. Despite relying on land to fulfil their domestic roles and responsibilities and playing a crucial role in economic development, women face persistent barriers in terms of enjoying equal land property rights.

'Land is the most important asset [...] and a very special good for rural women, due to women's attachment to, and dependence on, land. In addition to their involvement in agricultural production, fuel wood and water collection are largely conducted by women. The land for women is much more than an economic asset; it is essential for social security and wellbeing and performs several roles' (Narciso *et al* 2012, p.4).

The barriers women face to land property rights include Timor-Leste's strong patriarchal culture, a plural justice system, unclear legal capacity, ownership and inheritance of land even where the 2011 Civil Code currently provides for equality between spouses and for equal inheritance and land rights between women and men (CEPAD 2014). The formal recognition of women's rights and entitlements as set out in the Civil Code is dependent on the registration of marriage by the Civil Registry services. The lack of recognition of *de facto* relationships and of registration of traditional or church marriages with the Civil Registry office has major consequences for women's rights to their husbands' property upon divorce or widowhood (PDHJ 2015). This is complicated by the fact that still in use in Timor-Leste are the traditional system of inheritance, justice and informal processes for dealing with land, neither of which are favourable to women (Narciso and Henriques 2010). In patrilineal and patrilocal societies which dominate Timor-Leste, daughters do not have inheritance rights due to the assumption that they will leave the family after marriage, subsequently acquiring access to their husbands' inheritance. For example in Lospalos district, home to the rural women participating in this research, the patrilineal system adopted by the community does not afford women the right to either participate in customary decision processes or own inherited land from parents. Women only have

rights to access the land depending on their husband (Narciso and Henriques 2010). Research conducted by the Centre of Studies for Peace and Development (CEPAD) and UN-Women highlights that State laws may determine formal 'rights' but the customary justice system determines ownership in practice as: 'In most aspects [customary justice] is a male-oriented practice which ensures that men have control over productive resources, in particular, the use of land' (CEPAD 2014). In Timor-Leste the legal framework has not yet addressed customary, informal laws regarding land ownership such that:

'[...] a plural justice system exists in Timor-Leste and intersection, overlapping and clashing between these two systems often occurs. This situation leaves women with a choice between claiming rights to ownership and control of land or property on the one hand and maintaining good relations with their families in order to be able to continue to access land, use and manage land and participate in the life of the family and community on the other hand' (CEPAD 2014, p.73).

An important insight in the scholarship is the fluid and flexible pattern of customary land inheritance, where social norms affecting inheritance practices are subject to negotiation even in situations where traditional leadership positions are held by men (Thu *et al* 2007). However a major problem still persists for Timorese women in terms of conflicting systems of law operating at the national and local level forcing women to engage in trade-offs that maintain their subjugation and barriers to practical access.

### **2.3.3 Paid and Unpaid Work**

Women's role evolves around bearing and rearing children, the organisation of family life and ensuring the smooth running of the household on a daily basis and it is well acknowledged that women's reproductive and productive roles in the family are major constraints to them seeking and keeping a job (ADB 2005; World Bank 2010). Typically women are responsible for the bulk of care work and are assigned unremunerated and very heavy domestic workloads. Women's unpaid work and what they do and contribute to on a daily basis remains grossly undervalued. The definition of non-waged work used in the 2007 Living Standard Survey refers to unremunerated productive work. However as it does not include domestic tasks, or 'care' work it

understates women's total labour contribution. Women's contribution to the unpaid economy, in care and household work, is much greater than for men where typically women dedicate 50 percent of their time to housework compared with 36 percent for men (UNDP 2011a). In rural areas women also tend to crops, feed livestock and collect firewood and water. They are key contributors to local farming with 88 percent working in agriculture, compared with 82 percent of men (SEPI 2014). It is far more common to find women working outside the home in urban areas.

Women's economic role and contribution to production is under-recognised in official statistics (SEPI 2013). The type of paid work available to women is mostly 'informal'. Compared to men, they earn lower salaries, receive fewer benefits and opportunities to advance in their professional careers and are less likely to be promoted (Costa 2009; Niner 2016). Furthermore not all Timorese women who are employed earn an income for the work they do. Only 19 percent of employed women are paid in cash. Four in five employed women do not receive any form of payment for their work. These women are involved mainly in the agricultural sector and usually work for a family member or are self-employed (NSD 2010).

The 2007 Timor-Leste Living Standard Survey reported that women were far less active in the labour force, participating at a rate of 48.5 percent compared with men's 77.4 percent (NSD 2008). In 2005 whilst making up 25 percent of employees, women held only 2 percent of the highest positions within the civil service (Ospina 2006). Even where 44 percent of married women were employed over the previous 12 months, mostly in agriculture, only 20 percent received any payment (NSD 2010). Underemployment is a relevant way to monitor and assess equitable participation in the labour market. For example women's disadvantage is more evident in the vulnerable employment rate where it is revealed that 78 percent women employed are in vulnerable jobs compared with 66 percent men (SEPI 2013). The vulnerable employment rate is twice as high in rural areas (81 percent) than it is in urban areas (42 percent). In both areas it is very much higher for women than it is for men. In respect of non-agricultural activities, the national informal employment rate is 17.8 percent,

with the rate at 26.5 percent for women and 13.5 percent for men (World Bank 2010). Women thus tend to be concentrated in the informal sector activities which account for a significant proportion of total employment and income generation in Timor-Leste (Niner 2016). They also dominate the lower income-generating areas in this sector. Compared to 23 percent for men, well over one third (42 percent) of 'economically inactive' women make an economic contribution to the household via their work in unpaid crop growing/livestock farming activities, weaving *tais* (local textiles), tablecloths, *kurse* (needle stitch) and jewellery (SEPI 2013).

The multidimensionality of constraints on women's financial autonomy and active participation in the economy is typically not addressed or well-understood by development actors in Timor-Leste (SEPI 2013). As well as family responsibilities and traditional obligations, women working for pay are said to be constrained by inheritance practices and GBV, a severe lack of access to credit, technology and business skills (SEPI 2013). Studies show that the young age of motherhood, frequent pregnancies thereafter and heavy work and family duties constitute a major reason for women's disadvantage in labour force participation (Wigglesworth 2010). More than 30 percent of women cited family duties as constraints on livelihoods compared to only 7 percent of men (SEPI 2013). According to the 2010 Census, women with no children are more likely to participate in the work force than those with children and the more children a woman has the less likely she is to be economically active. Meanwhile the participation rate of women with no children is still far below that of men (SEPI 2013).

To conclude women have higher unemployment rates and lower labour force participation than men and whilst both work in the informal sector, women tend to engage in lower income-generating tasks. Lower earnings combined with a heavy and inequitable burden of unpaid care and domestic work make Timorese women and their dependent children vulnerable to poverty (Niner 2016).

#### **2.3.4 Gender-Based Violence**

Despite the Government's commitment to gender equality, gender-based violence

(GBV) is prevalent in Timor-Leste of which domestic violence against women is the most common form (Graydon 2009; Hall 2009; NSD 2010; SEPI 2013). In the summer months of 2006-08, one-fifth of all women presenting at emergency rooms in Dili and Baucau hospitals were recorded as victims of domestic violence, rising to one-third for women aged 20-39 years (Harris-Rimmer 2009). According to statistics collated by Fokupers, a local NGO administering various referral and safe-house programme, there have been persistently high and increasing levels of recorded domestic violence (Harris-Rimmer 2010; Kovar 2012). Court statistics also reveal the incidence and severity of domestic gender-based violence against women as increasing in all areas across Timor-Leste post-independence (JSMP 2010). In 2009 in Dili, VPU reports indicate that more than 3 domestic violence cases were reported to the police per day and that for every case reported, at least 10 are unreported (Ferguson 2011). Whilst police data demonstrate a high incidence of reports of GBV relative to all other crimes since 2000 reporting is still considered rare, seeking justice is not a common practice and GBV is typically considered a private, family matter, (NSD 2010). Amongst others, Harris-Rimmer (2010) and Kovar (2012) caution that police data possibly undercount actual incidents of sexual and gender-based violence as only a fraction of crimes are ever brought to the attention of police and service providers. For instance in Bobonaro district whilst the VPU statistics for 2008 indicated a low level of family violence, the results of a baseline survey conducted the previous year showed communities conveyed domestic violence as a private matter not to be discussed in public (Alves *et al* 2009).

The 2009-10 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) found that an alarming 38 percent of women aged 15-49 in Timor-Leste have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. Almost one third of women had experienced physical violence rising to 45 percent amongst married women (NSD 2010). Slapping, pushing, shaking and throwing objects are the most common forms of physical violence committed by a husband or a partner. Seven percent reported having their arms twisted, their hair pulled, having been kicked or beaten up. 3.4 percent reported being forced to have sex with their husband or partner when they did not want to (NSD 2010). Of the married

women who have experienced physical violence, 74 percent experienced it at the hands of their current husband or partner. Amongst unmarried women, parents were the most common perpetrators (PDHJ 2015). Very few studies were found making reference to the fact that today in Timor-Leste '... in the domestic sphere both women and men are known to be perpetrators of violence...' (Streicher 2011, p.39). According to the DHS 2010 young married women experience the highest levels of controlling behaviour exhibited by husbands. Age groups include 15-19 and 20-24. A secondary analysis of the data found that the greater number of controlling behaviours a woman experienced from her husband the more likely she is to experience violence (Taft and Watson 2013) Women living in urban areas, women with secondary education or higher and women with cash earnings report physical violence more often than their rural or less educated counterparts and women who are unemployed or do not have any cash earnings (PDHJ 2015). It is possible that those not reporting GBV might be worse off, as disclosure is itself an indicator of greater autonomy whilst non-disclosure does not imply an absence of GBV.

There are a number of Tetun phrases for domestic violence including '*violencia iha uma laran*' meaning 'violence in the home', '*baku atu hanorin*' meaning 'beat to teach' implying an 'acceptable' level of violence for instrumental purposes and '*bikan ho kunuru*' – plates and spoons bang together - also implying that some level of conflict is normal within marital relationships, an internal 'family' problem to be resolved by the couple together (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). There is a view and one held by female leaders that a woman reporting *baku atu hanorin* to the police is not a 'good wife' whose responsibility primarily is to look after and not break up the family (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). In Timor-Leste, a distinction exists between 'big' and 'small' cases of domestic GBV against women. Violence is considered 'big', perceived as a crime and socially unacceptable only when blood is spilled, a weapon used, or when the violence is frequently repeated (UNDP 2013a). Meanwhile so-called 'small' cases are usually accepted, not viewed as a crime and therefore often go unreported. Women are considered reluctant to report domestic violence as a crime owing to both the inadequate support they receive from the criminal justice system (ADB 2014) and

the level of tolerance of generalised and GBV amongst women and men across Timorese society (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). Furthermore the criminalisation of domestic violence is said to directly conflict with Timorese culture which women are said to be afraid to transgress culture by using the formal justice system (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). According to the DHS, 86 percent of women aged 15-49 years – support the idea that a husband is justified in beating his wife. Condoning domestic violence is overwhelmingly associated with women's gender roles, especially where children were thought to be neglected (76 percent), where the wife burns the food, and denies the husband sexual intercourse, as well as norms governing women's behaviour such as going out without informing or seeking permission, and an argument between spouses (ADB 2014; Wigglesworth *et al* 2015).

Almost one third (29 percent) of East Timorese women considered sexual violence and marital rape permissible and acceptable. Very few women (3 percent) have ever reported experiences of this (2009-2010 DHS data) and for example no cases of marital rape have been reported to the PNTL to date. Almost half of Timorese women believe a man cannot control his sexual behaviour, suggesting an accompanying belief that unwanted sexual advances from men can be justified by their inability to control themselves (ADB 2014). Confirming the DHS findings, the PDHJ's perception survey shows that only 44 percent of the population think that domestic violence is never permissible (PDHJ 2014 cited in PDHJ 2015). Nearly half of all women also believe that men cannot control their sexual behaviour and almost one third view marital rape as allowed (DHS 2009-10). Domestic violence and marital rape thus remain largely accepted within Timorese society. Rather than an offence domestic violence is often described as simply as '*bikan ho kanuru baku malu*' ('a plate and a spoon making noise hitting each other'), implying that domestic violence is a private matter exempt from State interference.

A 2015 study on young men's attitudes towards GBV found great variation and confusion amongst young men about what is a tolerable level of conflict, physical abuse and what can be classified as 'domestic violence' (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015, p.

326). Similar to findings in the 2010 NHDS, most believe that if a wife contravenes certain gender roles and expectations she deserves to be beaten – 43 percent of 15-17 years olds and rising to 83 percent of 22-24 year olds. Almost a half of young men believe that women should tolerate violence to keep the family together – rising to 61 percent of 22-24 year olds (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). Furthermore one third of the young men did not think forced sex is violence and also very disturbing, 42 percent think that a woman cannot refuse to have sex with her husband, an attitude that continues with age. These are remarkably higher than the 2010 NDHS figures (p.325). Wigglesworth *et al* highlight the need for urgent attention to the issue and definition of women's consent to sex (2015). The authors conclude that the majority of older youth condoned domestic violence and view it acceptable for husbands to perpetrate lower levels of physical abuse toward wives. Young men become less gender equitable as they get older and are more likely to be involved in intimate relationships with women.

When solutions for domestic violence cases cannot be found at family level they are usually referred to community, religious and state authorities (SEPI 2014). One in five women (24 percent) who experienced violence sought help. Of these, very few (4 percent) went to the police whilst most went to their family (82 percent) or in-laws (27 percent) (NSD 2010). Official figures on GBV in Timor-Leste only represent a fraction of the actual cases as definitions and understandings of what constitutes GBV particularly domestic violence diverge and remain contested (Niner 2016). Most GBV cases continue to be handled through the informal justice system where women are not usually permitted to participate and compensation for offences is usually made to the family of the victim through male representatives (Niner 2016). Fear of repercussions, lack of trust in police, pressure from family to make the marriage work, lack of confidence, and self-blame are some of the reasons why women are reluctant to report cases of violence to the police. As *barlaque* commitments cannot be reversed or broken, they may also compel women to tolerate violent marriages (Silva 2012 cited in Niner 2016). Fear of breaking up the family and financial dependence on perpetrators is also said to inhibit women from reporting the violence to the formal authorities (Khan 2012). Women experiencing GBV also face a number of barriers accessing the

formal justice system which is still under development characterised not least by limited outreach of the police and the long distances and low number of courts in rural areas, the co-existence of customary and formal justice systems, language and literacy (SEPI 2014). Lack of trust in police is associated with inadequate management of conflicts of interest, such as the police officer being a family member or a suspected perpetrator.

Recent research concludes that a combination of patriarchal values, poverty and family tensions increase women's risk of GBV (Alola Foundation 2011). There are consistent reports of poverty exacerbating marital and household stress, exposing women to blame and violence when they do not provide domestic services to the satisfaction of husbands and extended family members (Alola Foundation 2011). The relevant scholarship also highlights that GBVAW in Timor-Leste is an on-going part of the post-conflict political economy and its related structures of inequality, poverty and exploitation (Niner 2016). It is viewed as a symptom of Timorese women's economic and social disadvantage which is due to their unpaid reproductive work and lower wages for productive work. This disadvantage is manifested not least in women's limited access to resources, education, employment and decision-making power - whether in formal political structures, communities and the home - alongside being encumbered by the burden of daily survival and subjected to husbands' controlling behaviours (Niner 2016; Rees 2013). Community leaders perceived neglecting household duties and economic reasons such as the lack of money or food as the most common triggers of abuse of women in the home (UNDP 2013a).

### **2.3.5 Political and Public Life**

Under proportional voting systems and with the introduction of gender electoral quotas, Timor-Leste saw a dramatic rise in women's political participation in formal politics and representation in the national legislature over the last decade such that today it has the highest proportion of female parliamentary representatives in South East Asia (True *et al* 2013). Women are also included in significant numbers in national government. In the 2007 elections women gained 31 percent of the seats in national

parliament and their representation increased to 32 percent in the 2012 parliamentary elections. In 2015 in the government structure at the national level 25 percent of ministerial positions are held by women whilst 18 percent of vice ministers and 30 percent of State Secretaries are women (PDHJ 2015). However women do not have a strong public or political voice (Niner 2013; Wigglesworth *et al* 2015) and the struggle for recognition of women's rights and for women to be equal partners in national decision-making continues to be led mostly by elite women (Niner 2011). Furthermore women's participation in formal local government structures is very low. At the district level that lacks the kind of gender quota system in place in the *suku* councils, women hold 5 percent of administrative civil servant posts whilst men head up 100 percent of municipal administrations. Ninety-two percent of positions of municipal secretariats are held by men and they also fill 98 percent of municipal line sectors (NGO Working Group of the CEDAW Shadow Report 2015).

Numerically and substantially Timorese women are far better represented and integrated in modern systems of governance than customary processes and structures (Cummins 2011; Niner 2013; 2016). For example women are commonly appointed as judges, and public attorneys whose authority is implicitly accepted by the same communities who continue to prohibit women from exercising the same role as men in customary governance and local resolution of conflicts (Sarmiento 2012). Similar to their relative power in the private sphere, women's decision-making power in local communities is highly contested (Cummins 2011; Niner 2013; 2016; Wigglesworth 2013). At *suku* (village) level, the most grassroots administrative unit and 'everyday' site of governance in Timor-Leste, 2 percent of *xefi suku* (village chief) and *xefi aldeia* (hamlet/sub-village chief) are women (SEPI 2014). Meanwhile in traditional dispute resolution mechanisms women also lack authoritative voice and continue to be marginalised and excluded from customary processes and structures and are frequently prohibited the right to speak at community arbitration and adjudication sessions (Corcoran-Nantes 2009; Grenfell 2015; Wigglesworth 2013). According to some reports, the majority of Timorese women remain not only marginalised but also indifferent to the importance of decision-making processes (CEPAD 2012). There is also

a perception that women are not yet ready to participate in public life but that their role should remain in the domestic sphere (Brown 2012; Corcoran-Nantes 2009; Niner 2011). Underlying these perceptions are customary practices and traditional beliefs which continue to determine gendered roles and responsibilities in extended family networks (Niner 2016).

## **2.4 The Centrality, Relationality and Revitalisation of *Lisan* in Everyday Life**

### **2.4.1 Gender Relations and *Lisan***

In Timor-Leste equal rights are often associated with the concept of responsibilities which differ according to gender. As greater value and higher status in Timorese society are typically afforded to what men do rather than to what women do, gender inequality of some calibre must therefore persist (Corcoran-Nantes 2009). To understand the meaning of gender and its underlying role in both constructing differential worth and relative status and shaping social and cultural practices, it is necessary to consider the interrelated norms, roles and relations underpinning such concepts as obligation and responsibility, their centrality within Timorese social institutions and women's everyday experiences of motherhood and married and family life. Informed by an approach analysing social ontology followed by Timorese and international Timor-Leste scholars such as Brown (2012; 2015), Cummins (2010; 2011; 2013), Hicks (2004; 2007; 2012; 2013), Tilman (2012), and Trindade (2009; 2011; 2015), this section pays attention to the social relations and realities constituting how life is lived and understood in Timor-Leste. Moving beyond notions of 'culture', it underscores the *relational* dimensions and *multiple subjectivities* inhering daily life (Hage 2012 cited by Carroll-Bell 2013). Featuring in the narratives of women participating in this research these realities concern indigenous kinship and family relations and norms governing marriage and motherhood, the interaction of which determine the social construction of gender governing women's roles and responsibilities and engender expectations and ideas concerning acceptable behaviour for women and men.

Timorese culture and society are deeply gendered and hierarchical (Niner 2013; Saramento 2012). Customary law and governance are dominated by both cosmology and patriarchy within which the family and marriage are essential features (Narcisco and Henriques 2010). Despite this, little attention has been paid in the Timor-Leste scholarship towards understanding family norms and relations underpinning social and cultural practices and less still on the meaning of gender within marriage and motherhood - key social institutions for gender equality. Ethnographic studies exploring these aspects of Timorese society post and pre-dating independence and the militarised conflict generally lack a robust feminist focus on social and cultural construction of gender and less still on its meaning within family life. As a result there is little understanding of gender norms and *affective* relations underlying kinship, marriage and motherhood and the social construction of gendered poverty and GBV. Limited in feminist analysis, several anthropological accounts provide some insights into gender roles and responsibilities and the consequent relative position and power of women in indigenous society in the pre-Independence and pre-invasion Portuguese Timor (Hicks 2004; Trindade 2011). According to these accounts Timorese logic is codified in *lisan* which relates to both physical and symbolic constructs, - as in physical 'sacred houses' - and also a network of kinship structures and ways of being and viewing the world that guides relationships between family members and between the natural, social and ancestral worlds (Tilman 2012; Trindade 2015). Timorese researcher Trindade argues that these complex *relational dimensions* were key to the survival of indigenous society pre-dating and succeeding colonial occupations (2015). The most delicate and multilayered, interpersonal relations are governed by a strong symbolic dualism, namely *ema laran* - *ema liur* (insider-outsider) and *feto* - *mane* (female-male). Within this, masculine and feminine are opposite principles where women and men are viewed as operating in different realms. Mirroring the public-private divide commented upon by feminists, men dominate *rai* - the masculine, paternal, secular and visible world whilst women are associated with the sacred feminine, maternal 'inside' world *rai laran* (Hicks 2004; Niner 2011). Respect for this distinction occupies an important position on the maintenance of the cosmic order (Saramento 2012) and

also sets out distinct gender demarcations in almost all domains of social life (Niner 2012). Commenting on the significance and role of *relationality* within *lisan* in terms of resisting external forces and reproducing Timorese society, Trindade argues that:

'It should be noted here that in relation to these dualistic dimensions, the masculine world is politically superior and ritually inferior to the feminine world. Consequently, the feminine world is ritually superior and politically inferior to the political world. These complex asymmetrical relationships and alliances bond society together to resist internal and external pressures in the time of war, conflict, life or death rites and other misfortunes... Keeping the balance between masculine and feminine values continuously is not only important but essential for the survival of the entire community. Timorese resilience depends on this concept' (2015, p. 245).

Thus the social construction of gender within customary Timorese society relies on the principles of *relationality* and complementarity rather than equality (Trindade 2011). Hicks (2004) too has stressed this binary nature of gender relations characterising pre-Independence and pre-invasion Portuguese Timor and indigenous view of the world in which men and women have strictly occupied complementary roles. Feminist commentator Niner also stresses that whilst interdependent, indigenous gender roles and responsibilities in Timor-Leste are not symmetrical or equitable as we understand these in a modern sense (Niner 2013; Wigglesworth 2012). For example women and girls are assigned to the domestic sphere and responsibility for the unpaid care of children and food preparation entirely. Timorese men would suffer a loss of status if seen carrying out such tasks (Niner 2013).

Dominating indigenous social structures and holding deep significance for people's everyday lives *lisan* shapes important collectivist cultural norms and social practices relating to marriage and the regulation of family and community life including the distribution of resources and day to day activities (Tilman 2012). Some of these norms include notions of honour, shame and sexual purity and are said to sustain gender differentiation and gender inequality (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). Within East Timorese culture both the feminine and fertility are considered profoundly important and powerful (Cristalis 2005 and Scott; Hicks 2004). Discussing its centrality, Fox (1980)

describes fertility as a highly sought after asset whilst Trindade highlights the prominence accorded to the divine female element across Timorese cultures (2009). Referred to as 'The Flow of Life' (Fox 1980) the flow of women as wives and their fertility maintains indigenous kinship alliance systems through marriage which is based on the union of two families rather than two individuals (Niner, 2011; 2012; Thu 2007). According to Corcoran-Nantes (2009), exclusive to patrilineal and patrilocal societies which dominate Timor-Leste, possibly the most significant cultural practice shaping kinship, marriage and gender relations is *barlaque*, an indigenous marriage custom currently featuring in about half of all marriages in Timor-Leste (Niner 2012). *Barlaque* is described as: a way of showing recognition of the bride's identity, social standing and value to her family (Corcoran-Nantes 2009); an appreciation of the sacrifice for the upbringing of a daughter (Thu 2007). It is also part of a wider system of exchange that is integral to social life and everyday spiritual harmony (Cristalis and Scott 2005), sealing and strengthening the bonds between two families via lifelong commitment and mutual support. Generally, the familial relationships created by *barlaque* take place through the ritual exchange of goods and duties that correspond to the status and *uma lisan* of the bride and groom's respective families (Niner 2013). Once married Timorese women in patrilocal societies typically leave their family and land of origin to live with their husband and his family on their land and dwelling (Thu 2007). As land is passed on to the male family members except in matrilineal communities (Narciso and Henriques 2010; Narciso *et al* 2012) women only have rights to access the land depending on their husband (Narciso and Henrique 2010). Critical to East Timorese culture, family stability and kinship alliance systems are maintained by women's fertility and patrilineal marriage that rely on a gendered order expecting the wife to assume a subordinate position to the husband, the key decision maker and head of the household. Additionally as highlighted by Hove Bye:

'In a culture such as the East Timorese, there exists a hierarchical division between women within families according to generational and in-laws. Newly-wed women are on the bottom of the hierarchical ladder, and are thus subjected to subordination not only by men, but also by older women. Traditionally, increased status and rewards accrue to women later in life

when their sons get married and their new daughters-in-law move into the family. Then they come to dominate the young women, and finally exercise power over someone. This tradition can result in compliance from the older women to the patriarchal system, since they finally are in a position of power of privilege, while the younger women comply because they know that one day it will be their turn' (2005, p.50).

Inherent in Timorese hierarchical social relationships are leadership structures that are almost exclusively male dominated to the extent that Timor-Leste pre-Independence and pre-invasion has been depicted as a patriarchal society (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). Male privileging or what Connell (Connell 1995) calls a 'patriarchal dividend' exists to varying degrees, providing 'certain' Timorese men with honour, prestige and the right to command within institutional structures (Ospina and Hohe 2002). Male authority figures within indigenous sources of political life include the *lia-na'in* who are spiritual leaders and the *liurai* (hereditary ruler) whose power runs along family lines from the ruling class (Tilman 2012). Ancestors act as legislators and their living representatives, the *lia-na'in* become the judiciary (Wigglesworth 2013) and are also responsible for caring for families, ensuring peace and stability in the family and managing new relationships through marriage. Power is also afforded to women but is limited to elite especially senior women who remain influential within kin and community relations (Brown 2012; Niner 2011). Meanwhile the *suku* (village) and the *aldeia* (hamlet), the fundamental points of reference for political community and the vast majority of Timorese people represent critical sites of enmeshment of customary and state institutional forms of governance (Brown 2015). It is the *suku* and kinship networks upon which they rest, that underpin social order, food production and well-being for most Timorese and represent the site through which central government reaches the population particularly in rural areas (Brown 2015).

#### **2.4.2 From Armed Struggle to Cultural Re-vitalisation**

Customary norms and social relations governing everyday life have been profoundly impacted by the legacy of Timor-Leste's violent and impoverished past. Whilst some norms relaxed during the conflict they later went on to become firmly entrenched in patriarchal ideology and Timorese custom and tradition, serving to constrain women's

emancipation and opportunities for them to live a life free from poverty and violence as mothers and wives in the post-independent liberal state. Today the meaning of gender and *lisan* is ambivalent as traditional social structures and patterns pre-dating invasion and the militarised conflict have evolved, opening up opportunities for gender equality and an improvement in women's status. However women are also under tremendous pressure to return to a pre-Independence 'traditional role' that reinforces women's subordinate status and impedes gender equality (Niner 2011). Tensions exist over what is considered an appropriate role for women where gender inequality favouring men is evident but where a struggle for gender equity also exists. Critical to understanding gender relations and de-mystifying the 'traditional' role being advocated for women is an appreciation of the evolving nature of 'traditional' beliefs and cultural practices and their revitalisation amongst the majority of the population. This cultural revitalisation is considered a result of the many different effects of global influences of modernity, refracted through the particular intrusions of Portuguese colonialism (c1700-1974), Indonesian military occupation (1975-1999) and UN administration (1999-2002) (McWilliam 2005). This section briefly considers some of the effects these external influences are said to have had on pre-Independence and pre-invasion indigenous gender relations and how the evolution of gender has determined the social (re)-construction of women's roles and responsibilities as, what is considered 'traditional' post-independence, may be not only about Timorese custom but also in response to the consequences in Timorese societies of external influences (Wigglesworth 2012).

Although an in-depth and gendered exposition of Timor-Leste's history is beyond the scope of this chapter, brief consideration of the legacy of colonialism and conflict from a gender perspective is important to understand how the evolution of gender underlying *lisan* determined the social (re)-construction of women's roles and responsibilities. The periods of Portuguese colonialism (c1700-1974) and Indonesian occupation (1975-1999) both presented significant opportunities for both reversing *and* reinforcing inequitable aspects of indigenous gender relations. It is argued that Timorese women were afforded a more independent status pre-dating colonialism and

that this diminished with the arrival of the Portuguese patriarchal elite which was committed to a form of Catholicism that was highly conservative and hierarchical. Together these influenced East Timorese customs and indigenous practices, reinforcing the role of women as fulfilling domestic roles and subject to male authority (Cristalis and Scott 2005; Niner 2013; Wigglesworth 2012). Meanwhile the intersectionality of religion, class and gender provided urban elite women with access to education through the Catholic Church, unlike poor women of certain lineage (Sarmiento 2012). Some women also embraced 'non-traditional' roles, entering the public realm, fighting and challenging external rule and oppression and contributing to several anti-colonial battles as warriors and combatants (Cristalis and Scott 2005). Women also challenged structures of patriarchy, actively resisting sexual exploitation by the Portuguese rulers (Ospina 2006). Amongst those objecting to the oppression of women at the time was Rosa 'Muki' Bonaparte, one of the founding members of the modern nationalist movement of the 1970s, Fretilin and the OPMT,<sup>8</sup>, the first indigenous and overtly political women's organisation representing the woman's wing of Fretilin (Charlesworth 2008). Thus prior to the armed conflict certain gender norms had begun to relax and roles were gradually becoming less rigid in Timorese society.

This pattern of gender norm and role relaxation was to continue during the neo-colonial period (1975-1999) where Timorese women were active politically and economically and also headed households (Olsson 2009). During the Indonesian occupation, a highly militarised and violent society emerged alongside what some commentators have described as a 'radical' shift in women's roles and family responsibilities, concluding that the effect of the conflict was 'dichotomous' (Cristalis and Scott 2005; Niner 2011). Throughout the 24 years the population lived in severe poverty, constant terror, and women and men were subjected to horrific acts of generalised and gender-based violence, civilian killings, and mass torture. Systematic human rights abuses were endemic and included widespread sexual and gender-based violence of women (SGBV) (Taylor 1999). By the time the Indonesian occupation ended, it is estimated that between 100,000 – 200,000 Timorese – up to a quarter of

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8 Organizacao Popular de Mulher Timor: The Popular Women's Organisation.

the pre-invasion population – had died as a result of killings and death due to slow starvation and disease (CAVR 2005). An estimated 45 per cent of women lost their husbands during the war (Rede Feto 2000) and compounding their grief and pain of losing loved ones were the complications of having to head up households and rear families alone in extremely challenging circumstances (Pappa *et al* 2013). As lone parents, these women and the survival of their families relied heavily on the material and spiritual support provided by the Catholic Church who played an instrumental role positioning itself as a defender of the Timorese people and culture and loud critic of the Indonesian regime and its injustices including its coercive family planning programme (Richards 2015).

Paradoxically the brutality and intensity of the occupation enabled a 'relaxation' of gender norms and roles in other ways too and today Timorese women are vociferous in their assertion that - rather than any form of 'western' imposition - it was from their wartime roles - from the armed and unarmed components of the resistance movement (Taylor 1999; Ospina 2006) to political activism amongst the diaspora - that their fight for gender equality emerged (Sarmiento 2012; Niner 2011). Moving away from their traditional gender roles in the private sphere, some Timorese women entered the Indonesian public service, NGOs and state-sponsored women's organisations (Cristalis and Scott 2005; Hall and True 2009). This provided Timorese women with opportunities to address gender inequality and network with women at village level, improve their own skills, and disguise their work in the clandestine resistance (Ospina 2006). Increased access to education also encouraged women to challenge the gender differential values of Timorese tradition (Sarmiento 2012). Meanwhile the OPMT continued to be a forum for women from the national right down to the most remote *aldeias* where it mobilised at an unprecedented level (Hall 2009). Women also took up new gender roles within the organised resistance to the occupation, constituting at least 30 percent of those in both combat and non-combat roles (Cristalis and Scott 2005; Kent and Kinsella 2014). Politicised against the 'Indonesianisation' of Timor-Leste many sought to socialise their children and communities to Timorese traditional customs (Pappa *et al* 2013). Notwithstanding their roles and contributions, women

were largely excluded from positions of authority and remained absent from high-level governance structures within the resistance movement as its leadership and combatants in the guerilla forces were dominated by men (Cristalis and Scott 2005; Kent and Kinsella 2014). This implies that when gender norms relaxed and women's roles changed during the armed struggle, it was only by necessity to the extent that their participation in the public sphere increased but only where deemed appropriate and in auxiliary functions of the resistance and as armed combatants (Olsson 2009). This marginalisation of women within the Resistance leadership speaks to the resilience of the Timorese patriarchal logic and gendered concept of duality underlying the militarisation of hegemonic masculinity taking place during the war and that relied on the portrayal of a peaceful, nurturing feminine 'other' (Kent and Kinsella 2014). It intimates that though Timorese men 'allowed' women to take on combat positions during the conflict for the purposes of the struggle, it was neither perceived as 'natural' or a permanent aspect of re-configured gender relations.

Once the Indonesian occupation ended (1999) Timorese society began to undergo a cultural revitalisation owing to people's desire and freedom to return to *lisan* and traditional beliefs belonging to their indigenous societies. Over the course of the first decade of independence these re-appeared in nearly every domain of social life including political systems, social organisation, reconciliation and local justice (Niner 2012) representing a strong symbol of cultural power, a central part of community identity fundamental to the contemporary East Timorese *suku* and local governance processes (Brown 2012). This is reflected in the extent to which its *relational* dimensions remain very much alive and highly significant, reconnecting people with the divine entities, the land and with each other, most of which was undermined by conflict and violence throughout Timor-Leste's turbulent past (Trindade 2015). Browne too notes the significance of *lisan* for Timorese people and for the wider post-colonial society recovering from grief, loss and trauma. She emphasises how *lisan* incorporates forms of governance uniting living relatives with those who have died during the war and with people's ancestors. In Timor-Leste, ancestors - which is where community begins - have 'fundamental significance for a society still dealing with large-scale loss of

life' (Browne 2015, p.119).

The revitalisation of customary governance in Timor-Leste post-independence has meant that, ideas about balance and kinship-based social order continue to underpin much of the practical management of daily life in rural and more traditional villages (Brown 2015) with kinship networks forming the 'cultural and economic basis for the continuity of Timorese society' post-independence (Brown 2015; McWilliam 2005). A direct implication of this has been the emphasis on specific aspects of Timorese logic including the gendered concept of duality and the significance of marriage where it is now a marker of male and female adulthood (Babo-Soares 2004; Streicher 2011). This re-vitalisation has required an adherence to cultural rules and practices favouring men and certain women and thus for the conflict-affected pattern of gender norm relaxation to contract such that gender norms are now entrenched in most parts of the country particularly rural areas (Hicks 2007; McWilliam 2012; Thu 2007). The gendered significance of this is illustrated in the narratives of women participating in Grenfel's study who cited fear of *lisan* rather than poverty as the main factor preventing them from leaving a violent marriage (Grenfel *et al* 2015). This would suggest the powerful gendered role of stigma and community sanction. It is also apparent in the marginalisation of women from the public domain. For instance there was a remarkable absence of women in causing *and* resolving the 2006 socio-political crisis as women dominated the private realm of the family whilst female politicians lacked any influential role, particularly in political and security affairs (Niner 2011). Another manifestation of Timorese gender binary has been the on-going invisibilisation within post-war public discourse of women's political activism during the resistance that involved women taking on non-traditional roles and acting in the public domain (Kent and Kinsella 2014; Niner 2011; Sarmiento 2012). Corcoran-Nantes relates this silence to a tendency to: 'abandon any significant recognition of 'unusual times' in which actions and experiences entered into direct contradistinction to local adat [*lisan*] tradition and cultural norms' (Corcoran-Nantes 2009, p.172).

The revitalisation of *lisan* has seen the profound changes to Timorese male identities

(Myrttinen 2012). There are now multiple masculinities within contemporary Timorese society including an aggressive militarised, hyper and frequently misogynist masculinity where men dominate as political actors (Kent and Kinsella 2014). Although the privileging of masculinity within the organisation of everyday family life has also been highlighted, there is a lack of critical analysis of the relationality of female and male gender identities in the context of their traditional gender roles from a post-war perspective. In-depth understandings of the varieties of patriarchy and Timorese male gender identities tend to focus on urban militarised and violent masculinities found mostly in the work of Myrttinen (2012). Any mention of Timorese men's involvement in non-violent approaches to resolving difficulties appear in relation to customary conflict resolution and reconciliation methods (Babo-Soares 2004) whilst attention to broader understandings of how different Timorese masculinities are constructed in the private domain and in relation to caregiving and unpaid domestic work remain wholly inadequate. For example, there is a paucity in the literature on breadwinning masculinities or men's caregiving identities and how the social and cultural constructions of fatherhood might be (re)produced or even changing in the Timorese family and post-conflict context. Some grey literature has raised women's concerns regarding urban and rural male homosociality and men's indulgence in risk taking behaviour and in resource-depleting recreational activities such as cockfighting (Kilsby 2012) often a feature of hegemonic masculinities. However very little scholarship has been found analysing these and other expressions of hegemonic masculinities including normalised male infidelity and wife abandonment either during the post-independence period or pre-dating the conflict when indigenous sexual norms co-existed alongside Portuguese Catholic norms.

Rather than on the status of women whose perspectives are the focus of this thesis, most analyses of the varieties of Timorese patriarchy tend to emphasise the ubiquitousness of militarised and violent masculinities which, alongside the 'culture of violence', is said to dominate post-independence Timorese society (Molnar 2010; Myrttinen 2012; Niner 2013; Streicher 2011; Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). It imbues popular culture, transcends both hegemonic and protest masculinities and is an

identity the Timorese male elite and ruling establishment are heavily attached to and invested in (Niner 2011). Representing the current form of hegemonic masculinity, this elite constitute ex-resistance political and military leaders and have profoundly shaped the character of post-conflict society, dominating economic and political life, heading up the government, military and police (Niner 2011; Sarmiento 2012; Wigglesworth 2013). Meanwhile a distinctive form of protest masculinities has also emerged and it too is characterised by a form of hyper and violent masculinities found in the gangs, martial arts groups (MAG), groups of marginalised veterans and also within the National Police Force of Timor-Leste (PNTL) and the National Defence Force of Timor-Leste (FDTL).

Traditionally, heterosexuality followed by toughness have been the fundamental criteria for masculinity in Timor (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). Within modern Timorese hegemonic masculinity, there is also an overall impression that homosexuals are not 'real' men as real men only have sex with women (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). Other varieties of Timorese male identities include protest masculinities, masculinities embracing Latino-style paternalism of elite resistance leaders and also the traditional Timorese warrior ethos seen today in the celebration of male resistance 'heroes'. Rural areas do not hold strong stereotypes about tough and virile masculinity as more urbanised young men do. Current research has found that accentuated attitudes endorsing a tough virile masculinity increase and become more entrenched as young men age and move into urban areas. Education does not appear to temper aggressive and inequitable attitudes (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015).

Another enduring feature of Timorese male identities is the practice of both formal and informal polygamy which according to a feminist analysis is a key aspect of unequal gender relations. Kent and Kinsella posit that polygamy was common during the occupation amongst male resistance fighters, who - whilst remaining legally married to their first wives - often took on second wives and had multiple relationships and children with women who they subsequently abandoned (2014). Breadwinning status is also a fundamental component of most Timorese masculinities and post-conflict

modern urban hegemonic masculinity aspires towards the white-collar professional with adequate earnings to rear a family and own a house and car, whilst traditional forms of rural masculinity are based on ritual, adherence to tradition and lifestyle of subsistence farming (Myrntinen 2012).

Whilst far less ubiquitous there has been some relaxation of traditional masculinities in the family domain particularly related to caring roles. Established constructions that represent the standard of manhood are being challenged in the post-independent state as patriarchal norms and hierarchical social structures which determine gendered roles and relationships in the broad domains of private and public lives are being questioned (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). An interesting perspective highlighted in some of the grey literature but missing from the academic literature is that changes to traditional gender roles that benefit affective gender relations have been detected. A recent assessment of the gendered outcomes of a community-based water and sanitation project found evidence of increased recognition and respect for women's reproductive work and improvements in men's involvement in domestic work. There were also increases to women's participation in community roles, decision-making and contribution to the family income. Men's involvement in childcare, collecting water and general domestic tasks, though considered modest was highly valued by women for whom the benefits led to increased 'feelings of freedom and happiness' and 'harmony in the home'. Men too remarked on more peaceful marital relationships (Kilsby 2012). Alongside a greater sense of standing in the community and of having their work burdens and anxieties recognised and relieved, women expressed:

' ... a greater sense of agency in their own lives. Through being freer to participate more broadly in family and community life, instead of spending long periods of time collecting water, women felt they enjoyed more respect and acknowledgement from men in the community and for some, also at home' (2012, p.14).

However discussing the re-configuration of Timorese social relations commentators highlight the emergence and ubiquity of a certain kind of post-independent 'militarised' or 'hyper' masculinity. Molnar (2010) for example has detailed alarming

reports and complaints about excessive use of physical force, human rights abuses and the rape of women and girls perpetrated by male officers working for both arms of Timor-Leste's security sector (Molnar 2010). Timorese women too are publicising the problems they face in the aftermath of the war in public fora such as national women's congresses and at other important events such as the launch of *Buibere*, a collection of women's stories about sexual gender-based political violence. Addressing the audience - many of whom were survivors of such violence, gender equality advocate Sister Maria de Lourdes Martins repeated:

'A luta continua!' [The fight continues!] [...], and she described how the women of East Timor were still second-class citizens in their own land. 'A luta continua!' and she described how girls still don't receive the same educational or employment opportunities as men. 'A luta continua!' and she told of domestic violence still rampant, women still serving as slaves in their own homes, women bought and sold like commodities under the tradition of bride price, and men leaders still unwilling to accept East Timorese women as equals. Ovation after ovation shook the hall'. (Gabrielson 2002, cited in Sarmiento 2012).

What is striking about survivors' reactions to Sister Maria's speech, is that in their eyes, the departure of the Indonesian military and the arrival of national independence did not necessarily signal the end of violence against Timorese women and an improvement in their status within the family. Instead what the absence of war seems to mark for women is a new manifestation of male violence and privilege and female subjugation, suggesting a certain continuity between the gender-based political violence by the invading forces and the GBV and inequality experienced by women as citizens in post-independent society (Sarmiento 2012). It also suggests that women's up-take of non-traditional roles and responsibilities, of having acted somewhat independently and contributed to the fight for independence – on its own - did little to reverse gender inequalities and improve women's overall status within the family and post-independent liberal state (Corcoran-Nantes, 2009), the adversarial and multiple dimensions of which have been presented in section 2.3.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

One of the newest and poorest nations in the world, Timor-Leste and its people have been profoundly affected by the legacy of colonisation and violent conflict, an overarching gendered consequence of which has been the strengthening of customary and traditional patriarchal norms and expectations for women to return to 'traditional' pre-conflict roles. This is manifested in attitudes, constructions and actualities of women's role in the family, in public life and the perpetration of GBV against women all of which have been denounced by Timorese women. Meanwhile within Timorese masculinities changes have taken place, such that in a society permeated by war and an incomplete demilitarised environment - it is not uncommon for the Timorese to view male violence as an integral or 'natural' part of public and private life (Kilsby, 2012; Myrntinen 2012). In post-independence Timor-Leste, 'traditional' gender norms, reflecting conservative patriarchal values thus remain strong (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015). The militarisation of Timorese masculinities and of post-independence society has also been accompanied by a return to social norms that demand a re-traditionalisation of femininity to the extent that the institutions of marriage, motherhood and kinship and ideas about fertility and traditional gender roles and identities feature as central pillars which Timorese society and gender relations continue to be built upon. This trend has been fortified by the dominance of conservative Catholicism in Timor-Leste that emphasises women's maternal and sexual purity, their roles as wives and mothers (Niner 2011) and also family unity despite the presence of GBV (Myrntinen 2012). Significant also has been the role played by customary mores celebrating women as 'custodians of culture' and 'representatives of fertility and reproduction' (Graydon 2009, p.406).

Despite the implementation of gender mainstreaming and other state-led measures to reverse gender inequality, Timorese women continue to face a life-time of poverty, discrimination and GBV which remain serious challenges and concerns of the GoTL. Resonating with concerns within the post-Development literature (Escobar 1988, 1992; Esteva and Prakesh 1997 cited in Carroll-Bell 2015), the Timor-Leste scholarship has noted a tendency for customary ways to be overlooked by orthodox development

frameworks operating in Timor-Leste (Palmer 2010 cited in Carroll-Bell 2015). It further detects a conflict of interest, existing between constitutional provisions enshrining gender equality and Timorese tradition and custom where today strong attachments to culture and identity amongst the majority of the population '[...] have found different levels of accommodation with recently introduced international standards of democratic principles, human rights and gender equality' (Wigglesworth *et al* 2015, p.313). Whilst the Constitution provides that international norms should prevail over discriminatory aspects of customary law, the reach of these is limited and in practice it is most often tradition that governs everyday social life (Hedditch 2010).

Thus a number of Timorese and international gender commentators argue that building state institutions and establishing a liberal democratic framework for gender equality alone cannot guarantee gender equality in Timor-Leste. This is especially so in a context marked by a pluralistic system combining state and non-state sources of power both of which have to capacity to marginalise women and generate GBV. Indigenous norms, customs and traditions underlying non-state sources of power and a normative order that discriminates against women have evolved and interacted with asymmetric norms established throughout the periods of Portuguese colonialism and Indonesian occupation, not least by the deeply conservative Catholic Church and violent Indonesian military. Post-independence this normative order continues to be entrenched in patriarchal society that privileges 'militarised' or 'hyper' masculinity and that insists on female subjugation and women's return to 'traditional' domestic and maternal roles, causing them to suffer disproportionately by increasing their vulnerability to gendered poverty and GBV. Based on women's experiences as *mothers and wives*, the remainder of the thesis is concerned with bringing a holistic and nuanced understanding to the relational, inter-subjective and intersectional dynamics underlying this complex gender-poverty-violence nexus.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Theoretical Background and Conceptual Framework for the Study of Gender

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter sets out the theoretical background of gender mainstreaming and the concepts and analytical framework used to explore the role of gender underlying gendered poverty and GBV. The chapter comprises two sections. Section 3.1 focuses on gender mainstreaming, the most 'modern' and dominant approach and long-term strategy for producing substantive gender equality as a public policy outcome (Daly 2005; van Santen 2014). It provides definitions, ambitions and approaches and also highlights key reflections on its conceptualisation. It then reviews the critical gender mainstreaming literature, concluding with the debate that has major significance and drives the study, namely the 'meaning of gender' conundrum. Section 3.2 presents a heterodox approach to conceptualising gender that is underpinned by the Theory of Gender and Power, one of the most integrative theories of gender elaborated by Connell. It then elaborates on definitions and theoretical perspectives about gendered poverty including women's burden of unpaid domestic and care work and gender-based violence (GBV). I also present debates related to two empirically interrelated but analytically distinct domains of family life namely marriage and motherhood as it is through these constructs that I analyse women's experiences of gender, poverty and violence. Throughout the section I weave in definitions of concepts concerning other key issues relevant to participants' narratives and the conflict-affected environment in which they were rearing their children and conducting married lives.

#### **3.1 Theoretical Background: Conceptualising and Critiquing Gender Mainstreaming**

##### **3.1.1 Gender Mainstreaming Definitions, Ambitions and Approaches**

Gender mainstreaming appears as a 'tool' in international, regional and national governance institutions and policies who mostly adhere to the terminology and

definitions set out by organisations responsible for its formulation and that remain central to its implementation, namely the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU). The most commonly cited definition of gender mainstreaming stems from the UN Economic and Social Council:

‘ ..... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality’ (UN Economic and Social Council 1997).

The stated aim of gender mainstreaming is to end gender inequality by transforming unequal gender power relations. Transformation refers to altering the deeply entrenched societal norms and practices within which gender inequalities are embedded. It means transforming systems of gender relations including socially constructed 'gender arrangements' (Connell 2002, p.54) in any given setting, including the family. Such ambitions demand a redistribution of existing resources and responsibilities to create balanced gender relations (de Waal 2006). They are also based on an assumption that the patterns of gender inequality can be altered by transforming gender norms and values at all levels (de Waal 2006). Gender mainstreaming ambitions are mainly concerned with addressing structural gender biases so as to achieve gender equality. They seek to do this by transforming the mainstream through an on-going process of highlighting the gendered nature of policy assumptions, processes and outcomes and institutionalising and integrating gender concerns (Tiessen 2007). Its ambitions are high because they aim to overhaul the policy process itself whilst simultaneously effecting the outcome of that process, namely the transformation of society (Davids *et al* 2014).

There are at least five different levels or dimensions of the policy process where the strategy may take effect (Daly 2005). The first is at the level of rhetoric where the change represents a shift in the way the gender issue is generally conceptualised and

talked about such as the discursive move from women to gender and power relations. The second relates to changes at the institutional level. Here dedicated gender mainstreaming units are established and resourced with expert staff who provide technical support to regular policy-makers to incorporate a perspective of gender equality in their policies. The third dimension involves innovation in the techniques and tools used to make policy. This includes the introduction of gender-based policy analysis as well as monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which, together with institutional changes, support the fourth change which makes available new gender-disaggregated data and research to inform policy-making. The fifth and final level is in the way policy is made, namely by involving a broader range of official policy actors previously not associated with the gender equality policy process and by operationalising consultative mechanisms that ensure the meaningful participation of women's representatives in decision-making.

The literature also registers a number of gender mainstreaming approaches and activities distinguishing between 'institutional' and 'operational' (Jahan 1995), and 'expert-bureaucratic' and 'participatory-democratic' models. In the main, whilst the feminist aspiration and understanding of a gender mainstreaming strategy is one which is transformative, drawing upon the resources of expertise and deliberative democracy, it is the expert-bureaucratic integrationist approaches - implemented by normal policy actors - that are most frequently associated with gender mainstreaming. Less political and thus more palatable to institutions of global and national governance, these versions have been adopted and diffused with great enthusiasm across the globe (Agustín 2008; Beveridge *et al* 2000). As Woodford-Berger (2004) notes, they also explain how and why gender mainstreaming was adopted with such ease in the first place.

### **3.1.2 The Foundations an Underlying Framework of Gender Mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming constitutes a mixture of insights from three main approaches to reverse gender inequality, namely Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD). In brief, WID was succeeded

by GAD and in the course of its evolution included five distinguishable approaches described as welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment (Razavi and Miller 1995). At an epistemological level it included a paradigm shift away from the concept of 'women' to the concept of 'gender' (Baden and Goetz 1998). While the idea of mainstreaming was gaining currency over ghettoising women's projects, WID's conceptual transition from efficiency to the idea of empowerment was being spurred by a theoretical shift from women as a segregated homogeneous social category, to wider approaches that were informed by gender relations, with a particular emphasis on hierarchical power relations between women and men that tend disadvantage women (Beetham 2007). Therefore inequality experienced by women was to be addressed at a more fundamental level and women's relationships with men and the social structures within which they existed became the focus of attention rather than simply women themselves (Rathgeber 2005).

The underlying framework for transformative gender mainstreaming, GAD promotes an understanding of the complex relations between women and men. It is concerned with the long term consequence and potential for transformation offered by development. The framework draws on Molyneux's (1985) conceptual distinction between strategic and practical gender interests where the former arise from 'an analysis of women's subordination to men' whereas practical gender needs are those derived 'from the concrete conditions women experience' (Jaquette 2006, p.31). For example whilst not dismissing the pressing and immediate or 'practical gender needs' of women, such as health care, GAD is mostly concerned with 'strategic gender interests and needs' and the longer term outlook for reducing structural gender inequalities. Such interests involve power imbalances that lie at the root of gender subordination, such as gender roles and the division of labour (Beetham 2007). Further, and in addition to the technical tool of mainstreaming, GAD also promotes a participatory 'empowerment' approach, implying that women would identify whether and how to make their 'practical' needs 'strategic' (Jaquette 2006, p.31). It thus continues to rely on targeted approaches which reviews of gender mainstreaming find to be still widely and profoundly, if not universally, necessary. When implemented along-side specific policies

targeting women GAD thus represents one part of a dual and complimentary strategy or a 'twin-track' strategy for gender equality (Squires 2007; Walby 2005).

GAD takes into account all aspects and the everyday problems of women's lives (Rathgeber 1990). It is concerned with the way in which institutions affect men and women differently, and how society assigns roles, responsibilities and expectations to both women and men, focusing on the gender division of labour and the gender division of power embedded at many levels and through many institutions, including the household, the community, and the state (Beetham 2007; Rathgeber 1990). GAD therefore pays attention to women's contributions both inside and outside the household thus rejecting the public/private dichotomy that undervalues family and household maintenance work performed by women (Rathgeber 1990). It thus focuses on everyday problems including the oppression of women in the family and uses the concept of the 'private sphere' to analyse the assumptions underlying conjugal relationships. It also views the state as having a key role in promoting gender equality and providing many of the social services provided by women on a private and unpaid basis (Rathgeber 1990). Women themselves are also seen as agents of change and this approach stresses the need for women to organise themselves for a more effective political voice (Rathgeber 1990). Whilst GAD recognises the importance of solidarity, central also are distinctions and the way in which power relations constructed by class, race and ethnicity operate in such diverse socio-cultural processes and contexts (van Santen 2014).

To apply GAD a number of conceptual frameworks (Warren 2007) are employed as an analytical tool to identify, understand and redress inequities based on gender (Razavi and Miller 1995). These emerged as a direct response to the lack of fit between the sectoral mind-set of development policy and planning interventions and the inter-sectoral realities of women's lives (Reeves and Baden 2000). Central to transformative gender mainstreaming is the social-relations framework as it exposes the gendered dimensions of power relations embedded in social institutions and how these determine the relative position of women and men in society (Razavi and Miller 1995).

It thus gives central place to the analysis of relationships between women and between men and women. Its starting point is that development planning at the micro and macro levels needs to take into consideration 'the social relations of everyday life' (Pearson et al 1981), meaning the assemblage of relations that govern processes in their entirety, from production and reproduction, to distribution and consumption (Razavi and Miller 1995). This interpretation of GAD views gender as a social relationship and gender inequality as constructed by the exercise of rules and practices beyond the household in such institutions as the community, market, and the state (Razavi and Miller 1995). At household level, a social relations analysis views the gendered division of labour as a form of 'interdependence' and relationships as sites of co-operation, exchange and also conflict (Razavi and Miller 1995). Understanding the division of labour in this way is important for policy-making as it suggests that the potential for gender equality rests on the overall terms of exchange and co-operation between women and men and not necessarily on women's exercise of control over particular products or stages of production as this does not automatically lead to full autonomy (Razavi and Miller 1995). Young's work on household resource management illustrated that there is no direct relationship between women's ability to earn an independent income and their power in decision-making. This approach brings into focus the range of structural factors that determine a woman's power and challenges WID's idea that improving women's economic status will always lead to a positive change in their overall decision-making power or way in the disposition of joint income (Razavi and Miller 1995). A social relations framework points up to the centrality of the terms under which women and men co-operate and the span of institutions within which cooperation is structured such as marriage, the household and the state (Goetz 1989 cited in Razavi and Miller 1995).

Thus complex factors affect women's lives and decision-making processes such as the trade-offs between security and autonomy that are determined by the 'moral economy' and such relational resources within the family and household as rights, obligations and claims (Kabeer 1992 cited in Razavi and Miller 1995). According to the social-relations interpretation of GAD, power is interpreted as a continuous process of

wielding and yielding, such that power relations are constantly being produced and reproduced (Davids *et al* 2014). This places central importance on the power dimension of gender relations, as it seeks to expose the range of structural factors determining equitable power-sharing between women and men. For the same reason, the social-relations framework emphasises the dynamic nature and conflictual and collaborative aspects of social relations that involve agency and processes of bargaining and negotiation. What this means for the practice of GAD is prioritising women's 'empowerment' and increasing women's bargaining power through action-oriented political strategies (Razavi and Miller 1995; Zachariassen 2012).

A further important emphasis within the epistemological shift from 'women' to 'gender' and 'power' includes a focus on social location and how power relations operate in diverse socio-cultural processes and contexts (Davids *et al* 2014; van Santen 2014). Such emphasis has its origins in discourses that de-construct the concept of gender and the idea that there is a universal oppression of women based on their gender and that problematise the ideal of 'global sisterhood' that assumes that sharing a common goal of empowering women is possible and desirable (Desai 2005). The theoretical notion of a uniform category of women was abandoned as well as the notion of individual subjects as one dimensional and unambiguous. This interpretation of gender and of the GAD framework therefore views gender inequality as intertwined with other inequalities, based on class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, nationality and age, competing for a place on the political agenda (Davids *et al* 2014). Such critiques demanded from GAD closer examination of how identity and intersections of race, class, sex, religion etc., shape women's and men's relationships with institutions and each other, and how multiple identities impact on gender relations and on practical gender needs and strategic gender interests for any given context (Razavi and Miller 1995). By widening its concern with identity, difference, and institutions, GAD therefore expands the definition of what it means to focus on 'women' in development. This involves paying attention to the ways in which the combination of interlocking forms of oppression affects not only how women live their lives but also how they are affected by any given policy or development intervention (Beetham

2007).

### **3.1.3 Critical Reflections on Gender Mainstreaming**

Although many governments and agencies have opted for gender mainstreaming policies, the strategy has come under criticism for paying inadequate attention to the longer-term goals of challenging gender-based inequalities. According to a number of commentators it is a contested concept and practice (Daly 2005; Squires 2007; Walby 2005a; 2005b). Despite its conceptual power and whilst a focus on gender can be viewed as an important gain for gender equality and the women's movement, it has proved challenging to adopt a transformative and social relations interpretation of gender mainstreaming and so development projects designed from this perspective are difficult to find (Reeves 2000). Controversies surrounding its practice criticise the strategy for serving to depoliticise the kind of feminist thinking once at the root of gender policy (Cornwall 2007). Characterised as 'vague', 'hollow' (Subrahmanian 2004) and 'elastic' (Daly 2005), most of the critical case study literature depicts its results as a let-down (Chifamba 2014) to the extent that feminist debates are seriously questioning the value of gender mainstreaming altogether. It points to weak implementation and repeatedly criticises gender mainstreaming for its vulnerability to technocratisation and evaporation (Moser and Moser 2005; Obiora 2004) and for failing to transform deeply rooted societal norms and values that shape gendered structures of labour and power within which gender inequalities are embedded. Such disappointments are based on reviews showing gender mainstreaming to be top-down and theoretical where widespread adoption has rarely been matched by transformative outcomes and represents little more than tokenistic or inconsistent measures employing uni-dimensional views of gender and prioritising dominant neo-liberal forms of development over women's empowerment and gender equality (Sandler and Rao 2012). True (2008) and Moser and Moser (2005) call attention to the over-emphasis on technical processes and institutional inputs where the use of gender check-lists, information sessions and head-counts of women decision makers characterise the implementation and evaluation of gender mainstreaming rather than operational outputs including gender policies and programmes. Institutional outputs can hardly

provide a reliable indicator that existing power relations have been tackled or changed (Rathgeber 2005), suggesting that gender mainstreaming is little more than an 'add women and stir' 'business as usual' approach.

Rathgeber presents GAD interventions such as transformative gender mainstreaming as ones which would examine not only the sexual division of labour, but also the sexual division of responsibility, and recognise that the burden carried by women is one not only of physical labour but also of psychological stress, for example in being solely accountable for many aspects of family maintenance (Rathgeber 1990). This requires interrogating the social construction of gender and re-examining structures and institutions that buttress gender inequalities, results of which would ultimately demand a re-distribution of power. However this is precisely where GAD's weakness has been shown to lie – namely its demand for power shifts and a commitment to structural change, neither of which are likely to be found in national or international development agencies (Rathgeber 1990). Implementation of gender mainstreaming is thus frequently considered incomplete (Beetham 2007), as there is often slippage between GAD policy rhetoric and a WID reality where 'gender' is interpreted as 'women' (Reeves 2000). Indeed White's (1997) critique still stands that the move from WID to GAD did little for shaking off the preoccupation with women, where development efforts continue to focus on women and promote female-focused microcredit, education, health, and legal reform interventions (African Development Bank Group 2012). This leaves the concept of gender open to misinterpretation and/or co-optation and omits a full examination of gender relations as intended by such frameworks as the social-relations analysis. Failure to dig deep enough into social relations cannot uncover the types of trade-offs that women are prepared to make for the sake of achieving their ideals of marriage or motherhood. Key issues relating to this involve 'broader questions of the philosophical underpinnings' of analytical categories employed by gender mainstreaming (Bacchi *et al* 2010, p. 2000). According to Daly, the strategic framing of gender mainstreaming is an on-going dilemma (Daly 2005). There are multiple meanings of gender and gender equality in circulation and these are often vague, over-simplified, apolitical and unintelligible to local contexts and open elite to

capture (Grabska 2011; Subrahmanian 2004). Consequently and particularly in the global South, gender mainstreaming has developed with little substantive grounding in the reality of women's and men's lives (Lamprell *et al.* 2014). Concepts often lack meaning or substance in specific policy domains and in different institutional and geographical contexts, giving rise to weak substantive gender mainstreaming and approaches that overemphasise procedural dimensions and rely on technical tools (van Eerdewijk and Dubel 2012). Daly links the dominance of technical gender equality processes to an absence of an overall gender framework, itself a result of the complexities involved in taking gender as a frame of analysis as well as the linguistic difficulties inherent in translating 'gender mainstreaming' into multiple languages (Daly 2005). Caglar (2013) goes further. Noting the ease and clarity that exists in regard to the use of technical methods, tools and instruments employed for implementation, she cites Benschop and Verloo (2006) who link the obscurity surrounding gender equality goals and the content of gender mainstreaming to not only conceptual and linguistic complexities and lack of expertise but also simple unwillingness among policy actors to prioritise gender equality over other goals. Echoing Rathgeber, Caglar concludes that: '... the political operationalisation of gender equality rests on lay knowledge and normative – mostly conservative – assumptions about appropriate gender roles and gender relations' (Caglar 2013, p. 339). In practice this translates into mainstreaming policies that are more integrative than transformative. Women's concerns are simply added to existing policies without fundamentally changing the policy frameworks from a feminist point of view' (Caglar 2013, p. 339).

Gender analyses informing mainstream public policy intent and implementation are often confined to definitions of gender and views of gender equality based on unidimensional notions of difference and sameness (Walby 2005a; 2005b). This discussion relates to the 'sameness/difference' debate within feminist theory, also known as Wollencraft's dilemma as to whether and how to accept and value gender differences (Squires 2005). Squires describes the two dominant views of gender equality in circulation as equality of outcome to be achieved through a strategy of 'reversal' and gender equality of opportunity to be achieved through a strategy of

'inclusion' neither of which - unlike the more transformative concept of equality - seek to displace institutionalised practices and norms that (re)produce gendered subjects and gender biases (2005). Advocating for transformative gender mainstreaming along the lines of a 'diversity perspective' that pursues a strategy of displacement, Squires argues that: 'Neither the sameness nor the difference perspectives ... entail a transformation of the norms of equivalence themselves' (2005, p. 369). For example a concept of gender based on gender-as-difference emphasises differences between men and women, seeks recognition for a specifically female shared gendered identity and thus focuses on women's activities. This understanding tends to put forward universal standards, overlook the importance of situatedness. It also emphasises a position of 'vulnerable women', traditional roles and identities and asserts Western, heterosexist norms of appropriate gender relations (Sweetman 2012). Types of analyses based on gender-as-difference usually result in an agenda-setting model of mainstreaming that relies on consultation with non-governmental organisations and social movements to draw on the 'women's perspective' to inform special/separate programmes and positive action interventions and address disadvantages experienced by women as a consequences of their differences (Squires 2005). Its transformative potential however is threatened not least by difficulties such as the question of whose standards and how to identify difference while avoiding the trap of essentialism (Walby 2005b). In South Africa for example, a key challenge for the mainstreaming of gender into public policies has been to identify what gender issues are being raised where, by whom and towards what end' (Beall 1998). A related weakness is the danger of reification and that by emphasising a particular organisation as representative of women's views, it risks privileging certain gendered identities over others. Its potential to displace power structures is thus constrained by essentialism, fragmentation and identity politics at the expense of redistribution (Squires 2005).

The other related obstacle to transformative gender mainstreaming focusing on women is the sameness approach which identifies male-orientated standards of equality for women and men and relies on strategies of inclusion such as equal treatment/opportunities policies. Walby asks whether there can be an effective route

to gender equality when existing separate gender norms and standards are retained and equally valued? (2005b). This unidimensional definition of gender facilitates a quantitative and integrationist form of gender mainstreaming that focuses on adding women to development and governance by increasing their numbers in paid work or elected structures such that it is similar to that of men. Implemented by regular actors in the policy-making process who rely on bureaucratic policy instruments, integrationist gender-as-sameness mainstreaming often fails to acknowledge the gendered and multiple dimensions of poverty (Sweetman 2012) partly because for the strategy to be adopted, the concepts of gender and gender equality need to be kept vague enough to 'fit-in' and 'resonate' with the dominant policy frames and norms (Squires 2005). However and discussed further below, processes of negotiating mainstreaming including strategic framing involving 'shrinking', 'stretching', and 'bending' of gender leaves the concept open to being depoliticised, mis-used for a range of other goals and mis-interpreted and made irrelevant to social reality on the ground, all of which reinforce stereotypes that reproduce gender inequality. As Lombardo and Meier state gender mainstreaming ends up 'an open signifier that can be filled with both feminist and non-feminist meanings' (2006, p. 161 cited in Caglar 2013). Discussed in more detail in the section below, the World Bank for example stands out for its approach that regards gender mainstreaming as a means to development rather than gender equality (Caglar 2013; Moser and Moser 2005). Meanwhile at the regional level of the EU, Bock (2014) notes that the intention behind the EU's promotion of the gender mainstreaming of rural development policies was not to achieve gender equality but to retain women in rural areas, an objective it considers crucial to the long-term viability of rural areas. Consequently few initiatives address gender issues, resulting in little more than national rural development plans funding some separate 'women's' projects whilst failing to re-set the agenda, re-organise the policy-making process or transform rural gender hierarchies. Furthermore activities considering only women disciplined feminine rural subjectivities (Prugl 2009 cited in Bock 2014), where for example female rural entrepreneurship simply reconfirmed women's status as housewives as women's businesses and jobs were often in

feminised sectors and part-time so as to accommodate women's unpaid care work and preserve their gender roles. In this context gender mainstreaming is criticised for following an integrationist rather than a transformatory model that prioritises mainstream agendas and de-politicises, camouflages and trivialises the reality of rural women's lived experiences of a wide range of highly complex local gender issues such as those relating to female participation in the local labour market and local politics (Bock 2014).

The gap created between gender mainstreaming and actual social realities on the ground is found in case study literature highlighting the ineffectiveness of using sameness/difference gender concepts for overhauling structures of power that disempower women (Lamprell *et al* 2014). Case studies of integrationist gender mainstreaming in Uganda and Kenya link the evaporation of gender policies in wider health policies to difficulties in making the leap from women in development (WID) to gender in development (GAD) approaches, where a dissonance exists between strategic frames of gender and the local context on the one hand and between women's lived realities and meanings of gender applied to this specific policy domain on the other (Elsey *et al* 2005). Instead of implementing a response and applying a contextual analysis of gender to all aspects of health, the predominant focus was on women, specifically their sexual and reproductive health needs, in the absence of an understanding of power relations and their impacts on women and men's experiences of health (Elsey *et al* 2005).

'This raises a key issue – that while gender issues are framed in the language of outsiders, they are unlikely to have any impact on the hearts and minds of district-level stakeholders, from community members to civil society organisations and district authorities. Strategically framing gender issues in the everyday gendered experiences of local communities may better enable gender equity advocates to articulate, and potentially implement a 'home-grown- response to gender within health and beyond' (Elsey *et al* 2005, p.156).

Also constraining the leap from WID to GAD are the tensions arising between two agendas which gender mainstreaming has to contend with, namely 'gender equality'

and the 'mainstream', the result of which is the subordination of gender equality and co-optation of gender mainstreaming (Walby 2005b). Disappointments are often linked to a complex meta-paradox where practical barriers to gender mainstreaming and pre-conditions for success within the existing system prevail in a socio-economic, political and cultural context shaped by gendered power relations including the entrenched acceptance of gender-based violence (GBV) (Lamprell *et al* 2014). Not unique in the developing world, the situation in Papua New Guinea (PNG) is characterised by 'the failure of the gender mainstreaming approach to deal with deep-rooted structural inequality, yet the necessity of some levels of success with gender mainstreaming to establish the preconditions and platform for structural change' (Lamprell *et al* 2014, p.10). Kubai and Ahlberg (2013) associate the so-called 'Rwandan paradox' of continued high prevalence of GBV in a conflict-affected context of progressive gender policies and high political representation by women (56 percent) with universalised, top-down approaches that ignore indigenous knowledge of cultural notions of masculinity, gender roles and hierarchies of power that inform gender relations. In a separate study in Rwanda, Debusscher and Ansoms (2013) identify the absence of a gendered analysis of structures of labour and power relations including 'invisible' occupations in which women are over-represented as a principle factor hampering gender mainstreaming approaches. They caution that, because government policies fail to consider or question the unequal division of labour between women and men in subsistence agriculture and unpaid care work, they are likely to have an adverse effect on women's status particularly in the context of intra-household relations. This echoes Walby (2005a; 2005b), Daly (2005) and Verloo's (2001) references to the procedural assumptions undermining gender mainstreaming's potential for social and political transformation. That is, the assumption of mainstreaming gender in 'the mainstream' or the 'existing system', which is, paradoxically, a complex arrangement of fundamentally unequal gender relations.

There is a tendency for policies and strategies embracing economic goals to understand gender equality in an instrumental and integrationist manner, to ignore and thus implicitly condone women's over-representation in unpaid care work. This is found

across multiple state-led policies (Debusscher and Ansoms 2013) and international development organisations 'supporting' national governments' approaches to gender equality (Bedford 2013; Caglar 2013; True and Parisi 2013). For instance issues important to poor women such as the drudgery and inequalities surrounding their unpaid care burdens and their effects on time-use, vulnerability to GBV, access to employment and education remain absent in monitoring and evaluation programming, budgeting and public financing and in human rights debates, rendering such interventions irrelevant to social reality (Chopra *et al* 2013; Chopra and Sweetman 2014; Sepúlveda and Donald 2014).

Overall the scholarship argues that the issue of unpaid care work receives minimal attention in women's poverty and empowerment debates (Sepúlveda and Donald 2014) whilst remaining practically invisible in state-led policies in key sectors of health, education and social protection (Chopra *et al* 2013; Chopra and Sweetman 2014; Doyle *et al* 2014). There is widespread recognition that full equality for women cannot be achieved without more equal participation from men in unpaid domestic and care work and the need for greater participation of men in care work has been a feature of discussion within major development policy arenas, dating back to the 1994 Programme of Action for the International Conference on Population and Development, (Doyle *et al* 2014). Yet few large-scale efforts in the public sector have sought to engage men in taking a greater role in caregiving or in distributing care work more equitably between women and men (Doyle *et al* 2014). Meanwhile a 2013 review of social protection programmes implemented in 53 countries that found that only 23 out of 149 policies addressed unpaid care at all. Specifically, 10 percent of conditional cash transfers addressed unpaid care concerns, and 78 per cent of public works programmes ignored unpaid care work. This suggests that the vast majority of programmes remain disconnected from the reality of women's lived experiences. Rather than challenging gender stereotypes and encouraging men's caregiving, such programmes promote a traditional gender division of care labour that fuels gender inequality (Chopra *et al* 2013; Sepúlveda and Donald 2014). Examples of this are found in state-led social protection policies addressing poverty giving women (mothers)

certain benefits, namely cash payments, on condition they undertake certain activities such as taking children for vaccinations and health check-ups, and/or ensuring their attendance in school (Sepúlveda and Donald 2014). Whilst important to the family, their conceptual foundations and mode of delivery relies on and exploits women's gender role in the family as mothers and wives. This constrains transformation of gender roles associating women with the private domestic sphere (Chopra and Sweetman 2014; Molyneux 2006). Furthermore cash transfer programmes (CCTs) have been found to exacerbate inequitable care relations for the sake of other priorities by increasing women's unpaid work burdens seen for example in Ecuador where poor women recipients of CCTs engaged in 38 hours of paid care work per week, compared to an average of 33 hours for poor women who are not enrolled in the programme (ECLAC 2012 cited by Sepúlveda and Donald 2014).

Development organisations relying on a traditional notion of gender also fail to capture the issues important to poor women and address the difficulties they face in their everyday family and married lives (Chopra and Sweetman 2014). Examples are found within the UNDP that emphasise women's role as unpaid care workers maintaining families 'without advocating an exchange value for all non-monetised activities instead of arguing for a radical shift in the way families organise their work' (UNDP 1995 cited in Caglar 2013, p.260). As UNDP considers the care economy to be an emotional and social anchor stabilising society and enhancing human development, women's unpaid work has to be valued (Caglar 2013). The underpinning assumption that women – as women - are more gifted nurturers and home-makers than men, means UNDP maintains the gender division of labour by providing forms of social assistance and compensatory measures to support women meet their reproductive obligations and responsibilities. In this way, gender mainstreaming or 'engendering' policies hitch social policies onto economic policies (Caglar 2013) enabling power structures and gender inequality to remain intact. Meanwhile the World Bank is also grounded in a normative knowledge base that emphasises women's reproductive roles as nurturers of the future workforce. Like the UNDP, it considers the family to be a crucial informal institution necessary for good development and boosting the economy (Bedford 2013).

It is important to note that the Bank's model of GAD is evolving and it has changed a previous approach to gender that involved exhausting women and viewing their time as 'infinitely elastic' (Elson 1996 cited in Bedford 2013: p.237). However overall a narrow definition of gender and form of normative knowledge continues to dominate the World Bank as it accommodates and fits neatly into its wider agenda promoting economic growth. This is why the Bank's gender mainstreaming efforts serve as an instrument of economic governance and focus on a combination of social and economic measures including education, health and income-generation (Caglar 2013).

Other anti-poverty interventions that are based on a hegemonic concept of gender that ignores and devalues women's unpaid labour and care work are micro-finance programmes targeting women. When the focus of development agendas driven by 'smart economics' is on women instead of gender relations, and on economic growth, GDP and investment instead of social transformation they often remain disconnected from women's realities and blind to the implications for women's rights and the well-being of the household in the context of the current unjust care covenant (Chopra and Sweetman 2014). Largely driven by narrow goals of production and increasing household income, they are notable for their failure to transform the association of women with traditional roles and identities and the power structures inhibiting women's access to paid work in the first place as the concepts of gender and gender equality are often hijacked by underlying neo-liberal paradigms of efficiency and poverty reduction (van Eerdewijk and Dubel 2012). Questions are asked about whether 'smart economics', even with elements of empowerment hitched on to its side, actually strives for transforming laws, policies, practices and other structural barriers to women's empowerment. Or is this development 'on the cheap', that glorifies women as the salvation of the world whilst making them disproportionately responsible for economic improvement and poverty reduction? (Chant and Sweetman 2014). Hawkesworth makes the point that time-use studies do not signal decreases in women's unpaid labour or transformations in gender power relations in the private sphere when women enter the labour force (Parisi 2013). Likewise, according to Kabeer, the 'division of labour in domestic chores and child care is rarely renegotiated

between the sexes. Despite their increased labour input into paid work, women (particularly married women) continue to bear the main burden of domestic work [...]. By and large, gender inequalities in work burdens appears to be intensified' (Kabeer 2005, p.20).

Although mixed, there is some evidence that links increased labour force participation with increased intimate partner gender-based violence against women (Parisi 2013). Examining gender mainstreaming and poverty reduction programmes and policies in South Asia, Kelkar reports that the:

'organisation of women into savings and credit groups or self-help groups has led to incidents of violence by men of their households. The violence was reported because of failure of women to perform their set household duties, like serving food to men on time. But in one way or other such violence reflects a reluctance of men to come to terms with the changes in women's social visibility and in gender relations that tend to come about with changes in women's income status. At the same time there are also reports that such violence tends to go down as the functioning of these women's groups gets established and as the importance of their economic contributions to the households are realised and accepted by men (2005, p. 4698).

Additionally, women's increased participation in the labour force does not necessarily translate into gender equality in the public sphere as women's paid labour tends to be low paid and high risk. As argued by Kabeer:

'Women's access to paid work may give them a greater sense of self-reliance and greater purchasing power, but if it is undertaken in conditions that erode their health and exploit their labour, its costs may outweigh its benefits' (Kabeer 2005, p.24).

It could be argued that this type or pattern of paid work which is associated with the traditional gender division of labour and women's role as the supplemental wage earner to the male household head is hardly an indicator of women's empowerment or gender equality.

These reflections are important because varieties of gender mainstreaming, such as 'smart economics' - which target women - omit men from the picture, a key concern

within a gender perspective (Chant and Sweetman 2012). It ignores trends towards a 'feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation' (Chant 2008; Chant and Sweetman 2012), where women 'as mothers' are already making vast contributions to production and unpaid reproduction and the multiple disadvantages for women generated by the 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation' such as women's increased vulnerability to GBV. Not least also is maternal physical and emotional exhaustion, the financial anxiety and stress when loans cannot be paid back, the constraints on older daughters' education and the childcare burdens on elderly women (Chopra and Sweetman 2014). This type of mainstreaming also neglects to consider how mothers who are earners are to sustain unpaid care work and how interventions promoting women into paid work impact on the needs of those who rely on women to provide them with care. This not alone places unrealistic expectations on women to improve development and reduce poverty (Chopra and Sweetman 2014) but also reinforces a stereotypical division of male 'irresponsibility' versus female 'altruism' and 'self-sacrifice' (Chant and Sweetman 2012).

Feminist scholarship is concerned to highlight the consistent invisibility of care in public policy which it links to a number of factors. These include over-usage of narrow depoliticised definitions of gender as well as competing frames of gender politics and mainstream agendas. Significant also is the association between unpaid care with the private sphere of the household and thus outside the remit of public policy. It also references the failure to view and value unpaid care care as work, contributing not only to family wellbeing but also to human development (Chopra and Sweetman 2014; Esquivel 2014; Sepúlveda and Donald 2014). These points are dealt with in greater detail in subsequent sections of the chapter. There are calls from within the feminist scholarship for transformative policies that strengthen care provision and ensure a synergy between development, rights for carers and for those receiving care (Chopra and Sweetman 2014; Eyben and Fontana 2011 cited in Chopra and Sweetman 2014; Sepúlveda and Doyle 2014; Razavi 2007). This type of gender mainstreaming requires integrating a feminist analysis of the economy and making care visible in the intent, implementation and evaluation of mainstream public policies and positive action

programmes.

Divergent feminist and mainstream interpretations of gender also complicate definitions of 'success' (True and Parisi 2013). Evaluations drawing on definitions of gender synonymous with women and that base progress on the numbers of women affected by an intervention, do not adequately shed light on patterns of gender inequality or take into account the different lived realities of women and men which produce different sets of needs and interests (Charlesworth 2005). Where employment policies supporting the reconciliation of work and family life might be interpreted as promoting transformation in gender relations, another interpretation of the policy could be that it does little more than just add women into the paid economy and simply encourage flexible forms of employment rather than changing mainstream power structures governing gendered family responsibilities and obligations (Walby 2005a). Assessments reflecting only the material differences between men and women rather than the ideological basis of gender relations de-link the feminist goal of transforming gender relations from the analysis of gender equality (True and Parisi 2013). Thus economically-oriented measurements of gender equality that focus only on women's labour force participation are considered problematic. Jackson argues that where disaggregated data collected for the purposes of measuring gender equality is not 'harnessed to understanding gender relations, [it] is analytically impoverished' (Parisi 2013). An important start towards understanding whether an initiative has been effectively mainstreamed is - as suggested by Elson - to be guided by a reflexive feminist approach that views gender concerns and issues through a normative ideal based on equality and that asks, for example: 'What impact does this fiscal measure have on gender equality? Does it reduce it, increase it, or leave it unchanged?' Subrahmanian (2004) also suggests that evaluation needs to be clear about the concept of gender and the nature of transformation being pursued that is both broad and specific in approach. Broad in the sense that it locates gender mainstreaming within the wider context of development discourses, questioning what development represents, whilst also insisting on more specific definitions of gender concepts and strategies.

Another line of feminist critique of gender mainstreaming is its intersecting relationship with other complex inequalities such as those associated with ethnicity and class, disability, faith, sexual orientation, and age. Scholars such as Woodford-Berger (2004) and Hankivsky (2011) argue that gender mainstreaming is weakened by the ways in which it has been conceived or conceptualised as a Western paradigm. This reproduces normative gender binaries, constructing hierarchies where gender is prioritised over other dimensions of inequality. Referring to empirical data gathered in Ghana, Woodford-Berger describes western conceptualisations of gender and the 'household' as incapable of capturing gendered life for women and obscuring complexities that are mediated by other bases for inequality such as historical background, ethnicity and class (2004). Grabska (2011) and Kubai and Ahlberg (2013) provide separate examples of the adverse effects of gender mainstreaming on conflict-affected gender relations, where its approach ignored indigenous knowledge and insights into such issues as historical context, ethnicity and class and the focus of gendered policy was solely on empowering and raising women's status. The concept of gender mainstreamed in both cases was not only synonymous with women but relied on essentialised images of women so that gender policies missed the more complex gender arrangements and hierarchical power relations between women and men and between different social groups that defined gender inequality. Consequently gender-programming activities in a Kenyan refugee camp were in some cases rejected by men, many of whom had been militarised during wartime and felt emasculated and disempowered in the household by limited livelihood strategies and by women's empowerment after the war (Grabska 2011). Worse still, were the unintended results of gender policies such as the increased incidents of intimate partner GBVAW, rapes and forced marriages (Grabska 2011). Likewise in Rwanda where the prevalence of GBV is said to be higher than it was before the genocide, state-led gender mainstreaming activities aiming to economically empower women ignored double-edged cultural beliefs and local meanings of gender (Kubai and Ahlberg 2013). Drawing on post-colonial theory, Briggs and Sharp claim that 'there has been little critical examination of the ways in which indigenous knowledge has been included in the development

process' as well as a failure 'to engage with other ways of seeing development' (Briggs and Sharp 2004, cited in Kubai and Ahlberg 2013). For instance, because it was never imagined that gender equality policies might face implementation challenges different to other policy initiatives, they were subject to the same criteria and procedures applied across Rwanda's national development policy. In reality, despite women's economic empowerment projects and the promulgation of the law against GBV, many women were not able to benefit from the law by reporting violence to the relevant authorities. This example illustrates what happens when assumptions underlying mainstream implementation do not embrace contextually gendered ways of seeing or doing development by failing to:

'[...] consider the prevailing hierarchies and power structures that inform gender relations; the role and place of a woman in the family, notions of masculinity, economic dependence, the role of the extended family, and not to mention that post-genocide situation has entrenched the vulnerability of certain groups in society' (Kubai and Ahlberg 2013, p.9).

Instead of mainstreaming gender similar to models such as the gender-as-intersectionality or transformative models respectively, gender mainstreaming is criticised for focusing exclusively on the inequalities between men and women (Connell 2012) within the given structures and systems, ignoring the differences between women and addressing the needs of dominant rather than marginalised groups, thus failing to address the multiple and complex inequalities faced by different women (Bedford 2013). Gender analytical frameworks that have not kept pace with recent scholarship that moves beyond a singular or reductive focus on gender, obscures the way gender norms intersect with other social differentiations thus masking the realities of different women who are simultaneously vulnerable to multiple power vectors such as age, disability, ethnicity, geography, and economic situations (Crenshaw 2000 cited in Hankivsky 2013). According to Woodford-Berger:

'Analytically, the point that Connell makes – that we are dealing with not a single, but multiple, different, gender regimes and orders - appears to have been overlooked or perhaps even ignored by those who continued to promote the fixed, essentialised models of gender on which much gender

mainstreaming has tended to be based' (Woodford-Berger 2004, p.70).

So, whilst it has been critical in impressing upon political actors that gender - as an axis of power - matters in the policy sphere, gender mainstreaming is found to be too rigid and weak in substance to be able to view policy inequalities as produced by something other than gender (Hankivsky 2013). Even proponents of gender mainstreaming demand more in-depth analysis that goes beyond gender and looks at the myriad of power and related structures that shape people's lives, values and norms. Others point out that, given its failure to bring about fundamental transformation, gender mainstreaming has 'outlived its shelf life' and should be put to rest. The focus of new strategies and alternative approaches should be diversity-inclusive and intersectionality-informed (Hankivsky 2005). This is what Sandler and Rao also refer to when they call for 'greater conceptual clarity on what constitutes gender equality that is intersectional, contextual, and location-specific' and that can take us to another stage of transformation (Sandler and Rao 2012).

Finally a further obstacle to gender mainstreaming concerns interpretations of governance and the tension between 'expertise' and 'democracy'. One interpretation of gender mainstreaming is, that it is only through the participatory democratic process - involving a range of voices from outside privileged policy arenas - that gender mainstreaming can ever accomplish its transformative potential (Beveridge *et al* 2000). This is what Jahan means when she posits an agenda-setting gender mainstreaming where women civil society actors are consulted and brought into structures of decision-making (Jahan 1995). The point raised in the feminist scholarship is that women's lived realities and contextualised and indigenous meanings of gender and gender equality often remain overly vague in the absence of women's movement participation and the dominance of privileged actors normally involved in policy-making (True and Parisi 2013). When gender mainstreaming is seized by officials who control its interpretation and its goals, this closes off avenues for civil society influence (True and Parisi 2013). Normalising a gender perspective in such ways confines it to administrative and bureaucratic processes rather than potentially changing power

relations and structural inequalities through participatory debate. This version of gender mainstreaming leaves feminists open to bureaucratisation and gender mainstreaming vulnerable to de-politicisation and co-optation (True and Parisi 2013).

The absence of experiences of poverty - including burdens of unpaid care work or their 'invisible' role in subsistence agriculture - to the everyday lives of predominantly urban and elite decision makers could go some way in explaining the absence of such issues from public policy. As Debusscher and Ansoms argue in the case of Rwanda, 'The ambitions and perspective of the elite – men and women – ... far removed from the on-the-ground realities of the majority of the Rwandan population [...] and the majority of Rwandan women engaged in subsistence agriculture and care work in particular' (Debusscher and Ansoms 2013, p.1123). So, whilst women working in development bureaucracies are likely to see gender mainstreaming as useful and empowering to women, there are also powerful critiques within the grassroots that view it as a depoliticised concept imposed by donors, detached from reality and undermining of indigenous women activists' own efforts to bring about gender equality. To address this tension within gender mainstreaming, Mukhopadhyay stresses the significance of establishing substantive citizenship and carving out spaces for articulation and participation as important components of development (Mukhopadhyay 2004). This requires creating constituencies and 'communities of struggle' as, even where mechanisms exist favouring women's participation in such processes as decentralised planning and budgetary allocations, elected women representatives often cannot build on this in the absence of ways of identifying and articulating the interests and lived experiences of specific categories of women. This is what Mukhopadhyay (2004) implies in her call for substantive gender equality and citizenship. Within this debate it might also be asked how appropriate it is to polarise the expert bureaucratic versus the participatory democratic models. Is it possible to view different models of gender mainstreaming as co-existing and complexly entwined in practice. A case in point are the experiences of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), a tool which, whilst applying technical expertise to an already agreed agenda and set of policy goals, can also include explicit political statements about gender equality and the importance of

improving women's lives. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) can also at the same time promote a reflexive process by involving elected representatives, civil servants, experts from outside government including women's organisations and specialised gender advocates (Walby 2005).

This section has set out the theoretical framework for conceptualising, critiquing and extending gender mainstreaming, focusing on the concept of gender in light of the endless controversies about whether it is a 'failed strategy that has sucked the vibrancy out of work on women's rights', or a 'pre-eminent transformative strategy that has delivered the undeniable gains in women's status and rights [...]' (Sandler and Rao 2012, p.549). There is also a sobering position, and one which is taken by this research, attempting to push beyond such controversies so as to more adequately explicate the theoretical puzzles and paradoxes undermining approaches to gender equality (Zachariassen 2012). Heeding Subrahmanian, Sandler, Rao, and others, to break down gender mainstreaming's meta-paradox and to avoid getting caught up in debates about whether gender mainstreaming is a success or failure, elite or participatory, this research is informed by the main theoretical incongruities associated with gender mainstreaming (Subrahmanian 2004). Within these are criticisms that lay claim that the transformative potential of gender mainstreaming is impeded by a lack of conceptual clarity about gender and subsequent weaknesses in the implementation of public policy and targeted interventions such that:

- 1) interventions are informed by narrow definitions of gender and gender equality;
- 2) gender mainstreaming is frequently co-opted for a goal other than gender equality;
- 3) gender mainstreaming policies have been developed in the absence of women's movements;
- 4) resistance to gender mainstreaming prevails; and
- 5) evaluating gender mainstreaming for its impacts on gender equality remains challenging.

In sum the primary focus of the current study is the 'meaning of gender' conundrum.

Drawing on local women's voices, the present study responds to these theoretical and empirical demands by exploring the problematic of gender and gender inequality that is based on the perspectives of the women who experience it. In particular it seeks to establish the meaning and role of 'gender' in everyday lives of women living in a context affected by conflict and under-development. Presented in the following section, the conceptual framework used to follow this type of inquiry and analyse the findings gathered during the field work focuses on a *gender-relational-intersectional* approach by adapting Heise's ecological model (1998) and Connell's social theory of gender (1987) to the area of gendered violence and poverty, two themes dominating women's voices.

### **3.2 A Conceptual Approach for Understanding Gender in Women's Everyday Lives**

#### **3.2.1 A Structuralist *Gender* Perspective**

Understanding women's lives requires paying attention to what women raise as the most important issues for them which in this study is the quality of everyday family life, specifically their experiences of marriage, motherhood and standards of living. Dominating an overwhelming majority of narratives was the unequal distribution of the burden and benefits of unpaid care work and family responsibility and the difficulties women experience - as mothers, wives and daughters-in law - raising their families amidst material poverty and acts of interpersonal gender-based violence (GBV). As women's identities are complex and multifaceted so too are their vulnerabilities, experiences and responses to gendered poverty and GBV (Aghtaie and Gangoli 2015). Thus understanding women's lives requires paying attention to the diversities of women's experiences and how the social and/or economic hierarchies among women and between women and men foster gender inequalities and differentiate vulnerability (Manjoo and McRaith 2011). This is often addressed via the analytic concept of intersectionality, an idea that emphasises the interactions between gender and other social structures including race, sexuality, class, nationality and age

(Risman and Davis 2013). Following Crenshaw, I see intersectionality as not so much the existence of social categories but 'rather the particular values attached to them, and the way those values foster and create social hierarchies' (Crenshaw 1991, p. 1297). I also draw on Nash (2016) who not only calls for greater attention to be paid to how intersections beyond gender and race mediate experiences and how intersections between identities keep shifting, but also to how those in power are able to use their intersectional identities to their advantage. Furthermore and following Price (2015) whilst my research recognises the importance of intersectionality and that other markers of identity beyond gender may mediate women's experiences of poverty and violence, gender remains paramount and constant for my analysis, given the close links between gendered poverty, GBV, patriarchal control and the wider patriarchal gender order that prevails everyday life in Timor-Leste. Overall the study is committed to a social-relational approach which analyses how the male/female distinction and the gendered construction of marriage and motherhood reproduces inequalities between women and men and between women at every institutional level. Thus the principal approach followed is a structuralist *gender* perspective.

### **3.2.2 The Organisational Framework**

This study embraces a social constructivist stance and views gendered poverty and violence as products of asymmetrical social relations. The analytical framework is therefore firmly grounded in a gender perspective that draws on Connell's (1987) integrated structural theory of gender and power to which are applied a number of substantive and context theories, relevant to the data and the environment in which participants were living, rearing children and conducting married lives. Connell's meta-theoretical framework is useful as it helps to identify the underlying cultural aspects of specific gender relations and how they work together in order to construct gender inequality.

For analytical purposes, relations of labour (production and distribution), power relations and cathexis (emotional attachment) are typically presented as distinct social structures. However in reality there is a complex interdependency between and among

these structures (Connell 1987; 2002; 2009). This interdependency forms the basis of Connell's concepts of the gender *regime* of particular social institutions which constitute the over all gender *order* of a society. The gender regime characterises the state of play in gender relations demonstrated through shared practices and understandings within a given institution such as the school, state and family. It refers to gender-based institutionalised power relations which allocate men and women to different social tasks (Connell 1987). Meanwhile the gender order is a structure of human relationships. It refers to the gender patterns recreated through time in a society and collective activity at the structural level, or what Connell describes as 'the current state of play in the macro-politics of gender' (Connell 1987, p. 20). In this study I situate the family as a distinct gender regime, operating in relation to a prevailing gender order upon which it both draws and helps constitute and which Connell characterises as hegemonic masculinity in the sense of a normative ideal to which women and men position themselves (Connell 1987; 2002; Mulvihill 2015). In turn, the family is also viewed in the study as one of several interlinked social institutions where gender power relations are constructed, reproduced and transformed and where politics operate as struggles of intersectional power relations (Ferree 2010; Walby 2009).

Construing the interactions of all three elements of gender relations provides valuable opportunities for understanding the influence of interactions of structural and normative factors on women's experiences of marriage, motherhood and family life, and in particular for understanding the feminisation of social reproduction, responsibility and family politics of care, what Lynch, Baker and Lyons refer to as *affective inequality* (Lynch *et al* 2009a). These are aspects of everyday life which dominated the vast majority of the women's narratives. I propose that the social structure of emotional attachment, intertwined with gendered power and guided by the division of labour, plays a central role in the feminisation of obligation and responsibility. This interaction creates the injustices associated with the women's caring roles and responsibilities and in shaping and legitimising their experiences of poverty and inequality and GBV. I contend that the potency of this structure lies in its

embedded *hidden* power relations (Lukes 1974), the dynamics and operationalisation of which can be detected deep within the participants' emotional economies of obligation and responsibility (Shih and Pyke 2009) and their enactments of gendered norms and identities.

To incorporate a theoretical understanding of participants' subjective experiences of gendered violence and poverty, the organising and analytical framework also integrates elements of Heise's (1998) ecological framework. This tool is widely used to understand the aetiology of GBVAW and why some societies and some individuals are more violent than others and why women, especially wives, are so consistently the victims of abuse (Heise 1998; Heise *et al* 2002). It draws on an earlier ecological analysis developed by Belsky (1980 cited in Solotaroff and Pande 2014) found in the public health literature. Core to population health promotion, the multidimensional framework calls attention to the known determinants of health, especially the operation of gender and other social institutions, and the social and physical environments (Heise 1998; Krieger 2001; Montesanti and Thurston 2015; Richard *et al* 2001; Thurston and Vissandjee 2002). As it identifies different levels of social interaction, the framework allows for the development and precise targeting of multi-level interventions seeking to change behaviour (Solotaroff and Pande 2014). Adapted by Heise (1998) to bring a nuanced understanding to an analysis of GBVAW, the ecological framework demonstrates that there is a complex array of interconnected systems and factors exogenous to individual women that interact with the personal/individual systems and factors to increase their vulnerability to violence (Fulu and Miedema 2015; Heise, 1998, 2011; Heise *et al* 2002). These include the relationship, the community and social factors which operate across three levels of the social environment, namely the micro, the meso (group), and macro (structural & symbolic institutions) (Fulu and Miedema 2015; Heise, 1998, 2011; Heise *et al* 2002). As women and girls are vulnerable to GBV throughout their lives, the framework also incorporates the idea of time and life course analysis (Montesanti and Thurston 2015; Solotaroff and Pande 2014).

As illustrated in Figure 1, Heise *et al* 2002 visualise the framework as four concentric circles that include both intrinsic and extrinsic factors shaping women's vulnerability to GBV (Heise *et al* 2002). The innermost circle includes the intrinsic factors, the biological and personal history that each individual brings to their behaviour in relationships. The second circle, the micro-system, represents the immediate environment in which violence occurs, specifically the household, family and marital context and interpersonal relationships. The third circle, the meso-system, pertains to community, institutions and systems, formal and informal, for example economic, legal and political, in which relationships are embedded (Solotaroff and Pande 2014). This level represents the interplay between various aspects of a person's organised social environment, in other words, the linkages between an individual's family and other ambits of involvement including extended family, neighbourhoods, the workplace, social networks, peer groups and services in the community. All of these influence a person's immediate context and determine the dynamics in those settings (Montesanti and Thurston 2015; Solotaroff and Pande 2014). The fourth, the outermost circle represents the macro-system, the wider social environment. This encompasses formal and informal social structures, including the world of gender, sociocultural expectations, values, norms and beliefs that shape all other layers and their interaction within the social ecology (Heise, *et al* 2002; Solotaroff and Pande 2014).

Discussed in more detail in section 3.2.4.2, several factors interact at each of these levels (systems) to increase the likelihood that a man will abuse his partner. These include at the individual level, personal characteristics such as being abused as a child, witnessing marital violence, having an absent father, and frequent use of alcohol. Next, at the level of family and interpersonal relationships, factors such as marital conflict and male control of wealth and decision-making within the family are cited as strong predictors of GBVAW. At the community, institutions and systems level, women's isolation and lack of support, together with the presence of male peer groups that legitimise men's violence, predict higher rates of violence. At the societal level, GBVAW

is most common where gender norms and roles are rigidly defined and enforced, where son preference prevails and where the concept of masculinity is linked to toughness, male honour, or dominance. Tolerance of physical punishment of women, acceptance of violence as a means to settle disputes, and the perception that men have 'ownership' of women encompass other cultural norms associated with GBVAW (Heise *et al* 2002).

Where female authority and power outside the family and prompt intervention by family members and friends tend to protect women from GBV, rates of GBV are said to increase in contexts where the family is considered 'private' and outside public scrutiny (Heise *et al* 2002). Justifications for violence frequently evolve from gender norms about the proper roles and responsibilities of men and women to ideas that support men's right to control their wives' behaviour and the punishment of women who challenge that right-even by asking for household money or by expressing the needs of the children (Heise *et al* 2002).

Meanwhile certain events are said to 'trigger' GBVAW. Representing transgressions of dominant gender norms, these include wives disobeying husbands, talking back, not having food ready on time, failing to care adequately for the children or the home, questioning husbands about money or girlfriends, going somewhere without husbands' permission, refusing husbands sex, or expressing suspicions of infidelity (Heise *et al* 2002).

An important consideration when applying Heise's framework is that, typically not all factors fall neatly within a specific level of social ecology (Solotaroff and Pande 2014). Depending on the empirical context, they can operate and interact at multiple levels. Another consideration is that so far the framework does not address forms of GBV other than intimate partner or why a subset of women are perpetrators of GBVAW (Sitaker 2007). Since it is open to modification, I adapted Heise's level-dominated ecological framework to findings relating both to the wider Timorese context and to the findings on poverty and violence in several ways. First, I placed gender at the

centre and at every level of the social ecology. Since one of the basic assumptions of the model is that all levels are constantly interacting, it is understood that this affects gender. Therefore, I extended the potential of the ecological framework by integrating Connell's theory of gender and power at every level of analysis.

Furthermore as well as integrating structural perspectives on gender, the framework combines a number of context and substantive theories to ground the multi-level analysis according to the empirical data. For example, where I blend theories about kinship, motherhood and gender to explore poverty, I also integrate theories of marriage and intra-household relations to understand GBV. The framework also enables the analysis to locate risk factors operating at micro, meso and macro levels within the Timor-Leste context such that family poverty often appears in both the micro and meso levels. Meanwhile women's extended family is placed at the micro-level as the patrilineal and patrilocal extended family continues to exist as an important family form in Timor-Leste and also emerged as a significant factor influencing women's immediate context and experiences of gendered poverty and GBV. Dominating the meso-level are intersecting components relating to the socio-economic and historical context, such as the conflict and its legacy – namely militarised masculinities, underdevelopment and informalisation of the Timorese economy. Also included at this level is men's frequent and heavy use of alcohol, more frequently placed at the individual level of analysis. A limitation of the research, I further modified Heise's ecological framework by omitting the life-cycle approach that is relevant and fruitfully applied in studies using Heise's ecological framework (Solotaroff and Pande 2014). Thus analysis at each level of the social ecology does not systematically consider each stage of women's lives. This was due to considerations of scope and feasibility, even though analysis of the research findings, based on a theoretical understanding of gender as encompassing the relations among women, in particular older and younger women, points to this relevance. Finally I applied Heise's framework to a range of perpetrators and multiple types of GBV as the research findings highlight that it is important to explain why a subset of women are perpetrators of GBVAW.

Even though they are deeply intertwined, I make an analytical distinction between women's kinship roles of 'mother' and 'wife' and also distinguish between their subjective experiences of gendered violence and gendered poverty. Therefore the analysis is organised into distinct chapters, dealing with gendered poverty mainly through the conceptual paradigm of motherhood in chapter 6 and GBV through the conceptual paradigm of marriage in the subsequent chapter 7. The remainder of this chapter discusses the components of the framework in more detail beginning with Connell's three-part integrative theory of gender and power, followed by some key definitions important to the study of gender relations. This provides the backdrop to the theoretical elements I use to build a comprehensive analytical narrative of gender-based poverty and violence experienced by women as wives and mothers.

### **3.2.3 The Social Construction of Gender**

Structure - as in, institutions, ideology and the gendered distribution of economic power - remains critical for feminist praxis and scholarship (Agtaie and Gangoli 2015). This study sees structure and culture as inextricably interconnected, as culture is embedded within structure (Agtaie and Gangoli 2015). According to a structuralist gender perspective, women's life experiences are the products of social interactions and unequal gender relations (Scott 1986). In a stratified society like Timor-Leste, to understand women's lives including their risk, experiences and responses to gendered poverty and violence, it is necessary to examine the concept of gender and the structure of gender relations including the culture and norms governing the division of labour, the system of social power, and patterns of emotional relations which together govern women's lives (Bui 2001). It is also important to consider the *intersectionality* between gender and how other factors such as natal kin, marital status, intergenerational relations and rural versus urban settings might play a role in a society affected by poverty and violent conflict.

The scholarship on the conceptualisation of gender is vast. Since its introduction into the lexicon of feminist thought it has 'become the central analytic concept' utilised by feminist scholars working across a range of disciplinary practices (Budgeon 2014).

Mainly following Connell (1987; 2002; 2009), I draw on a theory of gender which takes on a social constructionist approach. I view gender relations between women and men as having little to do with biology or something acquired only through socialisation. Instead gender is conceptualised as an active accomplishment that is done differently within specific social and cultural contexts (Connell 2009; West and Zimmerman 1987). Theorising the 'gender problematic' gender mainstreaming scholars Eveline and Bacchi suggest viewing gender 'as a verb rather than a noun' (Eveline and Bacchi 2010). As a verb', they contend, 'gender could be seen as an escapably unfinished *gender-ing* process (Eveline and Bacchi 2010). As West and Zimmerman argue, 'Gender is not a set of traits, nor a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sort' (West and Zimmerman 1987, p.129). Doing gender is a powerful intellectual tool to conceptualise gender as an embodied, situated and interactive accomplishment (West and Zimmerman 1987). Women and men's agency is mediated by social institutions which prescribe situationally appropriate accomplishments of gender. For example normative conceptions of masculinity and femininity can curtail or structure individual action. Gender is thus a socially produced relation of complementary difference such as the gendered identities of femininity and masculinity, key elements discussed in greater detail later in the chapter. This social construction of difference is not neutral for as long as women and men perceive themselves as different kinds of people, women will not expect to occupy a similar position within social structures (Budgeon 2014). 'Therein lies the power of gender' (Risman 2004, p.432).

The social constructivist perspective integrates the dual concerns of social structure and individual agency and serves as the conceptual framework of this research (Connell 1987; 2009; West and Zimmerman 1987). Connell builds a social theory of gender relations that emphasises the interconnections between social structure and personal identity – or structure and agency. Social structures constrain and enable gendered social actions which in turn reify or transform those structures. Thus agency is curtailed when individuals align their social actions with socially sanctioned notions of masculinity and femininities. Underlying Connell's gender relations approach is her integrative Theory of Gender and Power (TGP) which identifies three basic gender

structures - the gender division of labour, the gender division of power and the structure of cathexis which includes emotional and symbolic relations (Connell 1987). The gender division of labour deals with relations of production and distribution in the sphere of paid and unpaid work, control of money and economic stability. The system of power refers to dynamics of authority and control in social institutions such as in the family seen in interpersonal relationships, or in various organisations that have authority to design policies, shape ideas and define morality (Bui 2001), all of which frequently reflect the broader forces of power between the genders in society. The third structure, that of cathexis, involves cultural patterns of emotional attachment and investment and symbolic relations and social norms. All of these structures co-exist at both the societal and institutional as well as familial and individual levels and are maintained, constrained and modified by social mechanisms or daily practices. The three gender structures are also interdependent and intertwined to the extent that the structure of labour interacts with the structure of power relations both of which are bound by the social world of emotional and symbolic relations which in turn reinforce the unequal power relations and patriarchal entitlements (Connell 1987; 1995).

With a focus on the social institutions of marriage, motherhood and the family, the latter of which Connell considers to be one of the most important gendered institutions and society's most complex product (1987), I will draw on this model to demonstrate how the relationality and interaction of these structures produce gender disparities that serve to heighten women's vulnerability to gendered poverty and violence. I also view the social processes influencing vulnerability as highly context specific, operating beyond marriage, motherhood and the family. I therefore posit that cultural norms fundamental to the wider gender order might also be salient forces shaping women's lives. Within a gender and power framework, women's experiences of affective and other aspects of gender inequality need thus to be interpreted in the light of broad economic conditions such as poverty but also in relation to prevailing socio-cultural norms and the post-conflict context.

### 3.2.3.1 The gender division of labour

Arguably, the most central gender structure is the division of labour<sup>9</sup>, referred to as the systematic allocation of specific types of work to different people or groups of people, based on their sex. It is the basis upon which marriage, family and kinship are organised and society is categorised. For example labour arrangements shape practice, thus creating patterns of practice, ultimately segregating the labour market. Social rules structure precedence, which go on to structure both action and judgement, affecting sex segregation in occupations and evaluations of capability and so forth. In effect, practice becomes patterned by precedent. Women and men are socialised to engage in gender-specific occupations known as 'women's work' and men's work'. Through segregation, roles are learnt, enacted and organised and endorsed by cultural norms and values so that such arrangements become a powerful system of social constraint.

Connell (1987) views the gender division of labour as a piece of a larger pattern, 'a gender-structured system of production, consumption, and distribution'. Gender divisions are not add-ons. They are features of production itself maintained by several social logics and mechanisms that operate across multiple domains and such institutions as interpersonal relationships, the family, the workplace, schools and so forth. One logic which maintains the division of labour occupations is the logic of accumulation (Connell 1987; 2009; Parrado and Flippen 2005) which distinguishes between two realms, namely the realm of 'production', and paid labour and, 'home', the realm of 'consumption' and unpaid labour. As men are thought to possess better skills, they are afforded a competitive advantage over women and are thus assigned to the realm of 'production', and paid labour and the position of breadwinner. Significantly, femininity discourses based on the traditional division of labour position women as possessing a maternal instinct and predisposed to caregiving while men, who purportedly lack this instinct, are excluded from full domestic involvement. Stemming from these notions of masculinity and femininity, women are appointed childcaring roles and end up performing the majority of domestic work and childcare

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9 I also refer to it as production and distribution relations in the sphere of paid and unpaid work.

regardless of their participation in the paid work because they are positioned as caregivers. This logic defines women and not men as parents, which legitimises an unequal distribution of childcare and domestic responsibilities and regularises patterns of inequality (Lorber 1995; West and Zimmerman 1987). Connell refers this to the political economy of masculinity in which patterns of hegemonic masculinity underpin the devaluation of women's unpaid work and discourage or even disallow men to take on household responsibilities, elderly and childcare, domestic and housework, thus reproducing gender inequality (Connell 1995). The 'dividends' accrued from the traditional constructs of masculinity and gendered relations of production also ensures that decisions about family finances are assigned to men, creating an enabling environment that bestows men further interwoven privileges and advantages over women, that serve men's interests and extends to their control over domestic decision making in familial and marital relationships (Parrado and Flippen 2005). Built upon an assumption of gender difference and hegemonic heterosexuality, both of which are related to emotional and symbolic relations and held in place by patriarchal power relations, the modern gender division of labour reflects the perniciousness of gender differentiating discourses significantly impacting women's social position.

Gendered skills differentiation thus justifies segregation which becomes resistant to change. Home or domestic life according to this principle is therefore culturally defined as a woman's world, whilst the economic sphere is seen as a man's world. In the latter work is done for pay whilst in the home, work that includes childcare, caring for the sick and elderly and housework and domestic work is unremunerated and done instead out of love or for mutual obligation (Connell 2009). As a result women are often assigned unequal positions compared to men, with the structure according men both resource-based and prestige-based measures such as relatively higher participation, status and remuneration rates in the workplace. Meanwhile women's unpaid work often fails to be recognised as work and is undervalued. Several studies indicate that given the way in which gender organises labour, women in heterosexual relationships are more likely than heterosexual men to be financially dependent on their intimate partners (Anderson 2005; Wingood and DiClemente 2000). This applies to women who

work exclusively in the home performing the traditional women's role of home-maker and to those with low levels of education working outside the home in gender segregated occupations characterised by unstable, low status and poorly paid jobs that leave them more financially insecure than their husbands (Bui 2001). Thus, given the nature and organisation of 'women's work', the gender division of labour construct perpetuates disparities in social status as it restricts access to educational and other resources, restricts women's career paths, economic potential and autonomous status thereby creating vulnerability in all aspects of women's lives including a pattern of social isolation and financial reliance on breadwinning husbands. This can constrain women and lead them to overlook partner infidelities as well as violent behaviour (Gupta *et al* 1995 cited in Panchanadeswaran *et al* 2007).

### **3.2.3.2 The gender division of power**

A basic component in Connell's Theory of Gender and Power is the structure of power which relates to structural arrangements that bestows advantages of one group or individual over another. In the context of gender, 'the main axis of the power structure [...] is the general connection of authority with masculinity' (Connell 1987, p.109). Inequality of power between men and women is a fundamental element of the structure of power (Panchanadeswaran and *et al* 2007; Wingood and DiClemente 2000). Women's lower levels of power are associated with the social meaning given to biological differences between women and men and in expectations and norms governing their respective behaviour, characteristics and roles (Gupta 2000 cited in Blanc 2001). Like labour, the gender division of power is maintained by several dynamics or mechanisms such as the exercise of dominating power (Wingood and DiClemente 2000) within economic, political, and religious institutions that have the authority to design policies, shape ideas and define morality, often constituting 'traditional' constructs about proper or desirable gender relations constructs (Bui 2001). Such institutions include at the interpersonal level intimate couple and family relationships, and at the institutional and community levels including the workplace, schools, health service, police and justice system, governance bodies and so forth. Power and gender relations in all of these institutions may be constructed and

reinforced through 'taken-for-granted', 'naturalised' everyday conversations and unremarkable interactions.

According to the patriarchal gender order and division of power, wives are expected to assume the subservient role and comply with decisions made by husbands regarding various aspects of roles, relationships and family life. Gender order and divisions of power also extend to relationship control, personal authority and coercion within sexual relationships (Parrado and Flippen 2005). Women in relationships constituting power imbalances, are often financially dependent on their husbands in cases where husbands earn more than their wives (Anderson 2005). Thus women are often forced to comply with men's decisions as they are not in a position to challenge their ideas and interests. Economic inequality increases women's economic dependency on men, reduces their decision-making power, exacerbates their vulnerabilities of male control and gender-based violence against women (GBVAW) (Panchanadeswaran *et al* 2007; Sa and Larsen 2008). Indeed gender differentials in power manifest most directly in the case of GBVAW. Still within the patriarchal gender regime at the household level, the gender division of individualised power also extends beyond marital relations, to relations within different types of family arrangements between women and shapes what women do to women. This is evident for example where intergenerational power relations between women such as mother-in-law/daughter-in-law reinforces gender inequality.

As it is power structures which permeate and intersect the gender structures of labour and cathexis, capturing their presence and role in women's lives remains the major focus of analysis in this research. To explore power dynamics and their interactions with the structure of labour and emotional and symbolic relations, I rely on feminist theories of gender identity, described later below, and on Kabeer's (1994, p.224) distinction between 'power within' or self confidence, 'power with', meaning the ability to organise with others towards a common purpose, and 'power to' meaning the ability to effect change and take decisions, rather than 'power over' others. The first formulation, 'power within' pays attention to the role that social rules, norms, values

and practices play in concealing male dominance, securing power relations and invisibilising their oppressive consequences or a vision of alternative ways of 'being and doing' (Kabeer 1994, p.227). For instance, in the context of household dynamics, the effects of social norms, values and practices have the propensity to compel women to remain silent about the unequal division of intrahousehold resources rather than challenge their husbands' personal expenditures and other aspects of the dominant ideology of marriage. In such cases women prefer to ignore conflict as an aspect of daily life so that the unequal distribution of resources within marriage become in effect a no-go area (Kabeer 1994).

### **3.2.3.3 Cathexis as Emotional and Symbolic Gender Relations**

The third element of Connell's theory of gender and power is 'cathexis' which she developed to deal with emotional and symbolic differentiation. It refers to adult emotional attachment and the process of investment of energy in a person/object/or idea – in other words the affective component of relationships. Relations of power, production and distribution are embedded in this dimension of gender relations which Connell views as a crucial component of how practice is achieved and how the gender structure is maintained (Connell 1987). At the level of society, cathexis characterises women's acceptance of traditional social norms including, for example their emotional attachments to men (Wingood and DiClemente 2000). At the institutional level, cathexis is upheld by cultural norms, expressed in the form of rigid gender roles (Mbonu *et al* 2010; Wingood and DiClemente 2000), beliefs, for instance about love, and practices, such as tolerance.

Cathexis is defined as norms that govern the social and gender roles and behaviour of women and men. It has two main elements, emotional relations/affective attachments and symbolic social norms, though the symbolic and cultural domain is sometimes referred to separately as a fourth dimension in Connell's conceptual model of gender relations (Pearse and Connell 2016). Applied to the construct of marriage, whilst emotional relations define patterns of attachment between husbands and wives, symbolic relations provide meaning for the role of being a husband or wife, mobilising

a historically constructed and well-defined system of expectations that dictate appropriate behaviour for men and women, whether such expectations correspond to the actual arrangement of roles within a given household or not (Menijavar 1999 cited in Parrado and Flippen 2005). Either way, symbolic relations define norms of femininity and masculinity through which interpersonal relationships are evaluated (Parrado and Flippen 2005). In terms of emotional/affective relations, maternal cathexis incorporates the gender roles of women related to motherhood, and is expressed in the form of women's interest in motherhood and children (Wingood and DiClemente 2000). Meanwhile, marital cathexis in the context of heterosexual marriage – the socially sanctioned form of sexual attachment, promotes attachment through marriage and gender differences in the investment of emotional energy in the relationship (Bui 2001). Scholars refer to the social sanctioning of heterosexuality as compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1980) or hegemonic heterosexuality (Connell 1987). Heteronormativity pervades emotional relations, normalises a certain type of heterosexuality that involves marriage and monogamy and is also evident in social practices that expect men and women to marry, women to remain monogamous and relationship-oriented and men to be unfaithful (Charlebois 2011). This latter complex can be described as masculinist heteronormativity. Emotional/affective relations thus can be seen to involve interest in childbearing and gender and traditional sexual roles or adult identities. It also refers to the emotional charge associated with women's attachment to their male partners as part of an integral part of their adult development and women's desire for trust and faithfulness in relationships with partners (Connell 2009).

To shed light on emotional economies, we must in turn tend to what it is that influences everyday attachments, investments and commitments and creates feelings of obligation and responsibility, core elements which are part of the structure of maternal and marital cathexis. Emotions permeate human experiences and social relations and are the 'glue' that binds people together. They create attachments and commitments to cultural and social structures (Turner and Stets 2005). To theorise this fundamental aspect of gender relations I draw on the concept of an emotional

economy of entitlement and obligation and to the cultural norms dictating gendered affective relations involving commitments and investments, feelings of obligation, gratitude and resentment and ideas of who owes what to whom, all of which indicate levels of power and powerlessness (Shih and Pyke 2009).

In the study therefore I explore how symbolic relations and social norms might inform women's culturally grounded social identities, their femininities, whether as mothers and providers of primary care, as wives negotiating marriage and as daughters-in law negotiating another type of interpersonal relationship, all of which I view as sites of relational struggles (Ferree 2010). Connell considers the second element of cathexis - culture or symbolic relations - as significant as they influence behaviour (2005). Culture involves particular social interests, and grows out of historically specific ways of life. In this study my use of the term 'culture' encompasses Connell's notions of customs, traditions, norms, 'ideas, and social behaviour of a particular group as they relate to how people interact in a particular local context', such as the family. Significantly culture incorporates shared understanding of 'acceptable actions, behaviours and norms in a particular setting' (Connell 2009, p.83).

So what precisely then are gender norms? When speaking about norms we refer to: values, attitudes, preferences, rules, beliefs, conventions, biases, ideologies, traditions, customs and culture. Norms may also imply economic relations, power structures, emotional relations and institutional practices (Pearse and Connell 2016; Petesch 2013). They are gendered by deeply entrenched societal values about what is considered appropriate for women and men in terms of their conduct, status and roles (Petesch 2013). When they come together gender norms are bundled into gender roles. Gender norms embedded within patriarchy create more opportunities for men than women to exercise power and control over resources and thus act as barriers to gender equality (Sweetman 2013). In some societies gender inequitable norms may underpin household decision making, authority over land use and inheritance laws (Agarwal 1997). Where women are expected to fulfil marital positions of subservience and maternal roles of caregiving, men are expected to earn and control money, head

up households and control decision-makers. In the domain of work, frequently underlying gender divisions of labour are norms that associate men's work with normative definitions of masculinities embodying physical power and authority (Pearse and Connell 2016). Meanwhile women's work is associated with normative or desirable femininities that expect women to be caring, self-sacrificing, and industrious – that is good mothers who protect the family by ensuring that difficult situations such as material poverty are managed.

Therefore gender norms play a key role in shaping women and men's gender identities understood as activities, attributes and values culturally and historically considered appropriate for and associated with women and men (Connell 1995). Connell has mainly led the theorisation and empirical study of masculinities. However this has not been matched by a similar interest in understanding the power dynamics involved in the social construction of different forms of femininities (Budgeon 2014; Shippers 2007). Shippers argues that 'femininity is still decidedly under-theorised', that 'a compelling and empirically useful conceptualisation of hegemonic femininity and multiple, hierarchical femininities *as central to male dominant gender relations* has not yet been developed' (emphasis in original) (Shippers 2007, p. 85). Masculinities are socially constructed by power relations as well as by psychological and institutional (collective practice) forces, and are also as much defined by the division of labour as they are by the structure of cathexis and patterns of emotional attachment and investment. Drawing on the concept of intersectionality Connell (1995) recognises that not all masculinities or femininities are equal and argues that it is necessary to acknowledge that gender is only one organising principle in women and men's lives as class, race, ethnicity, age and so on all intersect with gender to construct multiple masculinities and femininities, which operate through power relations between them. Connell thus introduced the concept of hegemonic and subordinate masculinities to reflect the power dimensions of gender relations, as not all men benefit equally from the institutions of patriarchy and some forms of masculinity are culturally elevated above others in certain times and places. Recognising power brokered differences within subordinated masculinities, Connell also refers to the concept of protest

masculinities which is 'a marginalised masculinity, which picks up themes of hegemonic masculinity in the society at large but reworks them in a context of poverty' (Connell 1995, p. 114). Hegemonic masculinity refers to the most valued version or an ideal of masculinity in a particular context (Connell 1995) which in many contexts, whether men like it or not, expects them to be independent, provide for the family, be courageous and aggressive, all traits linked to reinforcing power, otherwise described as patriarchal masculinity.

Femininity by contrast is often associated with being dependent (both emotionally and financially) on men, a home-maker or caregiver, passive, obedient and subservient (Shippers 2007). As there is no configuration of femininity organised around women's domination of men and as women have fewer opportunities for institutionalised power relations over other women, there is no hegemonic femininity as 'all forms of femininity in this society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men' (Connell 1987, p.186-7). Whilst the agency of women and their effect on gender hierarchies is acknowledged by Connell, she still maintains that compliance with patriarchy 'is central to the pattern of femininity which is given most cultural and ideological support'. This pattern is referred to as *emphasised femininity* and is 'oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men' (Connell 1987, p.183) whilst strategies of resistance, non-compliance or complex combinations of compliance also constitute other forms of femininity. According to Pyke and Johnson (2003) and Shippers (2007), when Connell suggested that women have few opportunities to exercise power over other women, she discounted the extent to which other axes of domination manufacture a hegemonic femininity and how this may be valued in the dominant culture and construct a superiority of some women over others. Shippers moves this debate forward by theorising the relations between multiple femininities and the role these play in sustaining gender relationality. Contra Connell, she introduces the idea that 'hegemonic femininities' are conceivable as, the expression of feminine characteristics 'establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (Shippers 2007, p.94). I concur with

this critique and find the emphasis Shippers' theorisation of gender hegemony affords to women's differentiated power useful, as, following Nash's point about intersectional power, the approach taken in this study recognises both the multiplicity of women's day to experiences as shaped by age, marital status and class and, the relationality of gender in Timor-Leste as socially constructed by and deeply rooted in contextual norms, traditions and cultures.

Further unpacking the concept of hierarchical femininities, gender relations encompass relations between women (Nash 2008), such as older and younger women, as women accrue power over their lifetime, enabling them to use their intersectional identities to their advantage, without undoing traditional notions of femininity and male privilege. This is evident in contexts dominated by a hierarchically-ordered kinship system characterised by strong intergenerational power asymmetries, an ideal of the extended, patrilocal household and pronounced patrilineal ideology promoting son preference and structuring a traditional family form found in many parts of the world.

Supporting and influenced by the patriarchal social order, hierarchical femininities serve to structure marital relations and family size preference and decision-making as well as intergenerational work arrangements between for example mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, placing women in subordinated positions and pitting them against one another as they vie for more individual power. It is the addition of the daughter-in-law that enables the senior woman- formerly a daughter-in-law herself- to accrue decision-making power. Though mediated and thus limited by her relationships with male family members (Shih and Pyke 2009), this power enables mothers to enforce the traditional division of labour, discouraging married sons from doing housework. Whilst the division of labour between women responds to family needs, resources and the wider economic context, it also reflects the different structural locations of family members as well as complex intra-family power relations serving the survival strategies of women in old age (Chen 2004). These socially constructed intra-family dynamics between *generations* of women find strong support in and are simultaneously maintained by the mother-son dyad, enabling more senior women to strike a

'patriarchal bargain' as a strategy for maximising their interests and power within existing social and structural constraints (Kandiyoti 1988).

There is now a large body of feminist research on the cultural construction of norms of femininity, care, women's agency, power and altruistic preferences (Badgett and Folbre 2003; Brickell and Chant 2010; Bubeck 1995; Folbre 2006; 2012; Kabeer 1999). Brickell and Chant for example are concerned with aspects of female altruism related to women's double burden that includes paid and unpaid work and its use to justify women's incorporation into development and women's disproportionate share of unpaid labour in the household. Distinguishing between multiple inter-related dimensions including emotional, corporeal, socio-cultural and/or economic female altruism they view the concept as an under-researched bastion of gender inequality and argue that its persistence and multidimensionality need to be unpacked further (Brickell and Chant 2010). Bolt and Bird (2003 cited in Brickell and Chant 2010) relate women's 'maternal altruism' and compulsion to invest their financial and other resources more in their children to patriarchal social relations whilst Kabeer (1994) also connects the strong association between altruism and maternal rather than paternal preferences to embedded gender regimes, 'cultural values' and resultant constraints on women's behaviour. She argues that: 'it is important to recognise that such altruism is often a manifestation of their disempowerment, a response to their restricted options rather than a 'natural' female attribute' (1999, p. 41). Meanwhile Land and Rose (1985 cited in Folbre 2012) invoke the term 'compulsory altruism' to describe the social pressure imposed on women to provide care. Bubeck also describes an 'interlocking set of constraints and practices that channels women into doing the bulk of care that needs to be done in any society' (1995, p. 181). She notes that even if wives become just as powerful as husbands, they may remain more vulnerable to exploitation as carers. Much of the current feminist literature on care also emphasises the ways in which inflexible and inertial institutional arrangements that could be termed 'compulsory caring' extend well beyond external patriarchal constraints to internalised values (Folbre 2012). For example according to England and Browne the concept of 'compulsory altruism' represents a variant of the more general concept of 'internalised

oppression' where women may internalise their oppressors' views of their own inferiority and gender socialisation may create or intensify normative pressures or internalised preferences that increase women's vulnerability to exploitation (1992 cited in Folbre 2012).

#### **3.2.3.4 Interaction, Interdependence and the Dynamics of Social Change**

As previously mentioned there is a complex interdependency between and among the structures of gender (Connell 1987; 1990). That none of the three structures is independent of the others is seen in the way that power relations are reflected in the structure of cathexis, and the gender division of labour and economic dependence - that is, low income, unequal wages, and responsibility for childcare - is also made up of relations of cathexis and is influenced by the structure of power and vice-versa. Emotional attachments are influenced by male dominance and lead to unequal marital power. Women's lower status that results from inequitable productive and power relations is reinforced by cathexis including societal gender role prescriptions and socialisation patterns. For example when women internalise and accept traditional and oppressive gender roles, this perpetuates power differentials by eroding further women's power in relationships which in turn constrains their capacities to resist abuse and adopt mechanisms to thwart vulnerability to GBV (Panchanadeswaran *et al* 2007). Cultural factors such as the importance of marriage and heterosexual attachments and stigma of divorce and separation are often cited in many qualitative studies as reasons that keep women in violent marriages (Davies *et al* 2009; Panchanadeswaran *et al* 2007). Women may thus justify and accept GBV as a normal part of everyday married life.

Viewing gender as a structure of *interdependent* social relations also helps us to understand change in gendered norms, as structures develop crisis tendencies, that is, internal contradictions that disrupt patterns and generate change in the structure itself (Connell 2009; Pearse and Connell 2016). Connell reminds us that gender arrangements are actually in a constant state of flux. Here Petesch alerts us to a useful distinction between an actual change and a relaxation of a gender norm (Petesch

2013). Gender norms can change through internal gender dynamics as well as external forces such as economic and sociocultural processes, social movements (Hankivsky 2005) and conflict. Crisis tendencies can emerge in any one of the three dimensions of gender relations and have the potential to destabilise the gender regimes in a given institution and trigger change in the overall gender order (Connell 2009). Agarwal has argued that norms are the subject of extensive bargaining in households (Agarwal 1997). Power relations have experienced crisis tendencies (Connell 1990) when equal opportunity legislation or women's empowerment initiatives such as women-only micro-credit schemes challenged and destabilised the legitimacy of a patriarchal gender order. Production relations are also a site of crisis tendencies (Connell 1995) when women's increased participation in the paid labour force challenges the notion that men are family breadwinners and women caregivers. Nevertheless occupational segmentation remains strong and the expectation for women engaged in paid work to continue their role as unpaid primary caregivers in the household prevails and can hinder women's career prospects. Meanwhile men's career trajectory remains uninterrupted by domestic responsibilities (Charlebois 2011). Thus whilst war and political conflict can trigger change in the structure of paid labour, the household division of unpaid labour remains unaltered. Emotional relations are also reflected in crisis tendencies (Connell 1995). Meanwhile the instability of patriarchy can be viewed as a crisis tendency within symbolic relations when deliberate social action and women's groups challenge the conventional assumption that a woman's place is in the home. Femininity discourses however continue to disempower women and women and men may both pay a high social price for transgressing or being unable to live up to norms of femininity and masculinity (Charlebois 2011). Hegemonic definitions of masculinity are rarely fulfilled by men such as when unemployment and poverty prevent some them from fulfilling breadwinning masculinities and providing for their families (Freedman 2012). The concept of 'thwarted' masculinities' has been used to describe the experiences of men who are unable to live up to expectations imposed by hegemonic masculinities. It is said that these men may be more likely to perpetrate violence whether in the home or in public. In such cases violence can either present

men with a means of reasserting their masculinity in the absence of other, non-violent means or provide men with a means of attaining other things required for 'being a man' such as economic assets (Wright 2014). Finally crisis tendencies and their consequences are also evident in the gap between normative definitions and lived realities of masculinities and femininities. This is sometimes considered one of the factors underlying GBV perpetrated by men against women, the various forms of which could stem from attempts to sustain dominance and relations of inequality between women and men in the absence of other, non-violent means, and from contradictions within normative and hegemonic constructions of masculinities in different societies (Freedman 2012). As Connell argues violence is a means of claiming or defending privilege or asserting authority, '... part of a system of domination, but is at the same time a measure of its imperfection' (Connell 1995, p.85).

#### **3.2.4 Theoretical Perspectives on Gendered Poverty and GBV**

Having discussed how I intend to analyse the complex interplay between gender, power, identity and other social norms and understand how gender organises everyday life, this section proceeds to outline the key issues and main substantive and context theories relevant to the data and the environment in which participants were living, rearing children and conducting married lives.

##### **3.2.4.1 Definitions and Key Issues for the Analysis of Gendered Poverty**

Literature on poverty offers many definitions. An International Poverty Centre paper in 2006 groups the various definitions into four categories, namely, those based on 'income or its proxy', 'material lack or want', 'capability deprivation' and 'multi-dimensional view of deprivation'. Broadly speaking, it is accepted that poverty is a denial of human rights that causes multi-dimensional deprivation – as in absolute poverty- for individuals and households. Inequality is entwined with poverty in such a way that it not only determines peoples' access and their ability to exercise their rights, but inequality is also a result of poverty. In this respect, inequality is an important element of poverty – as in relative poverty - that must be understood and tackled to address poverty. While inequality itself is a broad term, for this study inequality is

when people are not treated as equals, with the same privileges, status and rights accorded on the basis of their common humanity.

This study aligns with a multi-dimensional view of poverty (Bessell 2010; Chant and Beetham 2014), as, just as 'gender is not just about women, ... poverty is not just about income' (Chant 2010a, p.2). It also views poverty as subjective (Moore 2010). The definition also moves beyond Pearce's (1978 cited in Chant 2008) feminisation of poverty construct to include Chant's 'feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation' (Chant 2008). Discussing the underlying causes of gendered poverty, Cagatay asserts that, 'Gender-based power relations mean that women experience poverty differently and more forcefully than men do' (2001, p.14), and 'women are more vulnerable to chronic poverty because of gender inequalities in the distribution of income, access to productive inputs, such as credit, command over property or control over earned income, as well as gender biases in labour markets' (2001, p.6). Considering multiple and subjective dimensions thus helps to minimise false dichotomies based on essentialist assumptions about women and men's behaviour, power and agency (Davids and van Driel 2010).

Throughout this thesis I use the term 'gender' to encompass the socially constructed social and sexual roles ascribed to the different biological sexes whilst 'gendered' refers to the various *processes* which inscribe and re-inscribe these roles as well as the manifestations of these roles in various processes, systems and institutions throughout a given society. The gendered poverty concept used in this study relies on the assumption that roles ascribed to the different biological sexes are embedded in people's experiences of poverty (Cagatay 1998). Gendered poverty is also differentially impacted by a host of social, economic, demographic and other cleavages not least age, 'race', nationality, sexuality, class, household headship and composition, the marital, fertility and family status of women and men, urban versus rural provenance and residence, labour market possibilities and state social transfers (Chant and Beetham 2014; Cornwall *et al* 2007; Vera-Sanso 2012). Women's experiences of poverty need also to be viewed as multidimensional, multisectoral and experienced in

different ways, at different times and in different 'spaces' including the home, the community, the labour market, the domain of assets and property ownership, the legal and social policy arena, the political economy and in contexts affected by conflict (Chant 2010a).

Understanding women's poverty in this way and viewing gender as less predetermined and static has major significance for both analysis and policy interventions that attempt to mainstream gender but that have mostly failed to eliminate poverty and gender inequality in a transformative manner. Feminist scholarship is addressing their pitfalls through critiques of the 'feminisation of poverty' construct often underpinning gender mainstreaming strategies (Chant 2010a). However it has come under criticism for its lack of attention to differences among women, its over emphasis on income and on female headed households, for omitting men and gender power relations and neglecting the feminisation of obligation, responsibility and inputs involved in dealing with poverty within the household (Chant 2010a, Davids and van Driel 2010). Leaving men's position unchallenged, policy interventions drawing on the feminisation of poverty construct tend to deal with the material condition rather than the relational position of women within the family and beyond (Johnson 2005 cited in Chant 2010a). As previously raised in the section critiquing gender mainstreaming, particularly problematic for instance has been the instrumentalist manner in which women-only anti-poverty initiatives such as microcredit and conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes overshadow gender equality and rely on women as a 'conduit of policy' (Molyneux 2006) capitalising on women's unpaid labour in the context of assumptions about women's 'traditional' roles as wives and mothers. Similarly, in the context of resistance to changes in traditional gender roles in the domestic sphere and women's unequal share of unpaid work in the household, Kabeer (2007) has pointed to the absence of men and gender relations in gender analysis leading to a continuing failure on the part of policymakers to provide support for women's care responsibilities, despite the growing importance of their breadwinning roles.

Chant's expansion of the 'feminisation of poverty' construct to incorporate the

'feminisation of obligation and responsibility' component is based on three discernible tendencies found in her research, all of which align with the social realities of the vast majority of women participating in this study. The first pertains to growing gender disparities in the range and amount of inputs - paid and unpaid - to ensure family survival. Whilst growing numbers of poor women of all ages are working outside the home, as well as performing the bulk of unpaid reproductive tasks, men are not increasing their participation in reproductive labour, despite their diminishing role as sole or primary breadwinner (Chant 2010b). The second tendency involves the persistent gender inequalities in negotiations over obligations and entitlements in households leading to a growing weight of responsibility on women which they have little option other than to absorb (Chant 2008). According to Chant's study, women's mounting responsibilities for coping with poverty have not been accompanied by similar increases in power and leverage in respect of negotiating greater inputs to household survival, nor reductions in resource-depleting activities demanded by normative ideals of masculinity. Women often have little choice but to deal with poverty, re-doubling their efforts to live up to the idealised norms of 'good wives' and mothers by working harder inside and outside the home. Meanwhile men act on a perceived male entitlement that allows them avoid family responsibilities, escape the daily hardship of family life and withhold earnings to fund extra-domestic pursuits that range from heavy drinking and gambling to extra-marital affairs (Chant 2010b). This generates what the scholarship refers to as women's 'secondary poverty' which pertains when household income would be adequate if expenditure were to be optimally allocated. However this is often not the case where men might withhold a larger share of their own income for discretionary personal expenditure to the detriment of other household members (Chant 2008; 2010a). Secondary poverty has been stressed in feminist scholarship which concludes that poverty is, 'as much about agency compromised by abuse, stress, fatigue and voicelessness, as it is about lack of resources' (Sweetman 2005). The third distinctive element in Chant's theory of 'feminisation of responsibility and obligation' is the growing disconnect between gendered investments and responsibilities on the one hand and rewards and rights on

the other (Chant 2008). While responsibilities for dealing with poverty are becoming progressively feminised, there is no corresponding increase in women's rights and rewards whereas men, despite their lesser inputs, retain their traditional privileges of control over income, licence for social freedom and power over household decision-making.

Conceptualising gendered poverty with these observations in mind nudges the present study to place major emphasis on the gender-differentiated inputs involved in dealing with family poverty and caring for family members. As the study recognises that this consumes considerable amounts of physical and emotional labour and time, the burden of which in patriarchal societies falls heavily on women and girls (Budlender 2010), it pays close attention to the bearing of gender and the relationality of structures of labour, power and cathexis underpinning the 'feminisation of obligation and responsibility' construct (Chant 2008; 2010a). The study thus addresses the gender, poverty, violence nexus primarily from a care perspective.

There has been a conceptual evolution in relation to 'care' within feminist economics and feminist social policy so that today the concept of care overlaps with similar concepts such as care work, domestic labour, reproductive labour, unpaid work, social care, the care economy, etc (Esquivel 2014). Emanating largely from the disciplines of feminist economics and social policy research, a large body of cross-cultural scholarship<sup>10</sup> provides substantial evidence documenting the extent to which, globally, even as they do more paid work - women represent 40 percent of the paid work force worldwide - women continue to do the bulk of the caregiving and domestic work at home (Doyle *et al* 2014). Research from six lower-, and high income countries found that unpaid care is performed largely by women and girls, two to ten times more than men depending on the country even though women participated also in the paid work force. Of particular concern also is how care is distributed both within the household and between the household and the state as this has major implications for gender and

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10 Collaborators include ActionAid, Oxfam and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex and the 2014 third issue of *Gender & Development* explores care from a gender perspective (Chopra and Sweetman 2014).

women and men's respective experiences of it (Chopra *et al* 2013; Chopra and Sweetman 2014). In relation to men, obliging women to undertake heavy and disproportionate workloads excludes them from emotional connection and care as fathers whilst placing unrealistic expectations on them to be 'the breadwinner' providing for their family financially, enabling unequal decision-making and power dynamics to persist between women and men (Boudet *et al* 2013; Doyle *et al* 2014).

Building on this, resonating with empirical data gathered by my study, there are complex connections between gender inequality, GBV and the lack of male participation in care work (Doyle *et al* 2014). For instance Baker *et al* (2011 cited in Doyle *et al* 2014) have found that men who witnessed intimate partner GBV against their mothers were less likely to participate in unpaid work whilst Flemming *et al* (2013 cited in Doyle *et al* 2014) confirms that men who witnessed GBV were also at risk of perpetrating it later in life. Men's limited participation in care work also increases women's vulnerability and entrapment in GBV in other ways where for example women performing the bulk of unpaid care work are less likely to be engaged in paid employment and those who are economically active are more likely to be limited to part-time or informal employment, and earn less than their male peers (Minguez 2012 cited in Peacock and Barker 2014). The economic disempowerment of women resulting from the disproportionate burden of unpaid care work exacerbates gendered power imbalances that make women vulnerable to GBV whilst obligations (cathexis) and inordinate amounts of domestic and care work trap financially impoverished women in violent marriages, isolating them from family and friends and constraining their access to services. Disproportionate care burdens also impose limitations on women's opportunities in education, political participation and leisure time (Esquivel 2014). This was addressed in 2013 at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly by the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona who stated that the 'heavy and unequal care responsibilities are a major barrier to gender equality and to women's equal enjoyment of human rights, and, in many cases, condemn women to poverty' (Sepúlveda 2013, p.2). In her report she emphasised the distress, exhaustion and ill-health caused by the drudgery and unequal

burdens of care to women in the global South given the poor living conditions including inadequate housing and lack of basic amenities such as piped water to households, and essential public services such as childhood support (Sepúlveda 2013). The situation is worse for women living in rural and especially remote areas, for women living in poverty and unable to hire domestic help or invest in labour-saving technologies to lessen their care burden (Chopra and Sweetman 2014; Fontana and Elson 2014) and is exacerbated in times of economic crisis causing the cost of living to increase and threatening livelihoods as both the need for unpaid care work and paid work increases (Chopra *et al* 2013).

Disputes over the meaning of care and disagreements about how it needs to be addressed and framed in public policy dominate whatever visibility unpaid care issues have secured on state-led and international development agenda (Chopra and Sweetman 2014). Briefly, transformative meanings compete with the more prevailing conservative understandings of care which consider it a women's rather than a gender issue resulting in little more than timid remedial efforts at improving basic infrastructure aimed at helping women reduce 'their' caring workloads whilst failing to reform the generative framework and restricting the role of women in society to that of mothers and carers (Esquivel 2014). By contrast the 'care economy' approach used by feminist economists within development discourse aims to transform the inequalities associated with care provision as part of a broader, progressive, gender equality agenda (Esquivel 2014). Known as the Triple R Framework, this would involve recognising the role of women and girls in the provision of unpaid care, reducing the drudgery of unpaid care and redistributing women's care burdens and challenging the idea that this work is inherently 'female' and of lesser value than work seen as 'productive' (Fraser 1995 cited in Esquivel 2014). As pointed out by Doyle *et al* (2014) transforming gender relations within the home including norms around fatherhood and care work means addressing masculinities and engaging men in non-tokenistic ways. How the concept of care is framed thus affects the transformative potential of gender analyses, development policies and practices, including gender mainstreaming.

In line with the care economy approach this study conceptualises care as the bedrock of overall well-being, as sustaining everyday life and standards of living and as heavily intertwined with the 'economic', the 'social' and the 'public' (Esquivel 2014). As care is about gendered social relations and has the 'capacity to reveal important dimensions of women's lives' (Daly and Lewis 2000, p. 284 cited in Esquivel 2014), the study draws on the concept as an analytical category based a definition of care as: 'the activities and relations involved in meeting the physical and emotional requirements of dependent adults and children, the normative, economic and social frameworks within which these are assigned and carried out' (Daly and Lewis 2000, p.285 cited in Esquivel 2014). Meanwhile drawing on Elson (2000 cited in Esquivel 2014) it understands 'unpaid care work' as involving care of persons and housework performed within households without pay, *unpaid* because it arises out of social or contractual obligations such as marriage, *care* because it produces well-being and is work because it is an activity that has costs in terms of time and energy.

Women's vulnerability to these multiple forms of poverty, inequality and GBV may be underpinned by culturally-condoned expectations of their gender identity such as idealised norms of motherhood and femininity that emphasise female altruism (Chopra *et al* 2014) and rigid norms promoting violent and uncaring masculinities. Gender norms and other discriminatory social institutions dominating marriage and motherhood play a major role shaping the 'natural order' of the gender division of power, unpaid care work including roles and inequalities in caring responsibilities and women's decision making power, ability to challenge unequal burdens and control and access family resources. 'The unequal distribution of unpaid care work is highly reflective and determinative of power relations between women and men' (Sepúlveda and Donald 2014, p.447). Discriminatory gender norms also confine women to the private sphere and assigning them inferior status and rights generate and reinforce the unequal distribution of unpaid care work (Sepulveda and Donald 2014). This resonates with Kabeer who argues that: 'Gender often operates through the unquestioned acceptance of power. Thus women who, for example, internalise their lesser claim on household resources, or accept violence at the hands of their husbands, do so because

to behave otherwise is considered outside the realm of possibility' (Kabeer 2005, p.14).

#### **3.2.4.2 Gender-Based Violence**

A major theme dominating the findings was women's experiences of gender-based violence (GBV). GBV is now understood as an epidemic harm throughout the world including developing and developed countries. Recently there has been a global momentum in thinking about and responding to it, which has included a focus on the issue in wartime and also on the high levels of violence against women, especially intimate partner violence (IPV) in developing countries (Boesten and Wilding 2015; Manjoo 2016; Manjoo and McRaith 2011). There is also some attention paid to GBV in a branch of the gendered poverty literature in terms of its links with women's over-representation in unpaid care work (Barker *et al* 2011; Doyle *et al* 2014).

According to the latest WHO report (Garcia-Moreno *et al* 2005), 35 percent of women worldwide experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, of which the majority (30 percent) constitutes intimate partner violence (IPV). Nationally, levels of IPV range from 17 percent in Japan to 71 percent of women experiencing such violence in Ethiopia. Disparities in prevalence relate to gender ideology and to institutionalised gender inequality. In other words, gender poverty and gender inequality matter a great deal in the social construction of GBVAW (Boesten and Wilding 2015). Studies examining GBV largely focus on domestic violence perpetrated by men, which is unsurprising given the abundant evidence that this is the most endemic form of GBV (Heise 2011). Some feminist scholarship examines domestic violence perpetrated by women in same and opposite sex intimate relationships (Rew *et al* 2013) and by female family members who exercise unchallenged authority and power over daughters-in law (Chan *et al* 2009; Gangoli and Rew 2011; Raj *et al* 2006; Rew *et al* 2013; Shih and Pyke 2009). Research into GBV between female in-laws has mainly been conducted in South Asia and among Asian immigrant families living in Europe and North America. In this research, mothers-in law were identified as the second-most frequent source of domestic violence after spouses (Jejeebhoy and Sathar 2001; Krishnan *et al* 2012;

Solotaroff and Pande 2014). However comprehensive feminist research and analysis of the prevalence, risk factors and consequences of GBV between female in-laws is seriously lacking, possibly because its existence has only recently started to be recognised (Solotaroff and Pande 2014).

GBV is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon and there are several theoretical approaches and much applied work that attempt to explain this complexity (Manjoo and McRaith 2011). A combination of three broad perspectives are often used for understanding its causes, namely the psychological/individual, the feminist and the societal (Manjoo and McRaith 2011). According to the feminist perspective women's vulnerability to GBV stems from their subordinate political and social status and men's disproportionate levels of power and control over women (Anderson 2005; Connell 1987; Heise 1998; Wingood and DiClemente 2000). Women's subordination in and by society is both justified by and justifies men's violence against them. 'Also the violence against women by other women is often as a result of intersecting forms of discrimination. Feminist agendas often include analysing and addressing the problem of violence from the social structural level' (Manjoo and McRaith 2011). Finally the societal perspective holds the view that social institutions including state policies and societal norms that promote male dominance over women and contextual factors such as poverty and conflict perpetuate a discriminatory environment enabling violence against women.

The feminist structuralist approach to GBV compliments with Connell's Theory of Gender and Power that proposes that structural gender-based inequalities are pervasive societal characteristics resulting in men's disproportionate power and control over a number of areas including women's bodies (Grose and Grabe 2014). These structural inequalities are reinforced by normative gender ideologies that assume masculine superiority and feminine inferiority. Such socially constructed norms also endorse the belief that men's entitlement to power over women permits them to exercise coercion and to discipline women through the use of violence for perceived insubordination of gender roles (Anderson 2005; Grose and Grabe 2014). GBV against

women is thus a product of inequitable gender power relations between women and men, manifested in asymmetries in the gender division of labour – both productive and reproductive, paid and unpaid – and in asymmetries of resources and the distribution of power and decision-making authority (Dobash and Dobash 1979; Kabeer 2014; True 2012). Gendered power is thus central to any debate within GBV and is closely linked to the concepts of hegemonic masculinities (Agtaie and Gangoli 2015). Power is also associated with varieties within femininities and feminine coercive control though it has not been theorised to the same extent as male power. Stark uses the concept of coercive control to describe the different mechanisms men draw on to exert power over women: 'coercive control is personalised, extends through social space as well as over time, and is gendered in that it relies for its impact on women's vulnerability as women due to sexual inequality' (Stark 2007, p.5).

However a sole emphasis on the patriarchal gender order as a causal mechanism has not been able to adequately explain why some but not all men - who are wedded to hegemonic masculinities and the idea of male entitlement - are perpetrators of GBVAW (Heise 1994; Heise *et al* 2002), why variations in the incidence of violence exist within the same country, or why some groups of women are more vulnerable and affected by violence than others (Kabeer 2014). For example, it is now widely acknowledged that, even though all women are at risk of violence, not all women are equally vulnerable to acts and structures of violence. In her recent report, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women highlighted that both the bodily attributes and the social location(s) of individuals and groups need to be explicitly accounted for if we are to understand and adequately represent both the universality and the particularity of women's risk of violence (Manjoo and McRaith 2011). Thus feminist scholars pay attention to diversity and context-specific structural elements within society that not alone enable acts of violence but also deem them to be acceptable (Kabeer 2014). This understanding that risk factors for women operate at multiple levels helps to explain the above-mentioned variations and incongruities.

Within the broad concepts of context and intersectionality, one set of structural

explanations for women's vulnerability to GBV are the social and cultural norms, values and practices that define gender relations, roles and identities and that provide the background conditions for every day life (Kabeer 2014). Raj defines culture as 'a social doctrine taken by a group and this group is based on any of the following unifying social phenomena: Race/ethnicity, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, region, national origin, age and so forth' (Raj 2002 cited in Aghtaie and Gangoli 2015).

Whilst I have already discussed the concepts of social and cultural norms in relation to the emotional and symbolic dimensions of gender structure, I wish now to apply them more substantively. This is because, to understand women's unique experiences, the study needs to understand how culture shapes on a macro level the more general attitudes about the value and role of women and on an individual level the specific attitudes of both perpetrators and survivors of violence. Attitudes that support the use of GBV against women are deep seated and thus remain of central concern in relation to any analysis of GBVAW (Flood and Pearse 2009 cited in Allen and Devitt 2012) According to Allen and Devitt:

'Religious beliefs have interacted with traditional and local cultural belief systems to define the power relationships between men and women in society. Beliefs about gender are [...] a consistent predictor of attitudes that support the use of violence against women. Men with more traditional and rigid and misogynistic gender-role-attitudes are more likely to practice intimate partner violence' (Allen and Devitt 2012, p. 3517).

Also women's reactions to violent episodes are influenced by their 'views of themselves, societal norms, and the attributions that they make for the cause of abuse' (Panchanadeswaran and Koverola 2005, p.746). Cavanagh (2003) has argued that defining men's behaviour as violent is a key process in determining how women respond to it. I extend this insight to women's violent behaviour towards other women. Writing in the context of Asian women survivors, Gill notes that defining the experience of gendered violence is a complex phenomenon (Gill 2004). It may take years before a woman experiencing intimate partner GBV identifies it with a wider

ongoing pattern of oppression and control and even more time before she defines her relationship as violent and herself as a victim of GBV. Without ways to describe violent experiences, women are rendered silent and their experiences invisible (Kelly 1990 cited in Gill 2004) and so naming an experience empowers a woman and affirms her thoughts and actions. As Du Bois explains:

'The power of naming is at least two-fold; naming defines the quality and value of that which is named – and it also denies reality and value to that which is never named, never uttered. That which has no name, that for which we have no words or concepts, is rendered mute and invisible: powerless to inform or transform our consciousness or our experience, our understanding, our vision: powerless to claim its own existence ... This has been the situation of women in our world' (1983, p.106 cited in Gill 2004).

Following Aghtaie and Gangoli, I therefore see culture as shaping the way we understand GBV as it gives meaning to what actions are acceptable or not. 'Cultural ideologies can have both a negative and a positive effect on attitudes and experiences of violence. It sometimes can give legitimacy to violent acts by normalizing certain behaviours'. Culture can reduce the likelihood of abuse or increase the likelihood of violence where traditional gender roles are drawn upon to disempower women (Aghtaie and Gangoli 2015; Gangoli and Rew 2011). Koenig *et al* (2003) considered the effects of the interplay between individual determinants of women's status and structural inequality on GBVAW in two rural areas in Bangladesh. They found the effects of women's status to be highly context-specific where women's greater individual status increased their risk of experiencing IPV only in areas characterised by culturally conservative rigid norms concerning women's roles and status. Atkinson *et al* (2005) also associate women's experiences of GBV with contexts where violent husbands hold traditional attitudes about gender norms, values and norms. As religion controls women's sexuality and thus defines gender relations it has the potential to increase women's vulnerability to GBVAW (Aghtaie and Gangoli 2015).

In societies dominated by religion and a culture of heterosexuality, marriage may be highly valued and sought after by many women. Meanwhile divorce acquires a stigma as it runs counter to the idea of heterosexual emotional attachment, romantic love,

heterosexual intimacy (Bui 2001). Motherhood and the desire to reproduce is also highly valued in some societies (Sa and Larsen 2008). Such cultural norms are said to complicate women's entanglement in violent relationships. When women internalise and accept traditional cultural norms and oppressive gender roles, it damages their power in relationships, thus affecting their responses to violence in their lives (Panchanadeswaran *et al* 2007). For example some women seeking help state that they do so only to end the violence, not the relationship as they love their abusive husbands. For others any form of help seeking behaviour may represent too dramatic a move that threatens the relationship and family unity and children's welfare for which women are expected to have overall responsibility. Women may also be disinclined to adopt any help seeking practices that involve taking action against their abusive partners as (Bui 2001), as based on normative definitions of femininity and perceptions about women's inferior status, women are socialised to obey and comply with their husbands' needs and interests (Connell 1987) even to the extent of tolerating GBV.

Issues of shame and honour are also relevant to the theorisation of GBV. Because of deep-rooted culture and values, women experiencing victimisation often feel shame and maintain silence to preserve family honour (Cavanagh 2003; Gill 2004). Honour in this study is understood as status, precedence and reputation (Vandello and Cohen 2002 cited in Gill 2004). Honour codes are gendered as norms for men emphasise precedence and toughness whilst for women the honour code dictates modesty, shame and avoidance of behaviours that might threaten the reputation of the family. Ideals of family loyalty and feminine sacrifice feature prominently in cultures where honour is important (Gill 2004). Meanwhile shame, the counterpart to honour, is a social emotion, a painful feeling about oneself as a person. It 'refers, most simply, to the loss of honour' and needs to be considered as a social project beyond the personal and the individual (Feldman 2010). Often associated with genuine dishonour, disgrace, or condemnation, shame may stem from a violation of cultural or social values or moral regulations. Bannerji views shame as involving "a general morality and politics inclusive of sexuality and its formal signifiers' (Bannerji 1994, cited in Feldman 2010). Exploring how the shame/honour nexus and patriarchy might frame gender relations in the

context of female suicide in Bangladesh, Feldman asks: 'When women internalize honour, or respond to shame through personal humiliation, what kinds of choices might they entertain? How might women's conditions and forms of security in everyday life be transformed if, or when, they are assumed to break the norms of appropriate behavior?' (Feldman 2010, p.311). In this study I use my data to consider how might relations of honour and shame, as socially constituted sites of contested meanings, have framed abused participants' choices and responses to GBV and their negotiation of a local context that was dominated by certain ideals about the family including a culture of honour and cohesion. This consideration is important as, in the Timorese context and other parts of Asia, the importance of family honour and cohesion is strong and women carry great influence in determining the good name of the family and maintaining family status and reputation. In such situations women are often found to be under tremendous pressure to protect the integrity of the family and marital relationship and may thus remain in abusive relationships, despite the threat of or actual harm (Gill 2004).

GBVAW is thus due to gender power imbalances that are rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities (Grose and Grabe 2014). Based on these theoretical perspectives, the study distinguishes and acknowledges the synergies and linkages between interpersonal violence and structural/institutional violence experienced by women. No form of interpersonal violence is devoid of structural violence – as in all places, such violence is underpinned and made possible by beliefs about the perpetrators' right to harm another, beliefs which rely on societal notions of gender (Manjoo and McRaith 2011). Interpersonal violence is an act embodying multiple forms of violence perpetrated by an individual against another individual. Prevalent in all societies and experienced and understood within distinct societal responses and world views, such forms include economic, psychological, sexual, emotional, physical and verbal threats and actions. Meanwhile structural and institutional violence against women refers to gender inequalities, norms and identities or 'any form of structural inequality or institutional discrimination that maintains a woman in a subordinate position, whether physical or ideological, to other people within her family, household

or community' (Manjoo and McRaith 2011).

A number of terms describe interpersonal violence experienced by women including gender-based violence (GBV), violence against women (VAW) and intimate partner violence (IPV). Even though the terms are often used interchangeably, GBV is a wider concept. GBV refers to violence that is directed against a person on the basis of their gender identity. It encompasses male-on-male violence – for example, gang violence between young men; female-on-female violence including abuse of women by intimate partners or their mothers-in law; male-on-female violence and female-on-male violence such as IPV within marriage or the home (Green and Sweetman 2013). This study thus recognises that men, women, girls and boys can all be both perpetrators and victims of GBV.

Drawing on critical feminist analysis of GBV, this study understands that all acts of violence exist on a continuum of violence facilitated by a patriarchal gender order promoting gender inequality between women and men and between women (Davies and True 2015). The present study thus shares the United Nations' definition of GBV as follows:

'a continuum of multiple, interrelated and sometimes recurring forms... physical, sexual and psychological/emotional violence and economic abuse and exploitation, experienced in a range of settings, from private to public, and in today's globalised world, transcending national boundaries' (UN 2006 cited in Aghtaie and Gangoli 2015).

There is now a consensus within feminist scholarship about the continuum of GBV, and the idea that violence is fluid, crossing both public and private domains, may take different incarnations ranging from intimate and interpersonal to structural, systematic and institutional and be of a different scale, such as during periods of conflict. Such violence is rooted in existing and surviving gender ideologies and inequalities (Boesten and Wilding 2015, Manjoo and McRaith 2011). First conceptualised by Kelly (1988), the term 'gender violence' includes not only behaviour recognisable as 'violent', but further identified a spectrum or range of interactions and abusive behaviours as being

part of the same continuum of behaviour that reinforced the normalisation of sexual violence against women. The term is thus useful as it highlights the false distinctions between different forms of violence and also unpacks underlying and persistent practices that normalise women's subordinate position in society (Boesten and Wilding 2015). The continuum of violence - expressed in the everyday violence that women experience in their homes and in the public sphere - forces us to explore the structures of inequality that are at the root of such violations (O' Rourke 2015 cited in Boesten and Wilding 2015). In the context of transformative gender mainstreaming, this study shares Boesten and Wilding's assertion that:

'Recognising that women do not only face male violence ... during conflict, but before and after conflict on a massive scale means that interventions ... have an obligation to look at ameliorating the structures underlying this violence, whether they be the institutions, norms and values, economic relations or family structures that shape people's experiences, choices and opportunities' (Boesten and Wilding 2015, p.76).

Thus I believe abuse and coercive control to be fundamental to how we understand and define women's experiences of GBV in domestic and other contexts. I draw on Agtaie and Gangoli's useful insight that different forms of GBV may shade into one another 'each feeding into and being fed by the other' (Agtaie and Gangoli 2015).

#### **3.2.4.5 Understanding the Gender, Poverty, Violence Nexus through Marriage and Motherhood**

The concepts covered so far can be combined into an integrated critical feminist theoretical framework that will be used by the study to explore the **gender, poverty, violence nexus**. Key within this framework are the inter-related concepts of context, diversity, culture, and conflict as they are fundamental to the intersectional approach necessary to explore the lives of women who face multiple layers of discrimination and exclusion that are directly attributable to and go beyond their gender (Sokoloff and Dupont 2005). The framework used by the study also makes explicit the interconnections between the two domains of family life - marriage and motherhood - and their links with the socio, political and cultural context. It thus comprises further

components to deconstruct this complex nexus. These are informed by a combination of insights from feminist sociology of the family and feminist political economy. A fundamental concern within the latter approach is the role of power which it views it as operating:

'not only through coercion that may be visible and direct in its effects, but also through the material basis of relationships that govern the distribution and use of resources, benefits, privileges and authority within the home and society at large' (Erturk 2009, p.10).

This approach also emphasises the gendered politics of productive and reproductive labour and paid and unpaid work, and the wider conflict-affected macro-economic social environment (True 2010). It is thus helpful for unpacking the participants' subjective experiences and vulnerabilities to poverty and the gendered burdens they face raising their families amidst multiple forms of powerlessness, material deprivation, endless exhaustion and endemic violence (Erturk 2009).

Sophisticated strands within feminist political economy and feminist family literature focus on the culture and politics of marriage, motherhood, and intrahousehold gender relations, linking female subordination to women's identities as *wives and mothers* (Agarwal 1997; Ferree 1990; 2010; Jackson 2012; Kandiyoti 1988; Lynch *et al* 2009b). However, subaltern women as wives and particularly as mothers have received little attention in GAD and other feminist post-conflict literature. According to Enloe for example women's identity as mother is habitually overlooked as a category of analysis (2004). Within the North American and European gender and family scholarship, important distinctions are made between wife and mother. This helps illuminate that women are one thing when seen as wives and quite another when seen as mothers and the differential power these two kinship roles carry (Johnson 1988; Rich 1976). The distinction also shows that heterosexual patriarchal marriage, whilst separate from women's mothering, is a fundamental organiser of motherhood. It is motherhood as an institution rather than mothering itself that women's subordination lies owing to constraints on women to define themselves in terms of their relationship to men and their unequal differential worth compared to their husbands (Johnson 1988; Rich

1976). Rich thus posits that as patriarchal institutions, compulsory heterosexuality and marriage undermine the potential power attributed to mothering (Rich 1976).

A useful way of understanding the collective basis of marriage is the *conjugal contract* which mediates the terms under which the goods, incomes, and services including labour of husband and wife are allocated and distributed to meet consumption needs (Whitehead 1981). Motherhood meanwhile refers to mothers as a collective group, to the state of being a mother and to the qualities attributed to mothers (O'Reilly 2004; 2010). It is also a social institution characterised by specific meanings and ideologies that regulates human behaviour according to the needs of others and limits women to their nurturing role (Rich 1976). Rich distinguishes between motherhood as an institution under patriarchy and oppressive to women and motherhood as a relationship between a woman and her children (Rich 1976). These two concepts of motherhood are interlinked where one is superimposed on the other. Hence the idea of mothering which refers to women's female-defined and potentially empowering experiences of nurturing and caring for children which are performed in the context of the meanings and ideologies of motherhood (O'Reilly 2004). A further underpinning of the feminist family scholarship therefore is the distinction between the 'maternal' and male-dominated 'heterosexual' components of 'femininity' - with femininity being understood as a context specific cultural construct that emphasises women's weakness as wives and neglects women's strength as mothers (Johnson 1988).

Another major distinction within feminist scholarship is between marriage-based household units - characterised by co-residence and domesticity - and 'family', the ideology of relatedness that explains who should live together, share income and perform certain common tasks (Pearson *et al* 1981). Ferree (1990) has described the family as a cultural system of obligation, a 'tangle of love and domination', whereas the household is a locus of labour and economic struggle, a gender 'factory' where gender is produced and performed through carework (Berk 1985 cited in Ferree 2010) and allocation mechanisms. Feminists critique the view that relations and behaviour within the household and between family members are distinct and independent of the

outside world (Ferree 2010; Pearson *et al* 1981). They argue that the organisation of the family is as structuring as the organisation of the economy (Ferree 1990; 2010; Johnson 1988; Pearson *et al* 1981). Heterosexual marriage, women's mothering and the social assignment of early child care to women are recognised as structural universals. However assumptions are strongly criticised and rejected about the essentialising of femininity, that women belong to the realm of nature and that hierarchical relations between family members - the building blocks of household units - are 'natural' and therefore unchanging (Pearson *et al* 1981). Feminist scholarship thus challenges the notion that women have unlimited power and innate responsibility in the private domain for the well-being of children, the quality of the marital relationship and to prevent marital GBV (Ferree 1990).

Feminist research is concerned with marital relations and micro, meso and macro processes of social change, with a particular emphasis on the interconnections between gender and other forms of social inequality and intersecting historical, cultural and political forces (Ferree 2010). It is also concerned with individual and collective agency, rational choice and gendered subjectivities (Jackson 2012). This attention to structure and agency has been influential in critical analysis of gender in marriage, family change and the politics of care (Ferree 2010) in gender analysis of development and the links between gendered poverty and marriage (Jackson 2012). Marriage is often construed as an institutional structure with a gendered history that impacts on decision making and reproduces gendered identities (Jackson 2012; Kandiyoti 1988; Moore 2010). Research has shown how the conjugal contract often implies a battleground leading spouses to experience conflictual intrahousehold relations in such areas as unpaid labour, financial matters and forms of allocation and expenditure of 'shared' resources. Thus the household is not a collectivity of mutually reciprocal interests (Whitehead 1981) but rather 'a locus of competing interests, rights, obligations and resources, where household members are often involved in bargaining, negotiation and possibly even conflict' (Moore 1994 cited in Kandiyoti 1998). Drawing on Sen's model of cooperative conflict (1990), this understanding of intrahousehold relations counters the cooperative 'altruistic head of household' model and emphasises

relative bargaining power and agency in marriage and the gender differentials in breakdown position of spouses (Agarwal 1997; Ahmed 2014). The breakdown position of spouses refers to the ability of each to survive out of the marriage if it fails (Jackson 2012). These differentials are influenced by women's consciousness and perceptions of their self-interest and personal welfare (Sen 1990) and by constraints to women acting on those interests, including power inequalities and family norms (Agarwal 1997; Ahmed 2014; Ferree 1990).

According to Sen's (1990) cooperative conflict model, marriage weakens women's bargaining position seen where forms of marriage exchange objectify women, sever the support of natal kin, provide husbands with control over reproductive decision making, devalue women's unpaid labour and penalise divorce. Marriage has also been found to reinforce women's subordination when increases in male-based household incomes unleash latent patriarchal aspirations (Haddad and Kanbur 1990 cited in Jackson 2012) allowing the ideals of hegemonic masculinities – submissive and dependent wives – to be attained by husbands (Jackson 2012). The cooperative conflict model however fails to explain why wives' strong external breakdown position does not necessarily improve their bargaining power (Ahmed 2014; van Staveren and Odebode 2007). Paradoxically, strong fall-back positions can increase women's vulnerability to marital GBV as male unemployment 'thwarts' husbands' ability to fulfil the ideals of breadwinning masculinities. Meanwhile women-only interventions such as micro-credit programmes can lead to an increase in women's agency but also limit decision making power of loan recipients as a failure to address the relational dimension of gender such as oppressive masculinity can exacerbate conjugal gender inequalities (Ahmed 2014). For instance in van Staveren and Odebode's study on gender norms and the livelihoods of Yoruba women in Nigeria, an increase in women's economic empowerment left male status and the unequal distribution of burdens of unpaid domestic and care work unaltered resulting instead in 'male free riding on a symmetric economic norm, in an asymmetric context' (2007, p.923). Thus symmetric norms can produce unequal effects for women when they are dominated by asymmetric norms in contexts where laws and customs privilege men.

The cooperative conflict model is limited by its lack of focus on women's position relative to men and restricting ideas about gender justice to transforming subordinate notions of femininity – and not oppressive masculinities - by empowering women with resources and strengthening their external breakdown position (Ahmed 2014). Furthermore it neglects the effects third party interests might have on women's self-interest, decision-making and bargaining such as their children's actual well-being, given their role as primary caregivers (van Staveren and Odebode 2007). Having children can affect women's self-interest and the decisions and 'choices' they make even in situations of a strong fall-back position for example being employed. A more detailed analysis of norms complements the bargaining approach which is limited by its inability to disentangle the interaction between different institutions and explain why gender norms result in an asymmetric institutional setting for men and women even when certain norms are symmetric (van Staveren and Odebode 2007).

Jackson argues that marriage patterns gender relations and social change and mediates gender inequality (2012). Marriage can thus be understood as a relational institution underpinned by a variety of socially constructed norms that turn it into a 'bearer of gender' with unequal effects for men and women (Elson 1994). This is illustrated by the norm governing unpaid domestic work and childcare, activities which are unevenly distributed along gender lines and underpinned by relations of marriage and human reproduction and established understandings of masculinity and femininity (Mackintosh 1981). The gender division of labour is therefore the economic expression of the fundamental inequality of the marriage contract (Mackintosh 1981). As well as reinforcing it, marriage also challenges patriarchy, seen in women's ability to disrupt the formal power accorded to men in marriage – described as everyday forms of 'conjugal resistance' such as when women leave their husbands irrespective of strong social disapproval (van Staveren and Odebode 2007). Men's dependency on women as wives for producing children, sustenance, comfort and support can also disrupt patriarchy (Jackson 2012). This apparent paradox between the idea of male superiority, yet dependence on women 'suggests that the identity of 'wife' is not necessarily a micro inscription of macro patriarchy but reflects contradictions internal to patriarchy,

and offers grounds for subversion' (Jackson 2012, p.5). Critical to understanding conjugal power and agency is the character and extent of conjugal interdependencies. These are complex and include both the material and the emotional that are products of conjugal investments and attachments which generate affective power relations that influence bargaining and breakdown positions in non-material ways (Jackson 2012). However the cooperative conflict model – though concerned with agency and well-being - falls short of addressing non-material intrahousehold dependency relations, the more *affective* aspects of conjugality and marital quality (Ahmed 2014) or what Folbre considers essential components of the moral economy of the household (1986). These include such values as peace and love, sharing and caring (Ahmed 2014) all of which appeared as desirable features of family and married life in the narratives of most women participating in this study. Breakdown positions and good exit options are not necessarily indicative of women's desired outcomes of marital quality and everyday household well-being and thus do not drive intrahousehold power relations (van Staveren and Odeboode 2007). For example Ahmed's study of poor women's perceptions of marital quality in Bangladesh, shows that care relations and investment in fatherhood were key indicators of marital quality for women as it unites spouses toward a common purpose, thus sustaining mutuality. Using a 'peace-in-the-household- model to analyse findings, mutual altruism, peace and togetherness trumped bargaining power and emerged as central to the quality of everyday intrahousehold relations and the moral economy of marriage (2014). Critical to understanding household gender relations then are masculinities and the attitudes and practices of husbands with whom women share their lives.

In sum as women are differentially empowered and disempowered within marriage, the identity of 'wife' reflects more the contradictions internal to patriarchy than an inscription of patriarchy. This offers grounds for subverting patriarchy (Jackson 2012), suggesting that marriage is not necessarily an institution which enforces a gender order of male dominance but is an active field of struggle for voice, gender interests, and preferred outcomes with a fluid relationship to gender inequality (Jackson 2012). Critical to a gendered analysis of marital power and the exercise of agency is

understanding how power is expressed, controlled and thwarted in the everyday conduct of conjugality. To do this I extend Sen's (1990) bargaining model of intrahousehold relations to include Ahmed's (2014) 'peace-in-the-household' model and also acknowledge the tensions and inter-relatedness of symmetric and asymmetric norms and institutions (van Staveren and Odebode 2007). This means considering *interdependency* as a critical aspect underlying conjugal relations.

The study also views interdependency as integral to maternal cathexis which refers to the social construction of motherhood and femininity and the manner in which this generates and drives maternal altruism and women's moral obligation, sense of duty and responsibility to care for others. Interdependency is a key concept within the motherhood and care scholarship. According to Kittay we are all interdependent and this interdependence begins with dependence, a typical feature of the human condition, both in childhood, and at times of illness and infirmity (Kittay 1999). Vulnerability too is an inherent feature of human life (Fineman 2008) and as a consequence all of us need to be loved, cared for and cared about, rendering caring relationships fundamental for human development (Lynch *et al* 2009b). Dependants need care and those providing it require support so as to avoid incurring undue personal sacrifices. Providing care for dependants and intimate others is as much an activity as it is an attitude (Kittay 1999). It requires effort, time and energy that can be pleasurable and also burdensome. It therefore involves work (Lynch *et al.* 2009a). The extent to which society relies on the provision, typically by women, of love and care to children and other dependants has been highlighted by the feminist scholarship (Kittay 1999). It views care as a public human good and draws attention to the need for primary care obligations, responsibilities and activities to be rewarded and distributed equally between women and men (Hochschild 1989). Bubeck links an 'ethics of care' with issues of justice such as the unequal distribution of the burden of caring (Lynch *et al* 2009a). *Affective inequalities* occur when the burdens and benefits of care are unevenly meted out and also cause the carer emotional and material deprivations (Lynch *et al* 2009a). Feminist scholarship addresses these inequalities by paying particular attention to the role of power and how this social structure shapes other-

centred (primary care) relations and the interpersonal relationships involved in the care labouring of intimate others (Bubeck 1995; Folbre 1994; Kittay 1999; Lynch *et al* 2009a). Feminist research pays further attention to the ways in which affective domains of life are discrete but also interdependent on wider spheres of social life, a view that requires understanding inequalities in the affective system as interconnected to inequalities found in the economic, political and cultural systems (Lynch *et al* 2009a).

Bubeck argues that the moral imperative to perform unpaid family care work is much stronger for women than it is for men (1995). This kind of work involves physical childcare, emotional work, cultural work and sexual labour. Attachment and care rely on human capacity to connect emotionally (O'Brien 2009). Affect and feelings are fundamental to moral action and thinking as they enable us to care about and for others. They underpin caregiving activities such as listening, planning, empathising and comforting (Hochschild 1989). Emotions, ideology and cultural norms are interdependent. Emotions are generated by unconscious desires and dominant cultural norms, the emotion culture of society and the prevailing gender order (O'Brien 2009). Emotions also generate attachments and commitments to cultural and social norms. It is these culturally shaped emotions that enable and move mothers to care for their children in ways that are not available to men as fathers as they differ from dominant forms of caregiving masculinities (O'Brien 2009) as according to a gender order that relies on a static and dichotomic view of gender, motherhood and fatherhood represent two distinct varieties of parenthood, where the respective parental emotions and practices are conceived of as inherently different. Hegemonic ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood influence the emotionally charged ideas about caregiving and breadwinning. Ruddick (1994 cited in Arendell 2000) argues that even if they differ culturally and individually, mothering practices share a common set of activities that include nurturing, protecting and responding to children's basic needs.

Even though femininity and motherhood and their association with the provision of unpaid care labour are gendered, classed and raced, these have been examined mostly from a white western perspective with the result that dominant social constructions of

motherhood do not reflect the realities of non-Western mothers (Bhopal 1998). Like McMahon (1995), who posits that there is no universal ideal of motherhood, Arendell (2000) insists that women's various standpoints and social locations must be considered, as cultural and economic contexts shape mother's perceptions and experiences. A view of motherhood as culturally derived suggests that women from different cultural backgrounds might have different experiences of motherhood (Thurer 1994 cited in Liamputtong 2006). For example, in some cultures social norms dictating 'good' motherhood may be associated with the importance of bearing male children to continue the ancestral line (Bhopal 1998), or caring for children's physical needs, and guiding children to success in life (Liamputtong 2006), what Bourdieu refers to as 'cultural capital' (1984 cited in Liamputtong 2006). Other social structures, such as class determine women's experiences of motherhood and their sense of caring responsibilities toward their children. For instance, whilst the social identity of poor women may be preoccupied with the prevailing cultural ideas defining 'good' motherhood, in reality, their experiences might be determined by the context of material deprivations and thus consumed with the daily struggle of providing adequate food and shelter to make sure their children live (Liamputtong 2006). Mothering also takes place in different family arrangements and interactional dynamics. Some mothers contend with not alone economic hardship but also alcohol abuse and threats and acts of GBV (Arendell 2000).

Arendell argues that mothering has been viewed as synonymous with caring (2000). Maternal practices include emotional content and care relations between mother and child. These create physical, emotional and moral claims on the mother providing women with purpose and identity (Arendell 2000). Chodorow (1978) and McMahon (1995) too suggest that through motherhood, women enact their moral identity – defined as one of giving and caring, or an ethics of care and responsibility for others. Presenting oneself as a 'moral' actor is integral to a sense of belonging and is typically measured against socially acceptable social norms, for instance about how individuals conduct 'proper' family life (May 2008). Liamputtong refers to motherhood as a 'moral career' which is related to the concept of self-identity and adulthood (2006). It is

bounded by femininities and a gender identity allowing women obtain a 'loving, caring and responsible' feminine identity (McMahon 1995). Integral to women's moral career are their children, who 'have become social objects of great cultural worth. They carry the symbolic power to transform women's identities' (McMahon 1995). When women's responsibility and ethics of care for their children are internalised, they represent a 'female morality', furnishing motherhood with high moral value (McMahon 1995). An emotional attachment to the idea of motherhood then provides the impetus for women and generates their ability and willingness to care for and about children. Johnson (1988) distinguishes between using and doing gender. The logic of emotion plays a role in the division of labour. Emotional energy shapes the way in which people do gender. It thus creates expectations for women to bear children and mothers to prioritise the needs of their children over their own (May 2008). Arendell argues that the dominant ideology of motherhood leans towards intensive mothering (Arendell 2000) which mandates the mother to be entirely child-centred and emotionally involved, portraying the idea of the 'good mother' as one that is wholly devoted to the care of others and without needs and interests of her own (Arendell 2000). Intensive motherhood assumes and reinforces the traditional dichotomic gender-based division of labour, assigning the mother to the private family sphere doing unpaid care work, and the father to public sphere, with the former domain representing dependency and intimacy and the latter world outside the home synonymous with independent adult life.

A significant activity of women's caring work involves feeding the family (DeVault 1991). When discussing the oppressive consequences of women's attachments to relations of care, DeVault states that food preparation in the family has traditionally been a female praxis and preserve. In *Feeding the Family*, she further argues that cooking as caring represents a way of doing gender where 'a woman conducts herself as recognizably womanly' (1991, p.118). DeVault insists that the work of feeding is invisible as work, as it involves both physical and mental labour. It is also a social practice, constructing both 'family life from day to day' and women's 'own place within the family, as one who provides for the needs of others' (1991, p.48). Feeding the

family is caring work not only because it involves providing nutritional sustenance but it also demands emotions and care for intimate others as 'the food provided for a family cannot just be any food, but must be food that will satisfy them' (DeVault 1991, p.41). Following DeVault, the gender and food scholarship explores the emotional significance invested in feminine ideals of care. Aarseth and Olsen make the point that women's identity with food differs from that of men's as women are bound by the connection between food, care, and femininity which relies on relationships of obligation and responsibility around food (Aarseth and Olsen 2008). Contemporary scholarship highlights that the tendency for women to do the majority of food work still persists (Cairns *et al* 2010).

Emotionally charged and dominant ideas about motherhood contribute to and maintain the outlier position of men, making it emotionally easier for fathers to remain detached from caring responsibilities and obligations typically felt by women and limiting their participation in the intimate care of others. They create differences in the ways that 'good' motherhood and fatherhood (a moral self) are constructed, allowing fathers to pursue a more individualistic moral imperative of self-care, whilst mothers place their children first so that the ethic of care for children or other-centred' care remains paramount for women (May 2008). Men's primary family role has typically involved that of income providing (Arendell 2000). The 'good provider' role represents a major component of the norms of masculinity, where men's income status is linked directly to their sense of worth. Whilst this role imparts certain male privileges such as domestic power, it curtails their intimacy and nurturing activities. Hegemonic masculinities that embrace ideals of male authority and the subordination of women (Connell 1995; Hanlon 2009) write out and vilify 'feminine' attributes in men, given the threat they pose to male dominance (Beasley 2005 cited in Hanlon 2009). Hanlon makes the point that this gives rise to contradictions between the need to realise hegemonic masculinity and the negotiation of affective relational identities creating 'crisis tendencies' in gender relations with negative consequences for the well being of both women and men (Hanlon 2009).

According to Arendell, mothers experience more parental strain than do fathers. In the context of poverty, economic hardships and child care are the primary strains on married mothers who experience higher levels of anger than do fathers who do little to ease wives' burdens (Arendell 2000). A common experience of motherhood is distress, defined as 'symptoms of depression, anxiety, psychological malaise, and lack of happiness' (Goldstein & Ross 1989 cited in Arendell 2000). Maternal distress is associated with maternal employment, having multiple children with little support, having inadequate material resources and living in crowded conditions.

Drawing an important parallel distinction between women's orientation towards interdependence and dependence, Johnson (1988) highlights how interdependence is connected to women, who *as mothers* care for and nurture dependants. Meanwhile dependence links women *as wives* to subordination, passing from the control of father to husband as perennial children. In this way patriarchy can be construed as a potent form of juvenilisation of women by men (Johnson 1988). So whilst constituting separate domains, women's mothering and heterosexual marriage are interrelated (Johnson 1988). Motherhood makes marriage more conventional (Thompson and Walker 1989). Meanwhile through marriage mothers become wives and this basic element of kinship systems enables them to be controlled by men. Marriage, which tends in many cultures to be male-dominated and compulsory defines wives as lesser partners or of less comparable worth to their husbands and organises gender relations in ways that serve to control women's mothering (Johnson 1988).

The argument that 'women are strong as mothers but made weak by being wives' (Johnson 1988, p.269) can be explained by the male-dominated context underlying marriage inequalities and by maternal altruism, an ideology underpinned by norms that expect the mother and wife to prioritise the needs of family, including husbands and children over their own (Whitehead 1981). A fundamental aspect of the conjugal contract these norms gender access and control over resources and the performance of unpaid domestic work and childcare. Interacting with power inequalities, maternal altruism weakens women's equal share in household resources and control and use of

their own income. Wives' income often limits their power as it enables husbands to re-direct their own earnings for personal expenditure, whilst women surrender financial control once their earnings are brought into the household and get directed towards family needs (Whitehead 1981). Household allocation systems incorporate, express and construct gender (Ferree 1990) seen in the ways family secondary poverty in households headed by men who do not share their earnings challenges the idea that family income is shared among all members equally (Ferree 1990). Chant has provided strong empirical evidence about men's propensity to spend money on themselves and women's tendency to spend their 'personal' money on family needs; that not all of men's incomes go into a common pot. Gender norms still imply that men have 'spending money', that men's money is 'their' money that might or might not get put into the household budget (Chant 2007; 2008). Thus not all monies that enter the household are equal but carry gendered meanings that allow them to be earmarked.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

Gender mainstreaming has come under strong criticism for neglecting the longer-term goals of challenging gender-based inequalities. This neglect is associated with conceptual incongruities undermining gender mainstreaming and constituting its meta-paradox, leading to conclusions that the transformative potential of gender mainstreaming is impeded by a persistent lack of clarity about gender. Based on such claims, this chapter established the theoretical framework guiding the aim of the study which is to come to an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the concept and its interconnection with poverty and violence. Adapting Heise's ecological model and Connell's social theory of gender to these two themes dominating women's narratives, it also delineated the gender-relational-intersectional approach and the analytical framework used to study this complex nexus, a major underpinning of which is the understanding that women's poverty is gendered, multidimensional, multisectoral and experienced in a variety of ways, at different times and in different 'spaces', impacted by a host of social, economic, demographic and other cleavages. Recognising the complex relationships and interactions between all of these factors, and drawing on

Chant's feminisation of family responsibility and obligation, the study puts forward an understanding of women's 'gendered poverty' that is flexible and dynamic enough to accommodate a number of indicators including vulnerability to GBV, 'overwork', 'dependency' and 'powerlessness'. It thus incorporates feminist assertions that rather than income, it is these subjectively interpreted and experienced dimensions 'that may be as, if not, more relevant to women's perceptions of disadvantage, and to the 'trade-offs' they are able to make between different aspects of poverty' (Chant 2010a, p.3). The study also highlights the importance of integrating context, diversity and culture when researching gendered poverty and GBV, arguing that such aspects of women's lived realities needs to be part of our understanding of structural inequalities. Given the links between structural inequalities (structural violence) and GBV, the study introduces the concept of a continuum of violence as I believe this can help understand how GBV is perceived, experienced, perpetrated and perpetuated in conflict-affected contexts. Within this, I use the concept of intersectionality to show that gender identity is key to the study of GBV because of the close relationship between GBV and patriarchal control. So whilst recognising the importance of intersectionality and that markers of identity beyond gender mediate women's experiences of poverty and violence, gender remains constant for my analysis, given the wider patriarchal gender order that prevails everyday life in Timor-Leste. I thus move beyond 'classic' understandings of intersectionality where no one identity is paramount. Overall this study is committed to a social relations approach whilst also following a structuralist gender perspective. Illustrated in Figure 2, the nexus between gender, poverty and violence is explored primarily from a care economy perspective which is further nuanced by a focus on two empirically interrelated but analytically distinct domains of family life - marriage and motherhood. How gender-specialised motherhood is sustained through marital interaction and how gender difference and specialisation in the domains of marriage and motherhood is reproduced is therefore an important line of inquiry of this research.

## CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY

### Researching Everyday Life with Timorese Women Methodology, the Ethics of Praxis and Interactions in the Field

#### 4.0 Introduction

This research gives voice to Timorese women most of whom told me that they wanted the Government of Timor-Leste and those outside their *suku* and Timor-Leste to know about how much they are suffering. The purpose of this methodology chapter is to explain how this process has taken place. It sets out the research paradigm guiding the study, discusses the various dimensions associated with the fieldwork and critically reflects on the ethics of the research process and praxis. Adopting a constructivist solidarity-based feminist standpoint and using qualitative methods with research participants enabled me to gather the women's narratives and own accounts of their experiences and begin to understand how they made 'sense' of their everyday family and married lives in relation to gender, poverty and violence. To describe this process I have divided the chapter into six sections. The first is broadly concerned with assumptions about knowledge and understanding gender in everyday life that underpin the research. This sets the scene for subsequent explanations as to how the research was designed and conducted, what and why particular research methods were chosen. It also explains how the findings were analysed so as to produce a persuasive piece of reliable and valid research that can serve to inform transformative gender policy and effective emancipatory feminist action. After a short presentation of the study sites and participant profiles, section 2 describes 'interactions in the field', how I came to know what I now know about women's experiences of gender and the pivotal role and benefits of grounding the research in a culturally women-centred approach culturally rooted in Timorese ways of doing and seeing things. This discussion provides justification as to why I made the choices I did in terms of approach,

techniques and methods. Next, section 3 briefly describes how the data were recorded, managed and analysed. Section 4 presents short profiles of the study sites and sample composition and characteristics. Section 5 critically reflects on the ethics of feminist research praxis. It pays attention to some of the challenges and 'balancing acts', practical and ethical, and the cross-culture, language and power issues I encountered, overcame and eventually learnt from. Section 6 considers the limitations of the study.

#### **4.1 Generating Knowledge and Understanding Women's Experiences of Gender in Everyday Life**

Focusing on issues broadly relating to power, knowledge, language and culture, this section describes the overall approach followed by the study to address the research question and its central concern, namely, the meaning of gender in the context of women's everyday lives.

##### **4.1.1 Knowledge, Gender and Power: Taking A Constructivist Feminist Standpoint**

This research is motivated by controversies over the conceptualisation of gender in the theory and practice of gender mainstreaming that impede its transformative potential to bring about gender equality between women and men and between women. Meanwhile the substantive and specific area of inquiry - the gender-poverty-violence nexus – provides a way of looking at the dominant themes emerging from the narratives collected during the fieldwork. To address the gender conundrum, chapter two established the study's conceptual and ecological-organisational framework. Grounded in feminist structural perspectives, this research takes in multidimensional, relational, intersectional and inter-subjective conceptualisations of gender, poverty and violence. Fundamental to this inquiry is the constructivist epistemology that understands reality and everyday life as constituted by a multiplicity of subjective experiences, and non-material elements including ideas, thoughts, desires, fears and emotions and upon which knowledge, interpretations, perceptions and multiple claims and competing accounts of reality are based (Moore 2012).

To generate knowledge and understand women's exploitation and oppression the study drew on standpoint theory shared by Collins (1990) Hartsock (2004) and Smith (1987). Feminist standpoint theory allows women to share some common experiences of subordination and exclusion from knowledge production across their differences and intersecting inequalities (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). This allows for more nuanced and fine grained definitions of gender and of gendered poverty employed by this study which integrates the views and multiple identities of poor women themselves and focuses on social relations rather than on women as a single category (Jackson 2010; Moore 2010). Responding to Moore's emphasis on 'affect' and on gendered subjectivities implicit in the interrelations between gender and poverty (2010) the study incorporates Smith's notion of 'women's standpoint', taking a 'women's perspective' as a method of inquiry. This has meant privileging the voices of women by locating and beginning the research in their subjective experiences of living in poverty and with violence, told in their own words, and then interpreting those accounts and competing statements about their gendered lives and everyday social reality (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002; Smith 1987). Given the study's commitment to transformative feminist politics, Hartsock's historical materialist approach (2004) and specification of 'a feminist standpoint' also appealed to me and shaped my approach to the formulation of the research focus, questions, fieldwork and the everydayness of the research, data analysis and writing up. Feminist standpoint is potentially empowering because 'it provides knowledge of how gender relationships work in actual situations, and so offers a basis for transforming them' (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, p. 70). This methodological stance relies on a political feminist consciousness exposing real relations of gender subordination necessary to the operation of patriarchy, relations of which people are typically unaware of or blind to because they do not think with feminist consciousness (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002, p. 68). What is at stake in feminist standpoint – and of particular significance to this project - are not connections between experience and reality but rather *relations of power* as a distinctive kind of obstacle to the production of knowledge. Hence the strong articulation between an ambition driving this research project - which was to

make women visible who normally go unnoticed in governmental policies because of their social position - and the ambition of feminist standpoint which is 'specifically about challenging, from the position of the marginal, silenced and subjected, the conceptual practices of power, the 'view from above' (Cockburn 2013, p.10) As I wanted to understand structures of relations of subordination I choose a feminist standpoint as it offered me ways to 'dig deep' and explain the often-invisible power relations embedded in gender. I was interested in creating a situation in which Timorese women would 'talk back' to power from the perspective of their everyday experience thus addressing 'the brutal history of women's silencing' by authoritative male discourse (Smith 1987).

In every phase of the research project, this meant acknowledging Timorese women's subjective experience as fundamental to knowledge about their gender relations, thinking about the ways in which gender knowledge is interrelated with participants' experiences and their social realities of gender and being cognizant of the interconnections between knowledge and power and how this had the potential to determine whose voices can be heard. Furthermore by drawing on this approach I was able to pay attention to both the diversity in women's experience and to reflexively examine my own research identity making my own values visible. An essential component for disrupting hierarchies in the feminist research project, reflexivity is both epistemological – how we should learn about knowledge, as well as methodological – how we conduct research to acquire this knowledge (Nencel 2013). A feminist standpoint incorporating both of these dimensions addressed the ethical considerations of researching gender sensitive and traumatic topics in such a conflict-affected context as Timor-Leste. It offered ways of de-constructing how experiential or affective dimensions of gendered poverty and violence are shaped, the processes by which specific types of violence are legitimised, and how anxiety, silence and fear and survival and denial are central to research about gendered violence (Hume 2007) and poverty. It thus allowed me to incorporate into the research the almost entirely neglected concept of 'affect' and the relational and emotional dynamics fundamental to women's experiences of gendered poverty and violence. Meanwhile there were

other dimensions of 'situatedness' fundamental to a feminist standpoint that were appealing to the study which was careful not to conceptualise the contours of the research relationship as 'ontologically pre-defined' (Nagar & Geiger 2007 cited in Nencel 2013). In other words whilst remaining sensitive to 'ethically important moments' throughout the research process, I tried not to rely on assumptions about the power relationship between myself the researcher and the research participants nor the 'vulnerable' subjectivity of (potential) research participants many of whom were survivors of violent victimisation. Drawing on feminist standpoint enabled human agency, reflexivity and intersubjectivity to be experienced and performed situatedly depending on the research contextuality. This aspect of a feminist standpoint was also in fitting with the study's post-colonial stance concerning feminist epistemology, reflexivity and what kind of knowledge the relationship between the two should produce (Nencel 2013). As will be discussed later in the chapter this helped to illuminate and address the complexity of interconnecting power relations between women and make visible the hidden power relations of knowledge production, what Smith considers to be the 'underpinnings of gender' (1997, p.395 cited in Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002).

#### **4.1.2 Qualitative Methodology**

Whilst gender analytical work values both qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Jackson 2002), qualitative methodologies are particularly valuable for capturing different forms, multiple dimensions and the gendered nature of poverty and violence. Such methods 'are capable of producing additional data necessary to understand how poverty is experienced by women and men, and to reveal the intersection between poverty, gender and other markers of identity, including age, ethnicity and religion' (Bessell 2010, p. 63). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), qualitative methodologies emphasise hidden processes, contexts, rich descriptions, interpretations and specificities of peoples' lived experiences. They include a set of interpretive activities that are sensitive to an individual's standpoint, their own understandings of the world around them and how they make sense and meaning in

their lives. Acknowledging the contextual nature of the inquiry and the embedded nature of research, they are better equipped than quantitative and participatory approaches for capturing social processes, social relations, power dynamics and the 'quality' of gender equality in every day life. They are also more effective for in-depth exploration of subjectivities and experiences that include opinions, attitudes and feelings. For example and resonating with the narratives of women participating in this study, the World Bank's *Voices of the Poor* drew on qualitative approaches to reflect on multiple aspects of gender anxiety in the household as features of women and men's subjective experiences of poverty (Narayan *et al* 2000). Moore, who draws our attention to the absence of a theory of gendered subjectivities in gendered poverty analyses, describes subjectivity as about 'the thoughts, desires, fears, emotions and perceptions experienced by each individual' (Moore 2010, p. 37).

As discussed in chapter three of the thesis and fundamental to nuanced understandings of gendered poverty underpinning the research topic, there is now a growing recognition that poverty encompasses more than income (Bessell 2010). Following Sen, Bessell reminds us of the potential more complex conceptualisations of poverty and more qualitative methodologies offer for reflecting the lived experiences of the poor. Such expanded definitions include social and human deprivations - familial, social, recreational and educational deficits (Bessell 2010). Coates also makes the point that as an individual's experience of poverty goes beyond the material and is affected by a variety of social, cultural and political processes, an exclusive focus on material poverty fails to adequately reflect its complexity, the interrelationships between its different causes, aspects and processes and the more intangible aspects that demand more qualitative techniques (2010). Yet even as more sophisticated multidimensional approaches to understanding poverty are being developed, inadequacies remain. Some of the critiques concern the aggregation of poverty data at the household level, as these do not provide scrutiny of intra-household access to and control over resources thus ignoring the impacts power asymmetries have on gender relations and the bargaining power of different household members (Bessell 2010; Jackson 2002; Kandiyoti 1998; Whitehead 1981). Some other qualitative methodologies address

these inadequacies by focusing on the individual – not the household - as the unit of analysis and exploring the relational character of poverty and processes and inequalities within and beyond the bounds of the household (Jackson 2002). The relational consideration of the individual as the unit of poverty analysis was particularly significant in the realm of the present study's attempts at understanding the gender-poverty-violence nexus and addressing the conceptual lacunae undermining transformative gender mainstreaming. Understanding intrahousehold relations offered the study the possibility of exploring the complexity of economic, social and emotional calculations made by women when making decisions under the influence of inter-familial power relations and practices (Quisumbing 2010). It extended ways of seeing how poverty played out according to women and men's gender, how gender shaped women's place and relative status in the household and the unequal distribution of material and affective inputs, burdens and rewards (Bessell 2010). Compatible with the ecological and intersectional approach outlined in the previous chapter, it also helped to draw out how gender played out differently across multiple settings and household-types illuminating the manner in which intergenerational and other axes of power relations gendered poverty and GBV.

The research focused on women's own accounts and experiences of everyday life (Robben & Nordstrom 1995 cited in Hume 2007). These kinds of data are inherently qualitative and cannot be easily quantified. It began with and listened to women themselves, whose suffering was so commonplace it was often rendered invisible by the routine of everyday life. Okin considers that it is precisely this type of methodology – listening to voices rendered silent by power relations - as urged by Ackerly in her call for feminist social criticism - that can provide an invaluable reference point for scholars seeking to contribute to a more expansive, human concept of development (Ackerly 2000 cited by Okin 2003). For example a recent and much celebrated effort that moved away from recognisable forms and unidimensional definitions of poverty, was the World Bank's *Voices of the Poor*. This large-scale study broke new ground drawing heavily on qualitative methodologies and participatory methods including group discussions to listen to the views of the poor themselves and capture their experiences

on a range of issues. Placing far higher priority on empirical qualitative data, the study generated insights into the 'complexity, diversity, and dynamics of poverty as a social as well as an economic problem' (Narayan *et al* 2000, p. 25), and into the role of institutions in people's lives, how people themselves understand, define and experience poverty and how gender relations within the household affect experiences of poverty (Narayan *et al* 2000). For instance, the participatory methods uncovered multiple forms of GBV experienced by the women in my study. These included verbal abuse, deprivation, physical violence, drinking and gambling by men, polygamy, promiscuous behaviour, property gambling, dowry and bride price, divorce and desertion, teenage pregnancy and violent in-laws (Narayan *et al* 2000).

My choice of research paradigm needed to be flexible, opportunistic and heuristic in order to explore the multiple dimensions of women's lives, that include individual experiences, feelings, perceptions and values. A qualitative approach was deemed suitable to pursue this owing to its use of probes and open-ended questions that affords research participants control over discussions and opportunities to raise issues important to them. These methods allowed me to situate myself in the world of Timorese women's lives, pay attention to the contextual nature of the research, the daily constraints within the every day social world (Denzin and Lincoln 2003) and understand and respect *lisan* and Timorese ways of interacting. I also opted for the qualitative approach as the research process needed to be sensitive. In conflict-affected contexts, qualitative approaches have been found to be critical for uncovering the real meaning of the gendered impact of various forms of violence and the underlying cultural or patriarchal causes that explain women's situation during and after the war. I anticipated that exploring women's experiences of gender in everyday life would unearth topics such as violence and the loss of loved ones and thus 'require extraordinary delicacy in eliciting information from respondents (Herzberger 1993 cited in Hume 2007). I used the qualitative approach to achieve this 'extraordinary delicacy' bearing in mind the ethics of care. Qualitative feminist methodology offered the appropriate basis for capturing unique knowledge about women at local level taking in their cultural specificity and historical background indispensable in explaining social

reality and understanding the 'messy particularity of life' (Jackson 2002, p. 504).

#### **4.1.3 Qualitative Research Methods**

According to feminist researchers qualitative interactive methods encourage researchers to '[...] give voice to personal, experiential, and emotional aspects of existence and to deconstruct power relations in research. [...] These approaches to data production are valued for respecting the understandings and experiences of research subjects, and making explicit the politics of knowing and the possibilities of empowerment' (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002 p. 155). To conduct fieldwork and collect data, I drew from a selection of interactive interview techniques allied to the 'emancipatory' goals and principles of feminist standpoint theory that include focus group discussions (FGDs) and unstructured, semi-structured and in-depth one-to-one interviews (DeVault 1996; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). My two principal research methods were one-to-one and focus group interviews.

##### **4.1.3.1 Qualitative Interview Methods: one to one interviews**

The one-to-one interview represents the dominant research method employed by the study to collect the data. Whilst well accepted, it is necessary to briefly review the critiques and potential pitfalls of using this tool in research practice. Oakley problematises the normative masculine paradigm that informs what is considered appropriate interviewing. She is critical of its restrictive one-way question and answer format where the interviewer remains friendly but detached objectively and refrains from answering questions and expressing opinions lest the interviewee is biased (2001). This way of interviewing is seen by Oakley as creating a hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, placing the interviewee in a subordinate position. She argues that interviewing is a dialogue and responding to interviewees' questions is a critical part of the process. In practice it is difficult to establish a non-hierarchical relationship with interviewees without being moved by their lives. Oakley points out that the mainstream masculine paradigm is critical of affect or 'emotions'

and 'sentiments' as these are thought to obstruct objectivity (2001, p. 18). Furthermore choosing to disengage or refusing to interact substantively by ignoring respondents' questions both shuts down the dialectic and exploratory nature of qualitative research but also reinforces power inequalities and accentuates the exploitative nature of the research relationship (Oakley 2001).

According to a typology of different forms of interviews, namely the information extraction model, the shared understanding model and the discourse model (Franklin 1997), the shared understanding model follows a set of guidelines according to a semi-structured format which according to Kelly *et al*, has become the paradigmatic feminist method (1992). The interviewer engages in the interview process with an open-mind, uses probes to encourage dialogue and exploration of the topic and also seeks clarification when and where appropriate. Meanwhile the discourse model encourages the emergence of new themes during the interview process and cross-connections between interviews. Interactions between the interviewer and interviewee are conversational as the former responds to questions posed by the latter. Importantly this type of qualitative interviewing establishes a collaborative relationship disrupting unequal power relations.

Less intrusive and 'masculinist', the shared understanding and the discourse models are said to be more egalitarian and appropriate for research that seeks participants' own perspectives (Franklin 1997). For these reasons, when conducting my research, I considered these as more suitable for developing a holistic understanding of women's everyday lives and more appropriate in terms of the ethical stance of the study that sought to make the situation as non-hierarchical and non-exploitative as possible. One of the greatest values of using unstructured and semi-structured interviews in my study was that they allowed for open-ended questions and probes giving Timorese women some control over discussions and space to talk about what was really important to them. Although being a foreigner, a non-Asian, and a white middle class woman from Europe made it impossible to erase the separation between myself and the research participants, the interactiveness and flexibility of these methods helped me to avoid

imposing my ideas and opinions, influencing conversations or inserting my own bias too much into research findings. These techniques enable women to frame the specificities themselves, offering their subjective experiences and perspectives on their social reality (Bryman 2004).

#### **4.1.3.2 Qualitative Interview Methods: focus group discussions**

The focus group discussion (FGD) was the second main research method used to explore women's everyday experiences of gender. This technique was very much consistent not only with the aims and nature of the study but also with the ways in which Timorese women have historically shared information and used conversation with other women to confront issues of oppression and engage in political activism (Conway 2010). According to Madriz (2003) FGDs respond to the limitations of 'individualistic' techniques used in structured one-to-one interviews. Whilst the objective is not to reach a consensus, FGDs emphasise the collective rather than the individual. They provide opportunities for participants to discuss issues important to them unanticipated by the researcher (Bryman 2004) and to share opinions and ideas as well as disagree and challenge each other - what Denzin calls 'interpretive interactionism' (Denzin 1989 cited by Madriz 2003) in a safe and familiar space. The collective nature of the technique serves to validate aspects of women's daily experiences and resistance strategies, as multiple voices challenge, cross-check and reaffirm these experiences. In this way the collective setting empowers women participants to speak out and exchange information which in turn triggers awareness raising and a political consciousness that common experiences of oppression are not just individual but also structural (Madriz 2003). The collective testimonies also expose the different dimensions of power and domination that frame these experiences. According to Oakley women can be empowered to set and direct a social justice agenda on their own terms (1981 cited in Madriz 2003). Madriz (2003) points out that FGDs provide the opportunity for participants to express themselves with fewer inhibitions. In feminist research, as the aim of FGDs is to give voice to the subjective experiences of women, this technique uses less direct methods that facilitate

participants in articulating issues familiar and relevant to them, than the structured interview. Similarly in the in-depth interview the researcher exercises caution not to direct or influence the substance of discussions. The group setting helps to minimise the possibility of 'otherisation' and the subject-object dualism by reducing the control the researcher has over the data collection process and re-directing the balance of power towards the group so that the substance of the collective interview, rather than fitting neatly into the researcher's agenda, is set, led and prioritised by the interview participants who become 'constructors and agents of knowledge' (Madriz 2003). The FG setting also enables the researcher to observe the interaction among the participants and the interplay of power within the group understanding of the opinions, attitudes, and beliefs of interviewees.

#### **4.1.4 Inter-cultural and multi-lingual research: Knowledge, Understanding Language and Culture**

The social constructionist paradigm and qualitative methodology were particularly suited to this research project given the importance afforded to the issue of translation beyond a methodological footnote within this approach (Temple and Young 2004). As data in this study were collected in a non-English speaking society, the research was difficult to conduct. Researching and working across three languages (English, Tetum and Fataluku), all stages of the research process involved acts of interpretation and translation between languages and issues that included hierarchies of language power, situated language epistemologies and, naming and speaking for people seen as 'other' (Temple and Young 2004). The fieldwork for this research also took place in an intercultural context. According to Brislin and Yoshida (1994) culture can be defined as consisting of concepts, values and assumptions about life that guide behaviour and are widely shared by people. I use the term intercultural as it acknowledges cultural diversity and suggests interaction, understanding and respect.

The social constructionist paradigm acknowledges the translator and the act of translation as shaping the co-production of knowledge alongside the researcher, their

location within the social world and by consequence their view of it (Temple and Young 2004). Claiming there is no neutral position from which to translate, it acknowledges power relationships within the research and raises issues concerning the specific conditions pertaining to language - what Spivak (1992 cited in Temple and Young 2004) describes as the 'politics of translation' and the hierarchies implicit in translation. Temple and Young also claim that the translation of meaning and the representation of people who speak other languages are shaped by hierarchical relationships and power differences between languages and by the way in which the researcher views the world. In a similar vein Alcoff (1991 cited in Temple and Young 2004) argues that representing the 'other', or speaking for others, irrespective of the vernacular, is always a political act as it involves the use of language to construct self and other.

Qualitative approaches within plurilingual and cross cultural social science research (Temple and Young 2004) are thus concerned not only with finding equivalence between words across languages but also integrating the role translators play in co-producing knowledge. What becomes important therefore are discussions between researchers and translators about the data they collected, translated and transcribed, teasing out choice of words, perspectives on the translation and transcription process and different interpretations of the data. Edwards asserts that when interpreters are viewed as 'key informants' rather than neutral transmitters of knowledge, conversations about different understandings and worldviews across languages can emerge (1998 cited Temple and Young 2004).

Temple and Young argue that boundaries between translation and other roles are always blurred when political decisions are made that bring translators out of the shadows of the research. When fully acknowledged and included in the research process, translators perform a number of functions including: gateways to the community; cultural advisers; data collectors in first language; credibility givers; accessors of networks, knowledge and know-how; contributors to the interpretation of data (2004). Given such multiplicity of roles, from experts in the comprehension of language to assistants in the planning and conduct of the research (Baker-Shenk and

Kyle 1990 cited in Temple and Young 2004), questions arise about how much power translators and those without academic status as co-researchers actually have in the research process. Jones and Pullen move this beyond the issue of power, to '[...] an epistemological question because that interaction is part of the social construction of the research product' (Temple and Young 2004, p. 173). In an attempt to level the playing field, researchers acknowledge the cultural brokering role translators play by drawing on their intellectual autobiographies and carrying out research with translators as key informants and active participants in data analysis and co-production of knowledge. Whilst it might not succeed in dislodging the English-speaking world from the central position it holds and it can nonetheless make room for 'difference' on baselines of understandings.

#### **4.1.5 Site and sample selection techniques**

##### **4.1.5.1 Study Sites and Sampling Techniques**

Single study sites are often chosen for their intrinsic value, or a phenomenon or specific issue to be studied. In my research selecting multiple study sites was more appropriate as I was not interested in a 'critical' or 'unique' case (Yin 1994). I considered selecting participants from several different sites to be more robust. A total of 4 *sukus* were chosen to maximise representativeness given my limited time and resources for the fieldwork. The study sites were located in 2 of Timor-Leste's 13 districts, Lautem District, the furthest eastern district of Timor-Leste and Dili District, the country's largest district containing the capital city Dili (See Appendix E). To protect the identity and privacy of participants, the names of study sites have been changed. I refer to the urban study sites as Usululi and Harupai both located in the heart of Dili city and Marobo and Tafara as the rural study sites. Criteria for site selection was based mainly on the rural/urban cleavage, knowledge of the area and convenience and practical issues, such as personal safety, availability of interpreters and community facilitators, physical accessibility and my own financial resources and time constraints. I

chose Dili District as it offered me a wide variety of urban sites to select from and a convenient base from which to plan the entire study and collect urban data. I chose Lautem as I had previously lived and worked in this district and was familiar with its cultural, ethnolinguistic, geographical and territorial features.

The process of selecting the study sites began once I arrived in Timor-Leste. I consulted a selection of relevant secondary data materials including the latest national census but relied heavily on purposeful interactions with Timorese staff working in government agencies such as SEPI, and national and international NGOs and the donor community. These consultations were vital as they provided me with local knowledge about the existence of *sukus* previously unknown to me, particularly urban ones, and their suitability for the study in terms of personal safety and availability of women leaders, community facilitators and interpreters to liaise with when setting up and implementing the study. Usululi, my first study site was suggested during several consultations as, compared to other *sukus*, it was known to have limited infrastructure, poor housing and was home to some of the poorest families in the city (personal communication July 2012). Meanwhile Harupai, my second urban site, stood out as a commercial hub.

According to the literature, qualitative interviews should be based on saturation (Denzin and Lincoln 2003). However it is sometimes difficult for qualitative research to determine when an adequate sample has been achieved. Mason, who argues in favour of saturation but also acknowledges its practical challenges in the PhD. D context, claims that for projects similar to mine, 30 interviews is about the average (Mason 2010). Although each of the 4 *sukus* was developed as a full and complete study site and my research interest required a diverse group of participants, I aimed to recruit 15 participants in each site, given the number of sites and limitations imposed by my own resources. This raised the project's target sample size to a total of 60. This allowed me to include two language groups as well as urban and rural women of a broad range of ages and marital status not explicitly stratified by class backgrounds.

#### 4.1.5.2 Recruitment Techniques

Study participants in focus groups and one-to-one interviews were recruited on the basis of self-selection, purposive and convenience sampling using outreach and snowballing techniques (Bryman 2004). This combination gave me access to purposeful sample elements as they were identified by successive interviewees. Purposive sampling methods enabled me to select women of different ages and marital status and also based on their position in the village as elected women representatives. This ensured that the sample reflected a range of different women. As strategies for gaining access to social settings and recruiting research participants, I also employed a 'hanging around' and 'personal' recruitment strategies and convenience sampling and relied heavily on trustworthy 'gate-keepers' and 'key informants' (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). In all 4 sites my initial focus group participants were identified with the assistance of Timorese professional networks including community leaders – *xefi suku*, elected women representatives (EWRs), elected women youth representatives (EWYRs), secretaries of *suku* councils and *xefi aldeia*. My initial contact with recruiters was face-to-face as this personal approach was considered most appropriate to build trust with community members when conducting research in Timor-Leste as well as in contexts where women may be reluctant to participate in interviews.

Strategies for gaining access to social settings and recruiting research participants were used with ethics and cultural sensitivity in mind, ensuring accountability and transparency, while bearing in mind the practical implications of conducting research at *sukus* level and the political implications of the research topic (Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). For example I delayed study set up until after the announcement of the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections and following the advice of my community facilitator I postponed recruitment and data collection in rural *sukus* on several occasions when certain cultural events were taking place. To ensure transparency and accountability towards local leadership structures, I sought permission to conduct the study from *xefi suku*, provided them with local language information sheets which I used as the framework to introduce and explain the project,

and kept them informed of all stages of the study as it progressed. Ensuring transparency and accountability also meant establishing links with women's networks and making myself and the study known to the *xefi aldeia* and any other aspects of the *suku* leadership structure prior to and throughout implementation in each site.

## **4.2 Interactions in the Field**

### **4.2.1 Fieldwork Issues**

I arrived in Timor-Leste on May 16th 2012 and conducted my field work for the next 8 months, listening to Timorese women describe to me their experiences of everyday life. The study was conducted sequentially in the 4 sites, 2 urban and 2 rural. During the first 4 months I lived in Dili, where I planned and set the study up and then collected data in the urban sites. Once complete, I moved to a rural *suku* in the far eastern part of the country to live with a Timorese family. From there I based myself for the next 3 months, collecting data in two neighbouring *sukus*. I then returned to Dili for the final month with the intention of conducting further interviews and collecting secondary data materials.

When I arrived the country was preparing for national parliamentary and presidential elections. These were scheduled to take place in mid-July across the country. I was encouraged to be mindful of my presence and to not implement the study at community level until after their completion. As I had already lived in Timor-Leste and was familiar with issues of personal safety and democratic processes in conflict-affected situations, I followed this advice. Thus it was not until 2 months post-arrival that I finally began to engage with Timorese community life at *suku* level, familiarise myself with the micro-context of my research and initiate project set-up with *suku* leaders. This 8 week unplanned 'waiting period', served a number of purposes and turned out to be extremely productive. Aside from dealing with visa and other administrative affairs, I established contact and consulted widely with Timorese actors knowledgeable on gender equality issues and with experience conducting qualitative

research at national and sub-national levels. I recruited, briefed and trained interpreters and community facilitators, held information sharing and co-learning workshops, translated written materials and piloted oral research language and data collection methods. In consultation with Timorese researchers, I designed the study framework (Tetun *mata dalan*) paying specific attention to its urban / rural and language and cultural aspects. I mapped and identified study sites, the governance structure and key actors in each *suku*. I also participated in language courses to improve my Tetum and attended various national and international events relating to my research topic. By the end of the waiting period, I felt confident that an organic gender and culturally-sensitive research framework had grown out of my partnership with Timorese colleagues and, that this would be acceptable to research participants and gatekeepers alike and serve the study for the duration of the fieldwork. Equipped with 'our' *mata dalan*, I was now ready, very excited, and nervously eager to engage with the leadership and women living in Usululi, the first of two urban sites chosen for the study. Whilst I continued to draw on the framework for the next 6 months, the context and diversity within each *suku* required me to adapt it accordingly, especially amongst the Fataluku-speaking communities in rural *sukus* of Lautem district. This made fieldwork in each site a unique experience.

Fieldwork was conducted only during daylight hours. In urban areas, I lived in the centre of Dili, at a close walking distance to both Usululi and Harupai. This offered me a generous number of hours and easy physical access to research participants and gatekeepers on a daily basis, which helped to expedite the fieldwork. In rural areas, as Marobo and Tafara were located approximately 15 km apart and 7 km respectively from where I lived, physical access to both study sites was restricted and very unpredictable as motorised transport was limited, unreliable if not unavailable most of the time. My daily access to study sites over the 3 months relied on a combination of hitch-hiking and walking long distances in intense heat to implement all aspects of the fieldwork, from study set up and conducting permission seeking meetings to hanging around, outreach and data collection. Thus, the window of opportunity to conduct the fieldwork was restricted to a limited number of daylight hours.

Data was collected in the 4 study sites sequentially. In each site, the study was implemented over an intense period of about 6 to 8 weeks under specific time-frames dedicated to set-up, recruitment and interviews. The fieldwork was untidy and instead of being neatly contained to specific time-frames, it was messy and unpredictable. This required me to juggle multiple phases and aspects of the fieldwork in several sites simultaneously. For example whilst setting the study up with gate-keepers in suku Harupai I was conducting interviews in suku Usululi and also interacting with NGOs to select community facilitators and interpreters for the rural study sites. In the evenings I also transcribed what interviews I could but this was restricted mainly to when I was living in Dili. During the rural phase of the study I attempted transcribing and other aspects of the study occasionally on my bed under my mosquito dome. However this type of work was difficult to undertake owing to my living conditions, power cuts, tropical climate and the need for me to reserve my energy to maintain momentum and complete data collection that was physically challenging. Recruitment, data collection and interactions in the second, third and fourth villages benefited enormously from the experiential learning that took place during the course of the fieldwork in Usululi, the first study site, making the application of a 'retrospective design', as used in the case study approach, also appropriate for this type of study.

#### **4.2.2 Inter-cultural and multi-lingual research**

Data was collected for the study in 2 of Timor-Leste's fifteen indigenous languages. These included Tetum – the lingua franca of Timor-Leste and national language that unites all Timorese citizens and Fataluku, a language totally unrelated to Tetum. Throughout the fieldwork in all study sites, I hired Timorese colleagues who acted as community facilitators, gatekeepers and interpreters and to whom I broadly refer to in the study as colleagues rather than assistants. I hired Maria to translate all documents relating to the study from English into Tetum. At the time of the study she had been working for about 5 years through English as a full-time interpreter/translator and administrator with a bi-lateral donor agency whose work in Timor-Leste promoted gender equality. She was studying for a degree in English at university. Maria's first

language was Tetum and she understood and spoke fluent English. To implement the study in the first site, Usululi, I hired Fina who worked as community facilitator and Maria and Hugo who worked as interpreters. Only Hugo had ever worked with other researchers before. He was also the only male directly involved in the study. All 3 colleagues were aged between 20 and 30, had grown up in Dili and none were actually from suku Usululi. At the time of the study Fina was rearing her baby infant in a joint-family setting where she had been living for over 5 years as a consequence of marrying a man from the *suku*. She was very familiar with Usululi and its bairros (neighbourhood), community structures, leaders and residents. Fina's first language was Tetum and she spoke and understood almost no English. She had worked mainly as a waitress in local restaurants. She had no previous exposure to western concepts such as gender, to interpreting or had experienced working with foreigners. Hugo lived with his wife and child in a neighbouring *suku*. He had over 5 years professional experience working for a Timorese NGO promoting land rights and gender equality. He had worked as an interpreter/translator and as a research assistant on several peer-led projects. He had participated in training provided by Fokupres focusing on sensitive approaches to working with women survivors of conflict-related human rights abuses and GBV. His first language was Tetum and he understood and spoke fluent English. To implement the study in the second urban suku, Harupai, I hired Martinha who worked as community facilitator and again Maria as sole interpreter. Martinha grew up in the mountains and moved to Dili over 20 years ago when she married her husband with whom she reared a family of 6 children. She was familiar with Harupai and its bairros, community leaders and some residents. Martinha ran her own NGO that focused on rural women's economic empowerment, and was also attending university at weekends. She had never worked with foreigners or with other researchers before. Her first language was Tetun and she understood and spoke little English.

For both rural locations, Marobo and Tafara, I hired Nata as community facilitator, interpreter and translator, Juvintina as FDG facilitator, Rita as an interpreter and Maria Rosales as an additional interpreter to verify the Fataluku transcripts against the original recordings. Nata, Rita and Maria Rosales were from the Fataluku ethno-

linguistic group, and Juvintina was Masai. All four women were aged between 25-35 years. Some were married and rearing small children. None were living in the *sukus* participating in the study. When I met Nata first she was living in Dili with her marital family but re-located with her young daughter to live with her parents in *suku* Raca where I also lived for the duration of the rural study. Her first language was Fataluku, she was native Tetum speaker and she understood and spoke fluent English. She completed secondary school in Dili and this was her first professional research experience. She had no previous involvement in any kind of translation work or research activity, and had limited exposure to western concepts such as gender. As the daughter of a *Lia Nian* who was also a prominent community facilitator, Nata was familiar with *suku* governance structures and interacting with *xefi suku*. Her family were also originally from the first study site, Tafara. She also knew residents in Marobo. Meanwhile, Juvintina was rearing her young family in Raca. Her first professional post, she acted as the outreach worker for the NGO but was not involved in this work at the time of the study. She had no previous experience in any kind of research, community consultation or facilitation. She had completed secondary education. Her first language was Makasse a local dialect and upon marrying recently she had learnt Fataluku. She spoke fluent Tetun and understood and spoke a little English. Finally Rita was working in the district capital Lospalos. Her first language was Fataluku, she spoke Tetun and was a fluent English speaker with a wealth of experience conducting community outreach, workshop facilitation on such topics as peace and reconciliation and GBV. Of my three Timorese colleagues, only Rita had ever worked with foreigners and other researchers before.

At the time of the study, both professionally and personally I had experience of working and living across languages and being involved in the dilemmas of translated worlds. I graduated from University with a degree in French and Italian, worked in several non-English speaking countries, and became proficient in other languages. I had also spent some years working in intercultural and multilingual environments where English was the working language, rendering everyday translated communication between colleagues normal. Prior to this study, I had also co-

coordinated a range of culturally-sensitive community-based consultation initiatives in Timor-Leste and my own country, Ireland. As gender focal point with the UNTAET, and with the guidance of Timorese colleagues, I had experience engaging in discussions with Fataluku-speaking women through an interpreter. I had also gained valuable intercultural experience interacting with Irish Traveller women rearing families in marginalised and impoverished circumstances in the west of Ireland.

#### **4.2.3 Negotiating Access in the 'field'**

A convenience and self-selected sample of 130 women was recruited and interviewed using focus group discussions and semi and unstructured interviews in participants' language preference, Tetun in Dili and Fataluku in the rural areas.

To initiate study set up, community facilitators and I met with the suku leadership, including xefi suku and elected women representatives, and when necessary on a number of occasions. I introduced the aims of the research, explained the process of data collection and secured permission to conduct the study. These meetings also provided input into the recruitment process, as 'gate-keepers' offered to provide support if needed (Lincoln and Guba 1985). For example, many made commitments to participate in disseminating information about the study and also volunteered to accompany me during outreach visits. As soon as I secured permission to implement the study, and with the help of EWRs, I initiated the process of recruiting focus group interviewees through a combination of purposeful hanging around and community outreach strategies. This took place in each aldeia of the study site over a 2 week period, usually ending just before implementation of the FGD. The outreach strategy involved systematic door-to-door home visits to almost every household, where community facilitators and I introduced and explained to women the research aims and process. Women had the opportunity to ask questions and I also explained how information was to be interpreted, recorded, stored and kept private. As these interactions aimed to consult with women for their opinions as much as it did to recruit them into the study, they also provided input into set up as, when asked, women indicated when, where and how it suited them best to participate in the event.

Information about the date, time and FGD venue was disseminated through word of mouth and flyers during a second round of door-to-door visits. Gate-keepers and key informants' involvement was vital as it served to ensure wide coverage, particularly in very dispersed aldeias in rural areas where it also served to dispel suspicion and fear amongst isolated communities and explain the study in language familiar to rural women. Overall my embodied presence through 'casual hanging around' and 'focused community outreach' strategies proved extremely useful, not just as ways of raising awareness about the study and recruiting participants. They also provided women with opportunities to ask questions about the research and about myself. This was important as people were curious about me and I was also keen to build a rapport with them. I wanted to be upfront about my presence in their suku and felt by hanging around and engaging with people on a routine basis would serve as a transparent and accountability mechanism and a way of addressing power relations and the subject-object divide. I also hoped these strategies would dispel fear and avoid creating confusion, social jealousy and tensions between neighbours. It was also a way of building mutual trust and generating interest in the study.

The process of recruiting one-to-one interviewees took place mostly during the FGDs when participants were invited to self-select and indicate when and where they preferred the interview to take place. As a female and male interpreter were present at the Usululi FGD, participants were also invited to indicate their preference for either interpreter. The FG setting proved beneficial as participants had already gained an understanding of study aims, process and interviewing techniques, had engaged in discussions about gender and had built up a rapport with myself and with the interpreters. During several one-to-one interviews I also received referrals to other women who might be interested in participating in the study. I usually followed this up by approaching the woman herself and calling to her home to schedule an interview with her. Several interviewees also self-selected and contacted me themselves.

#### **4.2.4 Sample Size**

The study was conducted sequentially in four sites, two urban and two rural. An estimated 130 women participated in the study through group and one-to-one semi and unstructured interviews in respondents' language preference. This was just over double the target sample size. I had planned to continue interviewing participants until saturation had been reached. Theoretical saturation occurs when further interviews do not offer any new themes (Guba and Lincoln 1985). However I over-recruited beyond saturation for a number of reasons. First, the sample size for all focus groups far exceeded, and sometimes doubled their targets, something which I did not anticipate and found difficult to strictly control. For reasons related to physical access, I held two FGDs in one rural study site that was comprised of remote and dispersed aldeia. Additionally, at least two thirds of FG samples self-selected to participate in individual interviews. There was a very low rate of no-shows in this study. Furthermore in terms of the one-to-one interviews, I did not end sampling even when I sensed no new thematic information was forthcoming from some interviews. This was partly due to the exploratory and representative nature of my research and that I had not yet determined themes or categories, or established how much detail was needed in the study. At times I felt unable to decide whether the data collected were rich enough and covered enough depth or areas of interest determined by the research objectives. Thus I found it difficult to establish whether additional sampling would have been necessary. Also, given the fact that Timorese women have been traditionally silenced from speaking out about issues important to them, there were occasions when - even though I had well exceeded my target sample size for individual interviews and reached theoretical saturation - I did not turn down or turn away women who expressed an interest in the study. These recruits had been unable to participate in FGDs but were especially keen to have their voices heard and so sought me out and made special requests and arrangements to get involved. Thus, rather than strict theoretical saturation, the sample size was influenced by a recruitment strategy guided by my own ethics and duty of care, women's historical exclusion and lack of opportunity to have their voices heard, the general level of interest amongst women, access and availability, and the number of women that could be interviewed within an appropriate

time frame.

In the end the sample size was broken down as follows: in Usululi, 25 women participated in the FGDs and 20 in one-to-one interviews; in Harupai, the sample was 36 and 26 respectively. In the rural site of Tafara, I conducted two FGDs, one in Tafara proper and another in *aldeia* Tono and the sample size for each was 13. Meanwhile a total of 15 women participated in one-to-one interviews. In Marobo, the FG sample size was 25 and 15 women participated in one-to-one interviews. The final sample size of the entire study is approximately 130 rather than a precise figure as it was there were some inconsistencies in the documentation of FG recruits (See Table 2).

#### **4.2.5 Data Collection Process**

I used focus group discussions (FGDs) and one-to-one interviews as the two main qualitative research methods to collect data for the study. Participants names have been changed so as to protect their identity and privacy. Interviews were conducted in participants' preferred language in the presence of an interpreter. Also according to preference, individual interviews took place in women's private homes and FGDs were held in secondary schools and community halls. The first few moments in every group and individual interview were critical. In a brief time I had to create a thoughtful, permissive and respectful atmosphere and set the tone of the discussion. Much of the success of interactions and discussions were attributed to the development of this 'mindful' and open environment. In the beginning of each group and individual interview I took time to explain the aim of the study, the purpose and running order of the event, and its style which was to be discursive and exploratory. I invited participants to seek clarification and to identify guidelines they believed would enable meaningful participation. After jointly agreeing a framework that included understandings of various concepts such as confidentiality, I sought permission to document and record discussions and demonstrated how the project ensured participants' right to privacy. I re-iterated that participants could leave the FDG or the interview at any time, without having to provide an explanation. I mentioned the

possibility that sensitive issues may arise which could trigger painful emotions for participants. I referred very briefly to services that were available to women. To ground and initiate the process of exploring everyday life experiences, participants were then invited to take a few moments to mindfully interact with guided reflections (see Appendix A). which were led and read aloud by an interpreter. This quiet-time provided participants with a chance to rest and relax, re-connect and be with themselves and re-collect their thoughts about their daily lives. The main theme running throughout the reflections was self-compassion and this served to centre participants and make them feel 'at home' and comfortable sharing their experiences.

FDGs were held in private, comfortable, convenient and familiar public settings, free from distractions such as observers and noise. I conducted a total of 5, 2 of which were held in different locations in 1 rural study site so as to facilitate the participation of women living in dispersed communities. Although the target sample size was 15, the average was 23 and the size in each site was as follows: Usululi: 25; Harupai: 36; Tafara-Tono: 13; Tafara-Tafara: 13; Marobo: 25. FDGs with large sample sizes were intense, difficult to manage and capture nuance and complexity. To help implement each FGD, I hired a minimum of 2 colleagues who acted as co-facilitators, note-takers and interpreters. Also due to large numbers, focused discussions had to take place in break-away mini-groups. Participants named and regulated their own groups and also identified a spokesperson who would give feedback in the wider group. This process helped establish local ownership of the research from the outset and also helped participants to associate the mini-group sessions with the wider FDG process. Whilst the environment and settings were informal, my colleagues and I maintained active roles to ensure all participants had the opportunity to be involved. Information was captured in written format in source language on flip charts. De-briefing meetings were held immediately after each event during which time flip chart notes were translated by FDG interpreters and written up by myself. I later transcribed the audio-files. I sent the transcripts to interpreters for correction, comment and/or amendment. I also entered field notes into my PhD journal.

All FDGs followed a similar format or *mata dalan* comprising an introductory session, 3 break-out sessions and one wider group session. There were one light refreshments break and a lunch break. Introductory sessions lasted approximately 15 minutes each. Almost every FGD was opened by a women's leader with a short a prayer and a few words, usually acknowledging the event as an opportunity for Timorese women to raise their concerns and talk about issues important to them. This was immediately followed by introductions and icebreakers to put everyone including myself at ease. Icebreakers were used to warm-up, energise and motivate everyone throughout the event, but were key ways of breaking down power relations from the outset as they usually transcended inhibitions, triggered laughter and put a fun-provoking and welcomed spot-light on the *malae* (English: foreigner)!. During the introductory session I also explained the aim of the study, the purpose and running order of the FGD, and its style which was to be discursive and exploratory. I invited the group to seek clarification and to identify guidelines they believed would enable meaningful participation. The introductory session ended with the guided reflections which provided a bridge for the subsequent break-out sessions.

Briefly, the discussions generated throughout the focus groups benefited from both wider and breakout groups that were facilitated by translators who also acted as note-takers. The breakout groups were specifically guided by a set of prompts that whilst related to everyday family life, were broad enough to allow participants to frame the specificities of their lived experiences themselves. Probes typically moved from general responses eliciting descriptions of women's daily activities to more detailed accounts of participants' nuanced experiences of material and affective hardships. These were often accompanied by concrete examples of these experiences. Break-out sessions lasted approximately 40 minutes each. They were carefully structured around a set of predetermined probes – usually no more than 3 (see Appendix B) – but the discussions were free-flowing so that participants' comments stimulated thinking and sharing. Participants were actively encouraged to not only express their own opinions, but also respond to other members and probes posed by the facilitators. Questions and probes were phrased so that they were conversational, easy for participants to understand and

able to foster natural social interaction that was open and spontaneous among participants. They were also sequenced intentionally so that they went from the general to the specific where early probes set the stage for conversation and subsequent ones focused on more important topics. Certain probes were used to get participants actively involved by brainstorming, listing and sorting. Discussions were captured on flip-chart by a designated note-taker. Finally the wider group discussions lasted approximately 20 minutes and served as plenaries when smaller groups reconvened and were invited to give feedback, share and challenge thinking and generate further discussion and evaluate the event.

The FGD was chosen by the study for its typical ability to generate discussion amongst women and shed light on issues previously unexamined in Timor-Leste and considered important to women. The FGD specifically overcame the problem with regards to both literacy and the ongoing consolidation of Tetun as a national language. For example in the rural sites, the participation of those who were illiterate and did not speak Tetun - representing the vast majority of respondents - was made possible by the nature of this research method that did not rely on written text and allowed for discussions to take place in women's preferred language. Despite these advantages, a few limitations emerged as to the use of the FGD as a dominant research method. For example, the method was sensitive to the influence of the researcher, particularly as a foreigner, on the process of data-collection. This required me to invest a significant amount of time in casual talking, building trust and clarifying the nature of the research both during sample recruitment and each FGD. The difficulty of being an outsider was compounded by the nature of the research that touched on the family and other sensitive issues. It was difficult for Timorese women especially as part of a larger group that sometimes included clan members to speak to outsiders in a negative way about their family. Thus the act and presence of a person coming from outside of a community to explore such issues was sometimes viewed with caution especially in rural areas. Whilst I had prepared for almost any eventuality, the exceptionally large turn out in 3 of the 5 FGDs was unanticipated. FGDs with large sample sizes were intense, difficult to manage and capture nuance and complexity. The break-out sessions and the small size of the sub-

groups elicited rich data. However participants were inhibited and found it difficult to express themselves during wider group discussions. This was especially evident in 1 FDG that was dominated by more mature women who were more confident and vocal. I realised that younger participants were inhibited and hesitant to voice opinions. Power dynamics also inhibited some women from speaking freely about their experiences of GBV as influential discussants decided 'on behalf of the group' not to bring a discussion on the issue into the public domain, feeling GBV was too sensitive and a private family matter. This observation contrasts with Madriz's argument that participants can express themselves without inhibitions (2003).

Data collection also took place through one-to-one interviews. This type of research method required good listening skills which are described by Mason as being able to observe verbal and non-verbal cues relating to a social situation, notice the mood of the research participant and recognise affective aspects such as whether they are upset, tired, angry, bored, fearful or embarrassed. I conducted a total of 76 individual interviews and the sample size in each study site was as follows: Usululi: 20; Harupai: 26, Tafara:15; Marobo: 15 women. Almost all interviews were held in private, convenient and familiar settings, although not so free from distractions such as observers and noise as they were in participants' homes. Interviews followed a loose structure comprising an introduction, a discussion guided by exploratory probes and an ending guided by exit probes. I have already described in the above section the substance of introductions during individual interviews. Just as in FGDs, these short sessions ended with guided mindfulness, which set the scene for the subsequent exploration of everyday life experiences. Additionally participants were invited to share whatever socio-demographic information they wished about themselves. Resonating with Connell's social theory (1987) and on the basis of the aims of the research, this generally included women's approximate age, parent and marital status, family setting, occupation and so forth. Meanwhile a 1:1 interview guide with open-ended minimum number of probes (see Appendix C) facilitated the flow of conversation during each interview, the style of which typically depended on the participant's preference for the shared understanding model or the discourse model as some women were more or

less keen to interact with me, ask questions and establish a connection. I found 'collaborative' interviewing based on dialogue between the research participant, my colleague and I helped to build trust and rapport. This put participants at ease and made them feel comfortable speaking and sharing information about issues that were important to them. In sum, and as mentioned earlier in section 4.1.3.1, the one-to-one interview was selected for the typical reason that it provides both interviewer and participant more latitude to discuss ideas as they emerged in conversation. This meant that, whilst focusing on everyday life, given the nature of this research method, the interviews, like the focus group discussions, frequently evolved into framed discussions, such as experiences of affective and material hardships and GBV to past experiences of trauma, loss and displacement during the Indonesian occupation. Furthermore in Timor-Leste the semi-structured and open-ended model of interviewing seemed to be culturally appropriate and familiar to research participants as it represented a form of oral exchange that allowed for some degree of narrative discussion between interviewer and participant. This made the participation of women with limited literacy skills all the more accessible. There were a few limitations to using one-to-one interviewing however. Despite its advantages, it still is a particular form of exchange where being interviewed requires speaking on a subject matter with an outsider and in a way a person might not normally.

#### **4.3 Recording, Managing and Analysing data**

In accordance with NUIG ethical requirements, with verbal consent and permission of each research participant, I recorded one-to-one interviews on a dictaphone. Study set up, recruitment, data collection and the process of transcribing the data often took place simultaneously. Typically I transcribed each interview within a day of the interview taking place. De-briefing meetings at the end of each week allowed me to seek necessary clarification. To ensure accuracy each transcript went through a rigorous and lengthy process of review by a Timorese colleague involved in the respective interview, making it possible for them to fill in inaudible words and clarify any linguistic and cultural ambiguities. To maintain anonymity any identifying information was removed from the transcripts. For FGDs I also wrote up the flip chart

and any other hand-written notes immediately after de-briefing meetings. All audio-recordings, transcripts and notes were stored on a personal laptop that was kept in a secure filing cabinet in my accommodation. The data analysis strategy followed a general inductive approach that was directed by the data, the research paradigm and the research objectives (Creswell 2003). As the study sought to to examine how women's 'lived experience' of gender is created and given meaning, the study employed qualitative content analysis of narratives describing everyday real life. This involved searching for underlying categories or empirical *themes* that had emerged from the data during the research process (Graneheim and Lundman 2004; Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Shannon). According to van Manen (1990, p. 87 cited in Graneheim and Lundman 2004) a theme describes 'an aspect of the structure of experience' and answers the question 'How?' Creating themes in this study was a way to link together underlying meanings or a recurring regularity in the narratives. In line with the inductive and exploratory nature of the inquiry, the approach avoided imposing preconceived categories or conceptual frameworks, instead allowing the text to speak for itself and for the themes to flow directly from women's unique experiences. This approach influenced the subsequent design of the analytical framework and its selection and incorporation of substantive and context theories.

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frameworks, instead allowing the text to speak for itself and for the themes to flow directly from women's unique experiences. This approach influenced the subsequent design of the analytical framework and its selection and incorporation of substantive and context theories.

Instead of using computer packages for analysis, I decided to employ a straightforward iterative thematic analysis using sustained and repeated reading of transcripts. This enabled me to maintain greater closeness with each narrative and each participant when I returned to Ireland from the fieldwork. Furthermore by close-reading the interviews through several times, I achieved deep immersion in the data. This helped me to gather a sense of the whole (Graneheim and Lundman 2004; Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Shannon) and interpret the narratives and my own impressions and memories in a nuanced and sensitive way. As soon as threads of meaning began to emerge from this process, they were extracted and brought together under patterns. The next step was to distil recurring patterns allowing for a number of sub-themes or sub-subthemes to emerge at varying levels of abstraction. The most significant and frequent of these were clustered and finally formulated into a theme. The two themes dominating the data were gendered poverty and GBV. Owing to their apparent interconnectedness and the intertwined nature of human experiences, the themes were not exclusive (Graneheim and Lundman 2004). Thematisation was further assisted by a simultaneous and on-going review of the literature relating to the data, women's subjective positions, specifically as mothers and wives and the empirical conflict-affected context. This provided relevant headings to unify the sub-themes into themes. Sustained and simultaneous review of the transcripts, themes and scholarship helped uncover deeper, or more layering of patterns and themes. Multiple close readings of the transcripts captured the complexity of women's lived experiences and identified differences between and similarities within patterns, sub-themes and themes. This approach involved systematic comparisons and worked qualitatively and conceptually instead of counting the frequency of patterns, differences and similarities. Finally a process of reflection and consideration of women's localities and Timor-Leste's socio-historical-economic political circumstances and shifts further helped distil and analyse

the data. Representative quotations from the transcripts provided credibility and confirmability of research findings in terms of how well the themes cover the data (Graneheim and Lundman 2004). These were especially used throughout the empirical chapters, also providing direct commentary and illustrating nuance on specific issues. The choice and design of the analytical framework integrating Heise's ecological framework with Connell's meta-theory of gender and power was arrived at after completion of the fieldwork and the initial thematic analysis of women's narratives. Following the constructivist paradigm, this grounded the analysis in the data, the context, profiles and subjective positions of the research participants. It also provided for a deep theoretical understanding of participants' subjective experiences of gender, as it allowed for an iterative process that incorporated substantive and context theories that were directly relevant to the data and the environment in which participants were living.

#### **4.4 The Research Participants and Study Sites**

This section is designed to set the empirical micro-context by briefly introducing the study sites and describing the characteristics of the research participants.

##### **4.4.1 Study Sites**

Data were collected at *suku* level, in four study sites, two urban and two rural. I refer to these throughout the thesis as Usululi, Harupai, Marobo and Tafara. Usululi and Harupai, the urban *sukus* are located in Dili district, specifically in Dili city, the district and the national capital (see map, Appendix E). The rural *sukus*, Marobo and Tafara, are located in Lautem district which is situated in the easternmost end of Timor-Leste. These districts are broadly representative of the rural and urban areas of the country.

Dili district is situated on the north coast of Timor-Leste. Usululi and Harupai are located approximately a 20 minute and a 10 minute walk from Dili city centre, the Parlamento Nacional building and the main national government offices respectively.

In the census of 2010, the population of Harupai was estimated at 2,593, of which 1,428 were male and 1,165 female. There were 334 households with 291 were headed by men and 43 headed by women. Household size at subdistrict level was an average of 6.3 people per household. Harupai covers a land area of about .22 square kilometres and has one of the highest population density in Dili of approximately 11,000 persons per square kilometre (See Table 1).<sup>11</sup> It lies close to the coastal road and families and households occupy houses built on land between two canals containing accumulated debris. The estimated population in Usululi according to the 2010 census was 4,323, with 2,318 male and 2,005 female. There were 817 households, 674 of which were headed by men and 143 headed by women. The average household size is 6.14 people per household in the subdistrict. Usululi covers a land area of .62 square kilometres, and there are approximately 6,998 persons per square kilometre. Located slightly more inland the settlement was established by the Indonesian administration during the occupation and was home to the Indonesian military. Heavy military presence has continued in Usululi post-independence. Homes built on swamp land. Homes are built on swamp land which is problematic for its residents living in dilapidated housing particularly during the rainy season.

Like other *sukus* across Dili city, there are multiple ethno-linguistic groups represented in Usululi and Harupai owing to various forms of migration, re-settlement and displacement that took place throughout the Portuguese and Indonesian administrations and more recently during the country's first decade of independence. Thus the residents living here do not comprise a single homogeneous bounded community, but rather a number of communities. As is common in Timor-Leste, families in Usululi and Harupai tend to live in traditional multi-family dwellings, sharing accommodation with other households, including extended family members. Households often constitute parents and their adult children as well as conjugal families, elderly parents, parents-in law and adult siblings. Housing arrangements are complex and based on different forms of occupancy, including privately owned or

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11 Timor-Leste population density is approximately 82.4 people per square kilometre. Dili surpasses all other Districts with a population density of 689 persons per square kilometre.

rented accommodation. Land ownership may be state, customary or private much of which is under dispute. The structural quality of families' homes is generally poor especially in Usululi. Overcrowding is a serious common problem and living space is limited such that it is not unusual for one or two-roomed flimsy structures to double up as sleeping, cooking and storage spaces, forcing family members of different genders and ages to sleep in the same cramped room.

Lautem district, home to the rural *sukus*, Marobo and Tafara is situated in the easternmost end of Timor-Leste. The 2010 census estimates its population at 59,787. The capital of the district is Lospalos town, situated 248 kilometres east of Dili. Marobo, one of the two rural study sites is approximately 8 km from Lospalos town. In the census of 2010, its population was estimated at 2,455, 1,225 males and 1,230 females. There were 454 households, with 335 headed by men and 119 headed by women. The average household size in the sub-district was 5.5. Marobo covers a land area of 99.33 square kilometres and the population density is about 24 people per square kilometre. Tafara the other rural study site is approximately 27 km from Lospalos town. In the census of 2010, the population was estimated at 1,889, 932 males and 957 females. There were 359 households, 269 headed by men and 90 by women. The average household size was 4.8 people per household in the subdistrict (See Table 1).

Even though some of the *aldeias* in Tafara and Marobo are clustered together so that the population in the respective area is relatively dense, there are nevertheless some remote *aldeias* with a variously dispersed population. This is an issue especially in areas with poor infrastructure leaving communities isolated and making access to basic services and essential resources problematic. As communities in both *sukus* are dominated by the Fataluku ethno-linguistic group, they are far more homogeneous than those in the urban *sukus*. Families generally live in private single detached dwellings built on a spacious plot of ancestral or customary lands. Whilst they do not appear to face similar problems of overcrowding as compared to those living in Harupai and especially Usululi, the structural quality of shelter in both these *sukus* too is poor,

often resembling flimsy shacks built almost entirely of rusting and flimsy zinc and bamboo. It is not uncommon for domestic animals to have easy access and share space with people in rural homes.

Whilst the two urban *sukus* have better access to education, health and infrastructure services, all four study sites had visibly poor living conditions, characterised by insecure tenancy, overcrowding and dilapidated housing with limited access to clean and piped water and basic sanitation facilities. It was uncommon for households in any *suku* to have their own pit latrine, wash unit and manual water pump and those who did shared these facilities with many other family units. Water was thus only available by communal or shared access to a few public but mostly privately owned hand pumps. Not all of the houses were electrified and none appeared to have access to any form of sewage infrastructure and waste disposal system. Households also tended to lack individual or private wash units, adequate kitchen, cooking areas, facilities to store and prepare food and furniture to provide families with basic levels of comfort for essential daily functions. Typically housing in Usululi, Harupai, Marobo and Tafara did not provide for protection from climatic conditions and was often built in areas prone to flooding, particularly Usululi and certain low-lying *aldeias* in Harupai. Community and family life was thus made more arduous by the disruptive and damaging effects of heavy flooding inside and around already physically insecure dwellings. In rural areas the consequences of dilapidated housing during the rainy season included loss of agricultural produce stored at home.

Whilst there were visible differences in standards of living between urban and rural *sukus*, these were not dramatic. In 2011, the GoTL's *Sensus Fo Fila Fali* process – meaning 'returning the census to the *suku*' - disseminated the results of the 2010 Timor-Leste Population and Housing Census (NSD 2011). The results distinguish between 5 groups of *sukus* ranked by the asset-based measure of living standards. In this summation, quality of housing represents the key factor in the ranking. According to the ranking, the urban and rural *sukus* participating in my study belong to groups with the highest and the second reported highest standards of living. However it

should be noted that, alongside 3 other of Timor-Leste's 13 districts, *sukus* with the lowest living standards are concentrated in Lautem. These are far more rural and remote than Tafara and Marobo. Meanwhile almost all *sukus* in Dili district are within the group with highest standard of living (ADB 2013). However there are sizeable differences between the most well-off group that included Usululi and Harupai and the four others that included Marobo and Tafara. Infrastructure is better and access to information is higher in *sukus* with higher living standards and there is a large gap in access between groups. For example of the 89 *sukus* with the lowest standards of living, the average share of households with electricity is only 3 percent (ADB 2013). This compares with an average of 66 percent in the 89 *sukus* with the highest living standards that include Usululi and Harupai but not Marobo and Tafara. There is a large gap in access to maternal health care between *sukus* of low living standards and those of high living standards. For example, of the 89 *sukus* with the lowest living standards, the average share of births delivered by a skilled attendant is 12 percent. This compares with an average share of 50 percent in the 89 *sukus* with the highest living standards.

**Table 1: Population by sex, area, density, households and household size (NSD 2010)**

	<b>District Lautem</b>	<b>Suku Marobo</b>	<b>Suku Tafara</b>	<b>District Dili</b>	<b>Suku Usululi</b>	<b>Suku Harupai</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	59,787	2,455	1,889	234,026	4,323	2,593
<b>Male</b>		1,225	932	124,388	2,318	1,428
<b>Female</b>		1,230	957	109,638	2,005	1,165
<b>Area in sq. km</b>	1.813	99.33	27.25	368.12	.62	.22
<b>Density</b>	32.97	24.72	69.32	635.73	6,998	11,663
<b>No. of Households</b>	11,447	454	359	35,224	817	334
<b>Average Household Size</b>	5.19	5.5 subdistrict	4.8 subdistrict	6.4	6.14 subdistrict	6.3 subdistrict
<b>Male Headed Households</b>		335	269	30,554	674	291
<b>Female Headed Households</b>		119	90	4,670	143	43

#### 4.4.2 Sample Composition

I now turn to sample characteristics which are presented in Table 2. As the majority of these did not feature as strict sampling criteria for selection and recruitment, their elicitation was not pre-meditated or deliberate and were thus not part of the schedules for either the FGD or the one-to-one interview. Typically - apart from place of residence - as the FGDs were too large and thus not conducive to collecting such precise information, it was in one-to-one interviews that participants referred to some or all of the characteristics. This was based on an invitation I made during the introduction for women to share whatever biographical information they considered relevant to their everyday lives and were comfortable narrating. As not every participant referred to each characteristic, the data presented in Table 1 do not represent the exact

composition of the sample, but serve rather loosely to help put the research and women's lives into context.

About 60 percent of women participating in the study were from the two urban study sites. In relation to the women participating in the one-to-one interviews, all the participants conveyed identifying as a woman and as Timorese with the exception of Feliciano who was from Indonesia but had been living in Timor-Leste for almost two decades. Most of these participants were concentrated in the 40-49 age group. Almost 90 percent were ever married of which 4.4 percent had separated from husbands. Almost 90 percent were also mothers and the average number of children per woman was 6.4. To reflect their often complicated life circumstances, the research participants could often name multiple forms of income generation in addition to their roles as housewives and mothers. However this does not explain how well the woman was doing financially. I also did not ask for specific information about participants' personal income. An overwhelming majority of rural participants indicated that they could not read or write Tetum or barely understood this language.

**Table 2: Sample Characteristics**

<b>Category</b>		<b>Approximate Frequency</b>
<b>Residence</b>	<b>Urban:</b>	80
	<b>Rural:</b>	50
<b>Age</b>	18-29	16
	30-39	14
<i>Based on one-to-one interview</i>	40-49	24
	50-59	12
<i>Sample size of 76.</i>	60-69	5
	70-79	3
	80-89	2
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single/Never Married	8
<i>Based on one-to-one interview</i>	Ever Married	68
	Married at time of interview	53
<i>Sample size of 76.</i>	Re-married after divorce	1
	Experienced Husband Polygamy	1
	Experienced Abandonment	5
	Separated/divorced	3
	Widowed	5
<b>Number of women who said they were mothers</b>		68
<i>Based on one-to-one interview</i>		
<i>Sample size of 76.</i>		
<b>Number of Children:</b>	0	8
	1	3
	2	5
	3	6
	4	10
	5	8
	6	9
	7	8
	8	5
	9	0
	10	2

#### **4.5 Critical Reflections on the Ethics of Practice: The power of language(s), creating knowledge and negotiating understanding in the 'field'**

The research project has been guided by a concern for moral integrity and researcher reflexivity and accountability based on professional codes of practice as well as external regulation, governance and professional codes of practice involving ethical clearance from NUIG. Throughout the study, my role in the co-production of knowledge and of representing Timorese women and their languages in the study obliged me to carefully consider and reflect on the implications of my choices around communication, language and translation throughout the research process. All of these choices were based on my language and solidarity-based epistemology and my awareness of Timor-Leste's colonial history of linguistic imperialism and Indonesia's attempts during the occupation at ethnocide and the eradication of Timorese indigenous cultures. I was careful to the more recent sensitivities and ethnic relations post-independence. I was also mindful of related debates surrounding national identity, the role of vernaculars in an independent Timor-Leste and the importance of affording equal importance to Tetum and Fataluku, a minority language. I further acknowledged the threat posed to the linguistic integrity of the country by the power and prestige of the English language, the presence of English-speaking countries and the profound impact of anglocentric approaches of powerful foreign actors and institutions involved in the country, post-independence.

With these considerations in mind, I kept the use of English language to a minimum throughout the research process. I attended Tetum language classes in Dili upon arrival that helped improve my pre-existing rudimentary knowledge of the language. My decision was based on my previous professional experience working in Timor-Leste that provided me with insights into the implications of speaking the local language (Caretta 2014). As Watson argues, learning the local language equips the researcher to better understand how the spoken word and local expressions shape the spatial and cultural identity of people (2004 cited in Caretta 2014). Thus understanding Tetum gave me insights into, for instance, the language used towards women and towards me as a white foreigner. Conversing in the language also helped to me build relations and

narrow the linguistic and cultural gap that existed between myself and the East Timorese people. When I was getting to know residents in urban study sites, being able to speak Tetum also afforded people the chance to get to know me and interact with me without having to go through a community facilitator or interpreter. Even if my attempts at speaking Tetum were clumsy and I made mistakes, people chose to connect with me through my openness to interacting with them through their own language. When conducting door-to-door visits with my Timorese colleagues, I interacted with suku residents and explained the research through Tetum, using terminology, culturally-specific illustrations and previously rehearsed vignettes familiar to them. Where appropriate I repeated this approach during one-to-one and focus group interviews. Even where few people spoke and understood Tetum in the rural study sites, I made a decision to speak it instead of English whenever possible. In addition, although I did not take Fataluku language classes owing to time and other resource constraints, I learnt enough basic words to help minimise the cultural gap that existed between myself and the Fataluku speaking communities. In addition, and by playing with children living in the community I learnt a selection of nursery rhymes which proved highly effective as ice-breakers during FGDs and also initiating friendships in the community.

Although my spoken Tetum advanced, my comprehension of the language could not keep pace with the needs of the research. Even with my pre-existing baseline and after 3 months in the field, I did not fully comprehend fast conversations and found it difficult to grasp the meaning of certain historical and social references or cultural nuances. This linguistic challenge featured throughout the interviews but was particularly pronounced during FGDs that involved multiple voices. It became even more evident in rural areas as I barely spoke or understood Fataluku, the only language of the majority of research participants spoke and understood. Additionally, irrespective of my language competency, I was aware that my positionality in the field of being a white, *malae* (foreigner) female researcher necessitated collaboration with Timorese as community facilitators, gatekeepers and interpreters. I conducted every interview in participants' language preference which according to Edwards (2013 cited

in Caretta 2014) often generates richer data. Interpreting followed the consecutive model that relied heavily on the note taking technique, allowing interpreters to translate accurately whole sections of what was said after the speaker finished their utterance. This proved far more amenable to research participants than simultaneous interpretation which takes place during or even at the same time period as the original speech. In addition, and as did Caretta (2014), right from the beginning I grounded my fieldwork, in collaboration with Timorese colleagues. Our interview and interpreting techniques took in ethical considerations that encouraged interviewees to express themselves in their own way and for cultural and other expressions to be reflected rather than minimised in the translated output.

As my personal and professional experience in Timor-Leste had made me deeply conscious of the power imbalance that existed between my Timorese colleagues and I, I feared that both my role in the study as sole investigator and my social positioning that afforded me privilege might marginalise my colleagues who did not have the same academic status as co-researchers in the study, the same levels of education or access to wealth. In all 4 study sites those hired as community facilitators and interpreters participated not only as experts in the comprehension of language but also in the planning and conduct of the research (Baker *et al* 1990 cited in Temple and Young 2004). My intention was to involve my colleagues where and whenever possible in the study and I did this through short routine meetings when we would jointly plan our daily and weekly activities about how to conduct the study in each site. Even though my intentional distancing from the researcher-driven-research model opened up more democratic spaces for greater involvement of Timorese in aspects other than interpretation/translation, issues of both competency and power and the degree to which this enabled facilitators and interpreters to participate in the research process as equal actors remained a concern for me. To some extent the participatory standpoint underpinning the epistemological posture of the study helped me to deal with this, where our everyday collaborations and interactions involved high degrees of participation that I relied on as part of the process of co-producing knowledge (Temple and Young 2004).

Still, I could not overlook the fact that none of my Timorese colleagues were involved in the earlier conceptualisation of the study or the design of study protocols and research questions and apart from Hugo, none had been afforded an opportunity prior to the study to develop a level of competency and research skills needed to negotiate epistemology, methods and other methodological issues in the present research (Temple and Young 2004). I dealt with this concern by grounding this aspect of the study in intercultural community work which I had experience of and in a *process* methodology for training and consulting with community groups. I created opportunities for greater participation through regular planning workshops, routine team and 1:1 meetings and interview de-briefings with facilitators and interpreters. These interactions were often Timorese-led and where possible conducted in Tetun and Fataluku. From a practical point of view, these interactions were important as they stimulated constant reflection and where necessary adaptation of various practices. For example following de-briefings with interpreters, I adapted my interviewing techniques and use of prompts, interpreters switched from simultaneous to consecutive interpreting techniques and we also gave careful consideration and deliberation to ways of re-phrasing terminology and translating certain concepts such as *mudansa* (English: change) that were unintelligible to some women.

These interactions benefited individual competencies and collective and mutual learning amongst everyone involved in the study including myself. Pre and post interviews, my colleagues and I would regularly discuss aspects of our feminist approach or responses acceptable to interviewees from our own perspectives based on our respective subject positions. In another attempt to ground the study in what Connell (2015) describes as a 'solidarity-based epistemology', prior to data collection, Hugo, Fina, Maria and I linked in, as a small team, with established national researchers to learn from their experiences and discuss Timorese-centered methodologies involving access and recruitment strategies, research methods and interviewing techniques tailored for participants of mixed social backgrounds. These learning inputs were held in Tetum and led by Timorese colleagues themselves. Amongst several important learnings which we subsequently integrated into the study was the need for

an intersectional approach that emphasised tailoring interview techniques and using terminology and ways of engagement intelligible to different generations of women, particularly those living in isolated parts of the country. We also adapted culturally-appropriate research methods designed by Timorese NGOs by integrating the practice of mindfulness and culturally relevant reflections that proved highly effective in the interview process. Based on research experiences of data collection in Usululi, knowledge and know-how was then passed on by out-going colleagues to new community facilitators and interpreters involved in the second urban village, Harupai. This type of peer-led 'cascade' training took place in the form of a one-day workshop with teams from both study sites as well as female elected representatives from the *suku* council. The intention was to build confidence and competence and agree ways of implementing Timorese and feminist qualitative research in local communities. The content of the workshop focused on using one to one interviews and FGDs, the two principle research methods employed by the study. The approach was shaped by the expressed needs of the community facilitators and interpreters and followed a problem posing approach that encouraged people to identify their own needs and ways of addressing them. Co-facilitated by myself and a Timorese colleague involved in the Usululi study, it introduced a variety of methods including: role-playing, reflection, personal sharing, small and large group work, how to use research technology such as a dictaphone, gender sensitive approaches to interacting with people surviving violence and trauma and managing difficult situations during an interview.

Although sometimes heuristic and spontaneous or even unpredictable, these and other types of interactions such as pre and post-interview briefings became integrated into all phases of the research in the four sites, from study set up through to data collection. In each site, what started out as interactions based on principles of cooperation with and between Timorese colleagues generally evolved into relationships of co-learning (Mistry *et al* 2015) 'in which different formations of knowledge are respected but enter into educational relations with each other' (Connell 2015, p. 59). Over time our competence and confidence grew to the extent that, where appropriate, my colleagues often assumed increased levels of responsibility and key

roles beyond that of community facilitator and interpreter, a transition that was contingent as much on their desire to engage as their prior experience in qualitative research, feminist activism or western concepts such as gender. In practice this meant that my colleagues adopted a hybrid of roles from language expert and co-planner to analyst and cultural broker (Temple and Young 2004). During our first interview, Hugo felt confident enough to voice his concerns over my interviewing style that he felt made the research participant feel uneasy and so I immediately used less prompts and interruptions. Whilst neither Fina nor Martinha acted as language interpreters, after time they felt confident enough to perform a multitude of functions as research facilitators in *sukus* Usululi and Harupai, providing gateways to communities including *xefi suku* and potential interviewees, acting as cultural advisers and accessors of know-how and knowledge particular to the two *sukus* and as credibility givers in terms of my acceptability and that of the study to the local community (Temple and Young 2004). Indeed, within weeks of our collaboration, Fina moved in from the shadows to take on a more pro-active role, making suggestions and allowing her own views and ideas to shape the set up of the study in Usululi. On a daily basis, when introducing me to community residents, she volunteered advice as to how best to interact with older women in the community, and how best to conduct the outreach. After an exhausting FGD with 38 women from Marobo, Martinha confided that she had never participated in this type of activity before, let alone facilitated small group work, note-take or take on leading roles in feedback and group dialogue. Like Fina in Usululi, and Martinha in Marobo, Nata's confidence grew too as a community facilitator when she noticed that her interactions with Fataluku women were more effective than mine, despite my best efforts, in conveying messages about the nature of the inquiry and women's participation in FGDs and interviews. Study set up and data collection in rural areas further benefited from the critical roles women representatives from the *suku* councils played, who, once briefed about the study by Nata and I, provided more nuanced and locally appropriate approaches to recruitment of research participants because of their contextual knowledge and experience. In Tafara, when accompanying our visits by foot from *aldeia* to *aldeia*, Balbina went to endless trouble to ensure she introduced us to

diverse women including elderly widows, women with disabilities and very young single mothers. In sum, as in a virtuous cycle (Mistry *et al* 2015), the more community facilitators and interpreters drew on their own life experiences, knowledge and culture, the more confident they became, allowing them to develop their own way of engaging with research participants, community leaders and myself, as the researcher. The roles my colleagues played in the study show how they acted as more than transmitters of sentences. Moving across cultures and meanings, they guided me in the early phase of the study and in time assumed leadership positions thus contributing to the production of situated knowledge (Caretta 2014). Meanwhile, my competence and confidence to conduct the study in a culturally sensitive way also grew as I was constantly learning from my colleagues, research participants and *suku* leaders as to how to ground the study in aspects of everyday diverse gender orders in Timor-Leste, whether related to divisions of labour and power or cultural or other forms of cathexis. For instance in rural areas I learnt that it was wholly inappropriate to engage with communities when certain traditions were underway not just because of *lisan* and the cultural attachments and significance to the ritual but also because of the gendered labour arrangements involved that drew heavily on women's time. Or, when alleged perpetrators of GBV interrupted an interview process my interpreters and I took our cue from research participants and had to learn quickly how to manage tricky situations and respond in ways that did not compromise anyone's personal safety. These were aspects to the study I had not predicted and I realise now that I needed to be more critically aware of their potential to occur.

In inter-cultural and multi-lingual research participants' knowledge is mediated by the interpreter's position (Temple and Young 2004). In this study a broad spectrum of positioning factors were at play for research facilitators/interpreters such that the production of knowledge was mediated by gender, age, social status and ethnicity (Turner 2010 cited in Mistry *et al* 2015). The production of 'situated' knowledge, or what participants in the research had to say and how they said it was mediated not just through their perception of me as the sole researcher, but also the subjectivity of my Timorese colleagues who brought their own values, beliefs and preferences into the

study, whether through the selection of participants or the interpretation of their statements (see Temple and Young 2004; Turner 2010 cited in Caretta 2014). I acknowledged the cultural brokering role my colleagues were playing by drawing on their intellectual autobiographies and carrying out the study with them as key informants, mediators, co-producers and transmitters of knowledge between myself as researcher and research participants (Temple and Young 2004, p. 170). Throughout the field work, interpreters and community facilitators conveyed a deep interest and an emotional investment in the study, proffering opinions about sources of information, such as Hugo and Maria who occasionally informed me when they found some narratives inconsistent, and others more reliable. There were other occasions when all of my interpreters exercised their judgement when engaging with participants who were too anxious and fearful or who simply found it too difficult to continue the interview and on these occasions we jointly decided to discontinue the interview. Even though Nata grew up in a neighbouring *suku* to the study sites, and was educated in Dili, she remained socially embedded in the Fataluku context, enabling her to navigate some of the cultural norms that benefited study set up, as well as the selection, recruitment and certain aspects of the interview process (Wheeler 2009 cited in Mistry *et al* 2015). On our many walks from *aldeia* to *aldeia* when Nata and I would discuss our days work, she frequently contextualised what participants had told us during interviews, such as the strain of certain marriage customs on newly married couples compelled to live with their in-laws, or noted how certain women in the community had the potential to provide us with certain types of information based on what she knew about their social background and role in the community. At times colleagues drove their own feminist agenda (Caretta 2014). All did so freely as they understood and embraced the aim of the study. When facilitating the Usululi FGD, Hugo did not miss an opportunity to acknowledge women and girls' unequal share of domestic work when raised by participants and was also eager to discuss the harmful effects of GBV against women. A discussion ensued about the prevalence of GBV against adult and teenage women in the *suku*, opening up opportunities for the topic to emerge in narratives during one to one interviews. Meanwhile during a training workshop, keen

to offer her understandings of gender inequality, Martinha the community facilitator for Marobo spoke openly about her personal experiences of mother-in-law violence. In the Harupai FGD, she also triggered a discussion with the wider group about the importance of women's economic empowerment and independence from violent husbands as they raise large families in poverty. In rural areas Nata frequently distributed leaflets providing telephone numbers and information about services for victims of GBV. All of these actions gave cause for research participants to reflect on and challenge their own situation. As in Caretta's study (2014), these episodes show how 'translators are active producers in research rather than neutral conveyors of messages' (Temple 2002, p. 846). They demonstrate how situated knowledge is bound by the existence of what Temple and Edwards (2002) describe as 'triple subjectivity' of subjects acting in the field, namely the researcher, interpreters/facilitators and the research participants (Caretta 2014). 'These three figures shape and condition the development of field research by seeking, contributing to, eliciting or limiting the attainment of data. Hence whilst the term 'triple subjectivity' helps to envision the presence of these three subjects, their subjectivities are multiple. In fact, researcher, assistant and participant embody multiple positions in relation to one another, depending on several axes of intersectionality (ie gender, culture, economic status, educational background, etc) which can be challenged over the course of the investigation and determine their inclination to facilitate or hinder the research process' (Molony and Hammett 2007 cited in Caretta 2014. p. 2).

The roles played by my Timorese colleagues in producing field data for the study were multiple and sometimes made complex by their 'insider' status. Herr and Anderson (2005 cited in Mistry et al 2015) describe the social location of researchers relative to the communities with whom they conduct research along a spectrum of positionalities ranging from insider to outsider. They maintain that methodological decisions are contingent on the degree of insider/outsider positionality. I agree with Smith, who contests the notion that insiders are knowers just because they live in the community as:

'[...] The assumption that one's own experience suffices to explain the experiences of all others that occupy a similar position may serve to invalidate the lived experiences of other community members. It also assumes the homogeneity of 'community' ascribing the term to an institution without hierarchy, power, and discrimination' (2012 cited in Mistry et al 2015).

Therefore I considered colleagues' social backgrounds and positions within their respective language communities when making decisions concerning site selection, recruitment of interpreters and distribution of responsibilities (Temple and Young 2004). Drawing on her autobiography, Nata's interactions with Fataluku women created an accessible and safe space for them to participate in interviews. However at times I had the impression that, as much as it opened up spaces for participation, Nata's 'insider' status, her elite status and her familial and cultural proximity to the community might have prevented some participants from speaking more freely. Moreover the social positioning of her family and the role of her father as *Lia nain in a neighbouring suku* might have set her apart. Additionally, prior to the study Nata had never acted as an interpreter and found it challenging to assume a more distant position from participants which sometimes narrowed the opportunities for more detailed narratives. In both urban and rural areas, young female interpreters found it more difficult to interact with male officials such as district administrators and *xefi suku*, as compared to male and more mature female colleagues. During an interview, I observed the discomfort caused to my colleague, a young woman, by the interviewee, a male NGO worker, who felt he had the right to behave towards her in sexualised manner just like another young single East Timorese woman acting independently in the public arena (Mistry *et al* 2015). Meanwhile, where Hugo's gender did not seem to inhibit several urban participants' engagement in interviews or their disclosure about experiences of SGBV, the production of knowledge in rural areas was mediated by gender where women's participation in FGDs was very much contingent on the existence of a woman-only space. Reflecting on this aspect of plur-lingual, inter-cultural participatory research draws attention to the character of situated knowledge, the reflective nature of interpreters' positionality and to how the fluid and multiple subjectivity of interpreters/facilitators and participants' views of them mediate how

and what research participants choose to say during the interview process (Caretta 2014).

For both practical and ethical reasons, the research required me to reflect not only on colleagues' positions within their communities but also their competencies and professional backgrounds. For practical reasons and owing to different levels of skills and competencies not all colleagues were involved in all research tasks to the same extent (Mistry *et al* 2015). It is important to emphasise that the methodology for this study did not seek comprehensive participatory engagement of interpreters and community facilitators. It was also not possible. The realities of the study and contextual and fluid character of my epistemology meant that some interpreters and community facilitators played a greater bridging role in terms of language issues, accessing and recruiting participants and the overall cultural appropriateness of the conduct of the research (Mistry *et al* 2015). I was conscious that the learning curve was more steep for certain colleagues than for others. With a limited pool of experienced interpreters to select from and under pressure to expedite the study following a prolonged delay, I initially recruited Fina to act as community facilitator and interpreter in Usululi based on a recommendation. However her involvement changed as soon as I realised that her role as interpreter put her under strain due to her limited English. There were other occasions when it was clear that some colleagues felt overwhelmed, uneasy and under-confident as they openly expressed worry that they might be giving me 'incorrect' advice or making 'wrong' decisions. I dealt with this by explaining that there was no 'one' or 'correct' way of seeing and doing things. I also attempted to minimise these situations by adopting a mentoring role where appropriate and by making calculated decisions based on colleagues' desires to participate and their competencies and capacity to actually carry out tasks and assume levels of responsibility with relative ease. These aspects of the study highlight the ethical dilemmas researchers face when adopting an interactive and solidarity-based epistemology and addressing power imbalances by 'handing over the stick' that can create worry for those involved (Chambers 1994 cited in Mistry *et al* 2015). In my attempt to level out the playing field, I often felt caught between a rock and a hard

place, trying to balance my duty of care towards my colleagues, whilst questioning an over-reliance on foreign perspectives and inputs, being over prescriptive, protective and controlling of my colleagues' participation and ability to exercise agency, whilst at the same time maintaining my role as sole investigator responsible for producing the deliverables and fulfilling the aim of this academic project.

The role our interactions played in progressing the research extended far beyond logistics, cooperation, co-learning and enhanced participation. Right from the beginning they opened up democratic spaces that fostered an awareness, amongst everyone involved that, firstly we all come from different traditions and therefore bring different understandings to the study and secondly, that our need to reflect on and learn all matter of things was a journey constantly evolving in tandem with the research participants and the diverse gender orders governing Timorese women's day to day realities (Mistry *et al* 2015).

Some of these challenges included the transferability of terminology from source to target language; the challenges of making abstract academic concepts intelligible to different women and *suku* leaders; the challenges of making Timorese concepts and ways of being intelligible to me, an Irish researcher; the cultural peculiarities associated with different aspects of being Timorese and Irish; the appropriateness of recruiting a male interpreter; ensuring sensitivity interacting with those who experienced suffering in their lives; managing our emotions during the interview; the suitability of interpreting techniques and of introducing advanced technologies such as dictaphones to the interview process; maintaining linguistic and cultural integrity; the logistics of collecting data with limited infrastructure (no transport or phone coverage) to access remote areas in the tropical heat; my duty of care towards everyone's well-being and personal safety; ensuring the completion of an ambitious study with a limited budget and under a tight time-frame. Finally, and as encountered by other researchers such as Mistry (*et al* 2015), were matters that addressed the particular challenge of following a systemic rather than systematic approach to the study. Thus the study not only evolved around local context and gender orders, but also for it to progress, relied heavily upon

the interweaving of ideas, experiences and learning, constantly building a more interactive and solidarity-based epistemology (Connell 2015, p. 59). The epistemologies followed by the study were fluid rather than fixed, constantly *emerging*, *becoming* and *adapting* to the local situation whilst guiding the aims and objectives of the study.

#### **4.6 Limitations of the Study**

The collection and interpretation of study findings was constrained by several critical shortcomings many of which have been already discussed. Broadly these relate to constraints on generalizability, the multi-lingual and inter-cultural nature of the research, my language and interviewing skills, sample size and accessing research participants living in remote areas in the absence of any reliable means of transport.

Despite my preparations, the study was limited by my linguistic and interviewing skills. Tetum and Fataluku were also not easy languages to translate. This imposed enormous resource constraints and some difficulties following what was being said during the interview process and interpreting the findings later. The practical difficulties of interpretation during the interview process and my initial limited experience conducting this type of research not alone restricted my ability to pursue more in-depth exploration of themes but also follow up on the emergence of new themes. This was particularly the case in FGDs, the implementation of which proved challenging on limited resources. Furthermore large sample size of FGDs, resource constraints and limited interpreting and note-taking skills amongst certain Timorese colleagues compromised rigorous recording of multiple parallel discussions. Despite the best efforts of my Timorese colleagues and myself, I believe rich data were lost. Poor infrastructure and time constraints on women's availability restricted data collection in rural areas. As qualitative research does not lay claim to universal generalisability (Denzin and Lincoln 2003), a further limitation is that the findings convey participants' perceptions as understood by myself the researcher and my Timorese colleagues acting as interpreters. A final shortcoming of this research is that it was difficult to establish a non-hierarchical relationship with participants which I believe influenced what information, knowledge and opinions they choose to share with me.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has delineated the methodology used to guide the design, implementation and analysis of this inter-cultural and multi-lingual research project. The overall research paradigm including its feminist standpoint and solidarity-based epistemology and emphasis on cultural sensitivity, participation and reflexivity influenced my selection of qualitative methods and carrying out of the project that was woman-centred and rooted in Timorese ways of doing things. This type of research thus encouraged me to be mindful of and respond to the manner in which relational and multiple subjectivities and my embodied presence and that of my Timorese colleagues were impacting on the research process and influencing outcomes. This was important considering my own positionality as a privileged woman from Ireland conducting feminist research amongst marginalised people in a conflict-affected country in South-East Asia. Despite these efforts however power differences remained between myself the researcher and those participating in the research.

## CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS

### Women's Experiences of Gendered Poverty and Violence

#### 5.0 Introduction

This descriptive chapter is the first of three findings chapters. It provides the empirical backdrop to the thesis by presenting the major themes emerging from the fieldwork in the four communities. These were about women's encounters with gendered poverty and GBV as they went about caring for their families on a *daily* basis. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section one focuses on gendered poverty. First it sets the scene in terms of family poverty as this constitutes women's immediate context and environment in which they experienced everyday life, directly engaged with others and performed their gendered roles and responsibilities as wives and mothers. This is followed by a brief description of what women did on a daily basis to safeguard family existence and ensure a basic level of care. The third sub-section delineates the hardships women experienced arising from interactions between their impoverished environment - namely income poverty, food poverty and inadequate living conditions - and their daily burdens of responsibility with almost no affective involvement or economic support from husbands who headed women's families and controlled resources. Women's experiences of GBV is the focus of section two. After describing its nature and presence in day-to-day married and family life, it describes women's reactions to GBV, specifically what women actually did when confronted with violence and the different ways in which they responded, coped or acted to escape and/or end it.

#### 5.1 Women's Experiences of Gendered Poverty

##### **5.1.1 Family Poverty**

According to the data, an overwhelming majority of participants and their families were living in situations of endless and severe poverty. This finding dominated women's narratives. Burdens, hardships and suffering pervaded everyday life and were

reported to be caused by multiple deprivations, namely lack of food and poor living conditions owing to financial insecurity - including not having any money or not enough money. Deprivations were ubiquitous in all the research sites, urban and rural and women consistently reported experiencing extreme and multiple forms of poverty themselves. Family income was typically described as grossly inadequate giving rise to everyday maternal drudgery and worry. Over and over the data convey the financial difficulties mothers faced acquiring essential commodities consumed on a daily basis, sending children to school and providing their families with regular meals, clean laundry and a comfortable family life. The study is replete with narratives similar to those below.

'You can see the conditions that I live in. This is my house, just this single room. Sometimes I am faced with having no money on a daily basis. I eat once a day, maybe twice. At times there is no money to send the children to school. I've no money to build a house. We've no kitchen, no toilet. We use other people's things. We have to use other people's water [...] I have four children and a husband' (Jacinta, housewife, 30s, mother of 4, Harupai).

'Before we ate once a day but only because my husband worked. Now he is sick and old with a disability so my son and daughter's work supports us but still we do not have enough money' (Fina, housewife in her 50s, mother of 10, Harupai).

'My eldest son works as a security officer and when he gets paid he buys flt of cooking oil, rice and maybe salt and seasoning. Sometimes [...] we are completely dependent on my son's salary' (Fernanda, middle-aged abandoned housewife, mother of 7, Harupai).

'To support my family ... well if I'm lucky I can sell our chickens in the market. But if we run out of vegetables or don't have livestock to sell, then we experience poverty, like hunger and I cannot afford the children's school fees [...] Its not just my family here in Tono that experience poverty. Its the same for everyone else in the aldeia' (Carolina, housewife, 40s, mother 5, subsistence farmer, Tafara).

'[...] Women face so many difficulties doing their jobs because we do not have money to buy detergent to wash the clothes or soap to bath and keep everyone clean' (FGD Tafara).

Nearly every mother spoke about the difficulties they faced ensuring family sustenance

and their own survival in harsh economic circumstances characterised by inadequate or sheer lack of incomes. Most women struggled to send their children to school especially those with large families as they did not have enough money to cover basic, immediate and longer term expenses ranging from school lunches, drinks and public transport as well as annual costs incurred by uniforms and shoes, stationary, exercise and text books, fees, exam registration and school reports. This was raised as a major concern and an underlying cause of maternal anxiety and guilt in every focus group such as in Harupai where women told me that: 'We have a lot of small children and no work. Its hard to send them to school because we have so many' (FGD Harupai). On top of routine and everyday costs, participants also faced difficulties meeting exceptional expenses incurred by health care and traditional ceremonies and cultural rituals associated with marriage and family bereavements. A number of urban women referred to difficulties finding money to cover the high cost of essential medicine for family members with chronic and acute illness. These were mostly living in extended family settings with child and adult dependants with diverse needs, as captured by Margarita.

'[...] We want to build our house but we have no money and then when there is 'lia', like a big cultural ceremony we have to spend what little money we have on this. Then we have no money left. And when my mother is sick or when she is shouting and screaming in pain, we need to call the doctor to come here and this along with the medication costs a lot of money. And then there are the everyday costs like food and feeding the family, or when my children ask me for money just to get to school and to buy a lunch. That's 25 cent per child per day or at a very minimum \$20 per month. My husband's salary also supports my brother and sister to go to school so I also have to give them money. That is why the money is divided up to cover all of these on-going costs and many times it is just not enough' (Margarita, Housewife, 30s, mother of 3, Harupai).

A major consequence of lack of income was hunger, a theme that featured with remarkable consistency throughout every study site. Over and over women told me that because they and their families rarely had enough food to eat they were always hungry. As captured in the narratives below, children were reported going to school hungry and some women said they themselves frequently went throughout the day

without having eaten a nourishing meal. When there was no food at all they were forced to go hungry for extended periods.

'I go to school and sometimes I just go there without eating anything and then I get some food there. But I go there on an empty stomach' (Marciana, high school student, 18 years, Harupai).

'In our family we also have no money which means that we cannot buy food and cannot eat' (Landless woman participating in a FG, Tafara).

'Talking about hunger, well due to poverty we rarely eat rice and we are lucky if our son in Dili sends us some. Otherwise we just eat corn, and sometimes we don't even have corn. It all depends on the weather if our farm produces any. If not, then we are hungry' (Nina, 60s, housewife, mother of 10, subsistence farmer and market trader, Tafara).

Hunger and food poverty was raised repeatedly by urban mothers. They cited a combination of causes such as high food prices and lack of income and access to home grown produce as reasons for chronic and acute food insecurity. Some were very aware and frustrated with the pervasiveness of clan-based inequalities fuelling hunger amongst poor families in their communities, many of whom had been forced by the Indonesian army off their ancestral rural lands and driven out of their homes to Dili during the early phase of the conflict. A number of women felt first-generation families were at a distinct disadvantage and suffered hunger more than families indigenous to Dili who they believed had better access to decent paid work in the formal sector. This was highlighted for example by FG discussants: 'Its not just the government that should be able to eat rice. We too should also be able to eat rice. But the problem is that we do not have any money to buy healthy food' (FGD Marobo).

The data depicted elderly women, widows and single mothers raising large families as extremely vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition. Narratives such as the following appeared in every study site.

'About cooking [...] if I cannot buy vegetables we have to make do with sasoro which is like overcooked rice. If I have no wood then I have to use plastic bottles to burn so I can cook food for the family [...] Sometimes we have no oil [...] Our food situation is bad at the moment. Our first meal of

the day is at midday and if we are lucky we eat again in the evening. No vegetables, just *sasoro*' (Fernanda, middle-aged abandoned housewife, mother of 7, Harupai).

'[...] for breakfast today I borrowed from my neighbour so tomorrow I cannot borrow any more. They won't give it to me so probably tomorrow I won't eat breakfast. For lunch I will eat corn but my teeth are weak so I have to grind it before I eat it and the same thing for dinner, we will eat corn again; no rice, no vegetables' (Senghorina, widow, 70s, visually impaired, Marobo).

'[...] When I visit older women or widows in the community, I've noticed that they've nothing to eat. No food on the table. It makes me very sad as they have so many children. They eat just once a day, just in the evenings before they go to sleep' (Ella, housewife, 30s mother of 6, street trader, Usululi).

The narratives conveyed that in rural areas too women and their families experienced severe and endless hunger, with inadequate and lack of income and food produce emerging as the principle contributing factors. As the following quotes illustrate:

'My family does not have food [...] so I have to go directly to the fields without eating' (FG discussant, Tafara).

'If I have money we can eat rice but otherwise we eat corn. We can get some money when my husband makes traditional wine but that's all dried up now so most of the time we just eat corn' (Pasquela, housewife 40s, mother of 6, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

As well as lack of money, rural women blamed high food prices and inadequate and unreliable agricultural production as the main cause of hunger in their homes. Landless women faced severe difficulties feeding their families. Like urban women, for these women subsistence food production was not a livelihood option necessitating routine purchase of food items which was constrained by high prices and resource constraints as their earnings were irregular, low and sometimes non-existent.

'For women it is difficult because we grow corn but our children won't eat it. It takes them too long to chew it. That is why we prefer to eat rice. But we have to buy rice and its very expensive requiring us to work harder, like on other people's farmland to afford it. For a full days work, like 8 hours, we earn \$2 [...]' (FG discussant, mother and subsistence farmer and labourer,

Marobo).

Income poverty was a major factor contributing towards insecure and dilapidated housing and other aspects of poor living conditions that increased women's vulnerabilities particularly those rearing large young families alone and elderly widows living in rural areas far from adult children. Housing poverty, including insecure, inadequate and inappropriate housing and living conditions dominated women's narratives, urban and rural. Participants' housing arrangements were complex and based on different forms of occupancy. In rural areas women generally lived in private single detached dwellings built on a spacious plot of ancestral or customary lands. In urban areas women's housing arrangements were based on more complicated forms of occupancy. Some lived in privately owned or rented accommodation whilst a great many squatted on state, customary or private lands many of which were under dispute. Others reared their families in houses owned by their husbands, in-laws or families of origin whilst a very small minority of urban women owned the house they lived in. Young women abandoned by husbands lived with their parents. The adequacy of women's housing arrangements mattered a great deal to them as women relied on it to carry out routine house and care work which they also juggled with home-based income generating activities.

Alongside not having electricity, sewage infrastructure and waste disposal system none of the participants said they had access to any form of piped water. Access to water was vital for women as they had to have it to prepare food and beverages, provide for basic sanitation and maintain overall household hygiene and order including washing family laundry. This was raised many times throughout the study and was illustrative of the very real presence of urban but particularly rural poverty. Women's insecure housing also permeated the findings. It appeared that participants had no rights or permanent access to their homes and lacked legal title to land property was built on. Urban single mothers whose families of origin did not live in Dili were particularly vulnerable to homelessness and in rural areas it was typically deserted wives and single mothers too that faced housing uncertainty. Participants also identified dilapidated

housing, overcrowding and limited access to water, toilets and wash areas as serious problems in their everyday lives. Most found the size of their houses to be inadequate for family and independent adult life. Overcrowding was most severe in urban study sites where mothers were raising very large families in single rooms in houses shared by multiple families or in one or two-roomed flimsy structures that doubled up as sleeping, cooking and storage spaces. For example Francisca who was one of many participants raising a large young family in a temporary one-roomed make-shift shelter explained how: 'Actually everything is mixed up here, sleeping, eating, cooking. We are all squashed into this tiny space, all six of us' (Francisca, housewife, 50s, mother of 8, Harupai).

### **5.1.3 Caring for and Maintaining Family Welfare and the Organisation of Everyday Life**

Women's families relied on a number of important sources of income for daily sustenance. These ranged from earnings generated by themselves and their husbands. Families also depended on inter-generational cash transfers from adult daughters and sons, income earned from micro-credit lending schemes and also state-led support via social protection programmes, namely cash payment schemes restricted to those who were elderly, disabled and veterans and to mothers heading households. For example a critical source of food security was the family feeding programme – a universal rice distribution facilitated by the suku council and daily meals provided by the schools.

There were a small number of references to husbands being engaged in paid work. In such cases the narratives highlighted the importance of male employment and the critical role played by husbands' economic contributions towards family welfare. Comparing her situation to a number of food-insecure families in her aldeia, Ella, a middle-aged urban mother rearing many small children felt fortunate as: '[she had] a husband that has a job and he shares financial responsibility for my family [...] Every month we have enough money to allow us to eat everyday [...]' (Ella, married, middle-aged mother of 6, Usululi). Three women mentioned that their husbands worked in the public sector as xefi suku and school teachers and there were a small few cases of

husbands employed in the private sector as drivers and security guards. This type of work was mostly confined to urban areas. The vast majority of husbands working for pay were concentrated in the informal sector. The main occupations mentioned were: transport; In rural areas economically active husbands were said to eke out a living working as farm labourers or petty traders selling home-brewed alcohol. Overall the work that men undertook was typically irregular, menial and low paid.

The vast majority of participants generated some level of income that families were said to be also highly reliant on, with data conveying that it was usual and expected of women to earn and contribute towards the family. An overwhelming majority worked in the informal sector and the small minority with waged employment in the formal sector were clerical staff, elected representatives on suku councils, or women's rights advocates and project coordinators for national NGOs. There was one account of a woman employed as a primary school teacher. Most women's informal work was casual, menial and insecure. In urban areas women mostly ran kiosks, small eateries and worked on second-hand clothing and vegetable stalls. Some also generated income from the sale of pigs, vegetables, cooked food, soft drinks and petrol, hand-made Timorese musical instruments, handicrafts and textiles. Agrafina ran her own small tailoring business, Alina rented out rooms in her house to tenants, and Agusta made money selling vegetables and organising and staging traditional cultural performances at official events such as election campaigns and traditional ceremonies. Other participants worked as waitresses, cooks and cleaners for private businesses as well as East Timorese families and foreign women and men working in Timor-Leste. Inacia worked as a carer for an elderly widow. Women were also said to generate an income from sex work and recruiting sex workers from very poor urban villages (personal communication July 2012).

In rural areas family survival relied on a combination of women's subsistence agricultural activities and income generated from mostly informal work that was low paid, casual and menial and appearing significantly more limited and insecure

compared to urban areas. In terms of productive and subsistence agricultural activities, even though production was low, rural mothers were highly dependent on it to generate cash and grow crops for domestic consumption.

'Because of farming us women, we can support our lives, support our children, send them to school, provide them with clothes and buy things like detergent to wash everything' (FGD Tafara, rural participants referring to women's agricultural activities).

'I grow corn, cassava and potato but before I plant the seeds I have to weed the field first. What I get out of it, yes, its quite good. I can sell some of the vegetables but don't make much money. The rest I bring home so that the family can eat' (Palmerina, housewife 40s, mother, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

'I'm always farming, growing something. I carry water, find firewood to sell and all of these activities I do just to send my children to school and pay for their school fees' (Nina, 60s, housewife, mother of 10, subsistence farmer and market trader, Tafara).

Small holder farmers generated income selling the crops they cultivated on home gardens and family owned plots of land whilst on-farm labourers weeded, planted and harvested other people's land. Where possible this was supplemented with very low cash incomes mostly generated by brewing traditional wine, harvesting forest fruits, or petty trading natural resources such as firewood and home-made coconut oil, weaving and selling tais – an East Timorese textile item - and other items produced from home. Most of these activities demanded hard physical labour, were seasonal, in high demand and often hard to come by. They were menial, generating very low but essential income as illustrated in Yuliana's quote: 'I earn about \$3 when I sell my bananas. I give this to my sons for pocket-money and transport to school. I also bought them bicycles' (Yuliana, middle aged housewife, mother of 2, farmer Tafara). A number of rural women who were participants in micro-credit programmes also ran their own small businesses, selling their home-baked bread from door to door and operating small kiosks from within their homes. Some also provided domestic help to wealthier East Timorese families, cooking and serving meals, fetching water, cleaning their houses and

supplying them with clean laundry.

As well as working outside the home and contributing financially, women performed the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work that encompassed intimacy, affection, support and concern for others - often termed 'caring about' and considered the central energy force integral to the quality of life within the family (Lynch, 1995). Women were responsible for the needs of their children and husbands and many also took care of siblings, ageing and infirm parents and in-laws as it was common for participants to live in joint or extended family settings. A typical day for women included a magnitude of routine emotional work (listening and engaging), moral commitment (being trustworthy and reliable), mental work (planning), physical work (doing practical tasks including body work), and cognitive work (using skills of knowing how to care). Mothers like Luseila planned, organised and managed the day to day running of the household.

'I am always working and when I stop then I am always thinking, planning and organising. So even if you see me sitting down here like this I am in fact thinking ahead about all the jobs that need to be done like washing clothes, preparing and cooking food' (Luseila, housewife, 30s, mother of 7, domestic worker, Harupai).

The most basic of needs was to keep family members alive, nourished and healthy. Every day, often several times a day women fed their children, bathed and tended to the sanitation needs of infants and toddlers and put them to sleep. Women produced food, prepared and served meals at multiple times of the day to husbands and other family members. Alongside nutritional sustenance, women were responsible for meeting dependants' shelter needs which were as much emotional as they were practical and material. These included hygiene, comfort and physical safety as well as the need for a reliable and secure home. To ensure the physical order and smooth functioning of the family, mothers undertook an array of tasks including sweeping floors, cleaning and scrubbing, performing water dependent activities such as washing family laundry. They were responsible for pumping and carrying water long distances and organising waste disposal. Taking care of the family's basic needs thus demanded

multiple onerous 'behind-the-scenes' household chores. Feeding required from the mothers an array of tasks and providing clean clothes required not only long hours spent hand-washing and scrubbing large volumes of dirty laundry but hours spent travelling, drawing and hauling water home, making it safe for consumption and storing it for multiple use (personal observation October – December 2012). To ensure health and prevent infection or sickness from water-borne or other diseases such as malaria, the mothers maintained hygiene in key spaces such as the kitchen, bedrooms, wash and sanitation, and waste disposal areas. Mothers, especially single mothers rearing families in the absence of adult male labour organised and carried out renovations, repairs and structural improvements to their homes. In addition to organising the physical order, women also organised the social order in and around the family home, particularly in ways that were gender sensitive to the needs of all family members. They put in place safe and secure gender and age appropriate sleeping and sanitation arrangements for their children, particularly small children and teenage daughters. In urban areas a number of mothers told me they were responsible for securing accommodation by sourcing private rented dwellings and negotiating tenancy agreements with private landowners.

The data showed that mothers also took full responsibility and were committed to ensuring all of their children attended school daily. For instance Rosalina, a young mother of five from Marobo told me that: 'As a mother I have responsibility to make sure my children go to school and have a proper education'. I heard this frequently throughout the fieldwork. Mothers expressed a deep investment in their children's education and future prospects and a number also said that they involved themselves by encouraging their children to do their homework and also create a studious environment in the home. Mothers budgeted and covered the daily, weekly and annual financial costs of sending their children to school. Their commitment also required careful planning and organisation of the household, food preparation and continuous provision of clean school uniforms. Many times in the interviews mothers expressed worry about their children, from their daily welfare and survival to their future well-being and security. As well as taking special measures to ensure their physical safety,

some mothers like Armanda also mentioned playing an active role nurturing their children's moral well-being. 'I always ask my children to be quite and respectful and I also advise them about their future' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi).

### **5.1.3 Family Poverty, Women's Burdens and Gendered Care Relations**

The data depicted women as having primary responsibility for the welfare of their families and for coping with poverty which imposed limitless demands and burdens on them on a daily basis. The sub-sections below present the material, affective and corporeal consequences of these for women as they went about preventing and coping with hunger and meeting the needs of husbands, children and adult dependants. This involved budgeting on inadequate income and shouldering the main strain of making ends meet whilst also performing the bulk of unpaid domestic and care work in very harsh living conditions with almost no affective involvement or economic support from husbands who appeared in the study as household heads, principle decision-makers and in control of family resources.

#### ***5.1.3.1 Women's Burdens Caring, Providing and Dealing with Income Poverty***

Providing basic comfort and shelter, sending children to school and feeding and clothing them in resource-constrained contexts compelled the vast majority of participants to go to extreme lengths, distributing large portions of their time and energy to labour-intensive work. Over and over participants explained that their time was stretched as, as income earners they still had to continue performing their traditional roles as household managers and care providers (Lynch, 2009). Women invested their energy planning and organising physical and social order, kept household expenditure to a minimum going to great lengths to change expenditure patterns and protect and supplement existing income by diversifying multiple economic activities. Fernanda, an abandoned housewife and mother of a large young family reliant on intergenerational transfers barely prevented food poverty by selling off household appliances and all of her belongings. Her efforts to cushion primary and secondary poverty and ensure her children's welfare not alone caused her endless maternal exhaustion and anxiety but increased her vulnerability to greater insecurity as they

depleted her personal assets including her inheritance.

'Then the food money I used to give them came from selling my jewellery and other belongings; I've sold everything. I had a big ring that I sold for a third of the price. I sold my fridge to pay for school fees. I also ran a kiosk but its empty now ... nowadays I have no money, I cannot buy anything for my children' (Fernanda, middle-aged abandoned housewife, mother of 7, Harupai).

Lack of income to meet basic needs interacting with the moral economy and gendered assumptions about how women should behave in relation to family welfare created for many mothers dilemmas and conflicts of interest between their children and their own needs. As women also had to complete large volumes of household chores and care work to varying intensities, frequencies and at multiple times they were compelled to juggle their time and workload throughout their day, from early morning until late at night, seven days a week. The incessant nature of managing affective and material poverty was reported to be physically exhausting for women who had to tend to the needs of many small children and other dependants when working, wanting to sleep themselves or having to turn to the second or third shift of washing laundry and feeding the family after a long day at paid work. The study is replete with accounts similar to that provided by Avo Amelia who had little time for sleep when combining caring and domestic work with paid work: 'When I am finished my chores then I can turn to my other work like selling vegetables. Then can I buy food, cook it and eat it. Only then I can sleep' (Avo Amelia, elderly housewife, mother of 7 and petty trader, Usululi). Meanwhile Cesarina who was also raising a food-insecure family reported working long hours and shouldering heavy workloads. In addition to her economic activities that included running a kiosk and selling bread which she would bake and distribute in the suku before dawn, she also did all the housework:

'[...] I wash the dishes and the clothes. I fetch water and haul firewood from the forest back home. Normally I finish my chores around 10pm and get up around 3.30 am to get back to work again as usual' (Cesarina, 40s housewife, mother of 8, entrepreneur, Tafara).

One woman participating in a focus group combining formal and informal paid work

with primary caregiving gave some idea of how it could get tiresome for women having to juggle multiple workloads and turn to the third shift of feeding the family after a long day.

'I am a school teacher and I go and teach children everyday. After coming back from teaching I prepare lunch for the family. I also run a small kiosk. I wash the plates, clothes and fetch water. I cook the dinner for all the family in the evening. I also help my children with their homework. If I'm lucky I get to bed at midnight' (FG discussant, Tafara).

Poverty interacting with the unequal distribution of unpaid work and subsistence activities reinforced physical strain and fatigue and also induced in women profound levels of anxiety, misery and despair. Women suffered miscarriages, dizziness, headaches and physical pain in their bodies from working harder and for longer hours or going without food for prolonged periods. Catarina found caring and breadwinning from home an overwhelming and demanding experience. At the time of the interview she was rearing eight children under the age of ten in very impoverished conditions with little support from an alcoholic and violent husband. She described the corporeal and affective burdens as follows:

'[...] I've had 6 pregnancies including two sets of twins. It is very hard on the body to carry twins [...] if my husband goes to work I have to look after all the children myself. That is an awful heavy workload. Eight children and all so small. I breastfeed the twins and this is challenging as well as trying to keep an eye on all the children. With all these things, I am trying just to be patient' (Catarina, housewife, young mother of 8, petty trader, Usululi).

Rural mothers found combining domestic, subsistence and paid agricultural activities demanding and exhausting particularly landless women and those living in remote areas who had to walk long distances in intense heat to access water sources, forage for food and haul heavy loads of firewood for cooking and income generation. To cope with income and food poverty and ensure their children and husbands got fed required that women invest and commit to anything from one to three hours daily – walking to and from the family on plots of land located several kilometres from the home. Agricultural production demanded essential on-farm tasks such as manually fetching water and watering the land, sourcing materials and constructing fences to prevent

over grazing and destruction by roaming livestock, a problem which many farmers said they were afflicted by. They performed seasonal non-mechanised activities such as weeding, ploughing and making land ready for sowing seeds and harvested the yield and physically picked the crops, the loads of which they carried home on their backs. Rural mothers also processed their crops such as pounding corn, and performed a range of livestock-related tasks. Nina a subsistence farmer and mother of ten children described the effects this had on her body.

'I am always working. Even when I am tired after farming I have to continue working. [...] When I am sick my body feels really tired and my arms and back are in pain. And still I cannot go to the doctor as I have no money. The main problems are money and transportation' (Nina, 60s, housewife, mother of 10, subsistence farmer and market trader, Tafara).

Some women who had experienced miscarriages explicitly blamed their heavy physical workloads. In rural areas this related to subsistence agricultural work especially food cultivation and production which they had no choice but to perform if they were to behave in food-related maternal ways, complete family tasks and shield their children from hunger. As Luisa explained:

'Because of the miscarriages I've become very weak and unable to farm. Even so I force myself to work hard for my children [...] I had two miscarriages in the same year. I think it was because I was exhausted all the time. Working too much, like I was collecting the corn in the field throughout the pregnancies [...] I wouldn't go to hospital because all they'd tell me to do is sit down and rest. But if I did, who would take care of my children, get the vegetables and the basic things that I need for my family? [...]' (Luisa, 40s, housewife, mother of 2, subsistence farmer, Tafara).

Informal workers in the city endured risky and hazardous working conditions. At the time of the interview Cecilia, a market trader had been living alone and sleeping under a bench for extended periods in a violent part of the city without bedding, sanitation and proper lighting described how:

'Sometimes I stay in hari-laran to sell things and I never come back home [...] I live in the big marketplace [...] I sleep under the vegetable stall for many months [...] all this is very difficult for me as I am the only one who works and brings in the money [...] there have been problems there

recently with people throwing stones' (Cecilia housewife 40s, mother of 6, market trader, Usululi).

Certain forms of women's paid work was dangerous and harmful such as sex work as explained by Dulce:

'[...] The sex was forced and I felt sick after but the money was good. He paid me \$50 but I was in a lot of pain after for a few days [...] The foreign men pay much better than the Timorese men. The foreigners pay \$100. The Timorese, even the ones that are big bosses they pay \$10 or \$20 and I'd also accept \$5' (Dulce, unmarried, young transgender woman, Usululi).

As a result of material poverty women also found their domestic and caregiving work demoralising and worrisome as it required resources that they typically did not have to cover basic costs of living. Income and food insecurity gave rise to chronic and acute maternal anxiety. Though they worked hard and were determined to do their best, in reality, despite taking extra measures, women often could not fulfil what was expected of them like creating for their families a comfortable home, providing them with regular and nutritious meals and clean laundry or with opportunities to participate in education. In their narratives mothers conveyed angst, frustration and other negative feelings about this. Feelings of pain and powerlessness dominated their interviews.

'What happens when we have no money? Well we cannot do our jobs properly. For example when we have no money we cannot buy detergent. So when we wash the dishes or children's clothes they are never clean' (FGD Harupai).

'[...] I have to work really really hard to support my family. Especially when they need things that I cannot provide. No matter how hard I try I've never been able to give them what they need (Palmerina, housewife 40s, mother of 8, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Women also faced emotional turmoil on account of tensions that arose between paid and unpaid work and when juggling multiple responsibilities. Cecilia, a mother of 6 from Usululi conveyed how she often had to make difficult choices between generating an income on the one hand and being present in the home and providing continuous love and care work on the other. Cecilia worked as a trader in one of Dili's largest markets in Hari Laran, enabling her to generate enough income to ensure the survival

of her family that included 6 children and her disabled husband, also a dependent. She took pride in her love and care work that allowed her focus on her children's comfort and happiness. One of several moral dilemmas for Cecilia related to a conflict of interest between her children's emotional and material needs. As her work required her to be away from the family home for long periods, she experienced on-going guilt at not being emotionally available to her children or able to fulfil her moral commitments via providing reliable maternal intimacy and presence in her family. Cecilia was also conflicted when faced with the difficult decision of placing the immediate needs of the family over her eldest daughter's long term future and her desire to continue her education. To spend as much time as she did in Hari Laran, she relied on the availability of her daughter who assumed the backstopping for the bulk of the housework and continuous childcare coverage. To free up her daughter's time to attend university, Cecilia would have needed to cut back on her breadwinning hours, diminishing the family income, the potential risks of which she was acutely aware of having previously lost four baby infants when the family lived in acute poverty. Her maternal decision to put the needs and survival of the family over her daughter's future and self actualisation was not made easily and the maternal guilt she experienced was evident in the interview. A further dilemma she encountered was related to the strong cultural imperative that obliges families to make significant financial contributions in cases of bereavements. By exercising her maternal discretion not to comply with social norms and pay the full price, Cecilia risked social disapproval rather than compromise her capacity to care and provide for her family. Whilst her maternal power and decision had positive outcomes for the welfare of her family, she felt strained and anxious.

Women faced other types of tensions between paid and unpaid work such as those manifested in women's interpersonal relationships. There were several accounts of husbands becoming angry and inflicting verbal and physical violence against breadwinning wives for not completing housekeeping and care work on time. The few waged women working in the civil service were under tremendous pressure, juggling tense marital relations alongside the competing demands of inflexible paid and

incessant unpaid care work. For example, a rural school teacher expressed fear, explaining that: 'Its the same for me [...] my husband gets angry with me when I go out to work. He gets angry because I cannot get home on time to start cooking for the family' (FG discussant Tafara). Evident throughout Emilia's narrative, an urban formal sector worker, were the anxiety inducing effects brought on by a combination of her husband and male boss' attempts to control her time and paid and unpaid labour that resulted in conflict over housework and tense relations in the workplace.

'He gets angry when I come home from work late so he gives out to me [...] I cannot choose between following the demands of my husbands and my boss. Its really difficult trying to face my angry husband and a demanding boss all the time [...] The whole thing really is an awful problem for me. I have such a difficult time trying to manage it' (Emilia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, waged worker, Usululi).

Managing poverty and juggling childcare with heavy physical workloads emerged as key barriers facing women in relation to their ability to generate income - by being obstacles to employment and participation in other activities in the public sphere such as training and education. This was particularly so for rural women living in areas lacking proper infrastructure such as public transport and tele-communication networks.

### **5.1.3.3 Women's Burdens Caring, Providing and Dealing with Food Poverty**

As well as dilemmas related to income poverty, the chronic and severe lack of food interacting with the affective and moral economy and gendered assumptions about women's food roles and how women should behave created for many mothers additional dilemmas and conflicts of interest between their children and their own needs. As previously mentioned in the chapter, women were responsible for sourcing, preparing and serving food to family members. However maternal food responsibilities involved more than manual work and corporeal burdens as feeding was not just about ensuring nutritional sustenance. It was also emotion, care and solidarity work - an expression of maternal love, of how women cared for and about their families. To fulfil their food responsibilities women stated that they adjusted their eating habits to

guarantee their children got fed and stayed healthy. For example Rosa dealt with food shortages and the tensions between her children's nutritional needs and her own by prioritising her children's needs. For her, feeding her children and providing them with adequate nutrition represented a fundamental caregiving responsibility of motherhood. Rosa had also been reminded of women's supposed natural role for ensuring family health. The quote below captures the trade-off she made between her own nutrition to have energy to survive and fulfil her maternal obligations and her children's needs.

'I really want my children to be healthy but we don't have enough money to buy healthy food. When my children went to the hospital the doctor said if I wanted my children to be healthy, I must feed them food that has proteins and vitamins. But how can I when I don't have the money? Sometimes I really want to eat so that my body can get some energy but I also have to think about my children [...] So I don't really think about myself as I have to focus on my children's future' (Rosa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

There were reports that maternal anxiety as well as the lack of food led to under-eating. When women did not eat and were deprived of nutritional sustenance - either due to the sheer absence of food or because they adjusted their eating habits to prioritise their children's needs – they lacked energy and suffered from exhaustion, headaches and dizzy spells. Pasquela for example suffered exhaustion from the strain of poverty and care work and was consumed by endless food-worries.

'Sometimes I get very tired if I have a lot of work to do. When I stand up I get dizzy and if I overdo my work I forget to eat because of this situation, thinking about the money, everyday life and food problems' (Pasquela, housewife 40s, mother of 6, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

It is also possible that under-eating affected women's pregnancies. There were a number of women who reflected during their interviews on painful experiences of miscarriages and of losing baby infants and toddlers possibly on account of poverty, poor maternal and child nutrition and health. Food-anxiety fuelled by a combination of maternal food obligations and food insecurity - affected women in ways other than physical workloads, diet, nutrition and eating habits. Women's emotional health too

bore the brunt of food-poverty. As well as a discourse of love and nurturing, women's food narratives were also punctuated by feelings of pain, powerlessness and despair. It appeared that fulfilling food responsibilities was for many participants an expression of maternal love and about providing their children with food that was digestible and palatable. However there were several instances in the study of women feeling guilty, anxious and responsible for not preventing hunger and satisfying children's preferences for certain food types and for aggravating their children's digestive problems. When food was lacking, inadequate or inferior women such as Silvina conveyed feeling sad and guilty.

'If there is no food I get frustrated and suffer headaches and I feel very sad. I try to encourage myself not to be sad but the pain from the sadness is worse than the physical pain from an injury' (Silvina, 40s, housewife, mother of 3, subsistence farmer, Tafara).

Cedaliza, a single mother with a debilitating health condition was among many who spoke about the emotional turmoil that comes from shouldering the burden of being responsible for food needs and not being able to meet them.

'Then I see my friends' children eating good and healthy food and my children cannot do the same. Honestly I feel guilty and have a pain in my heart and I cannot do anything about it. I feel it is painful. This poverty is painful' (Cedaliza, 30s, single mother of 3, Usululi).

Food-poverty and anxiety also affected women's interpersonal relationships with their children and husbands. Some women explained that it is they who are blamed, singled out and bore the brunt of pressure from children and husbands when there is no food or not enough food, when food is unpalatable or when the food is not ready on time. This often triggered marital tensions and gender-based physical and emotional violence against women, aspects of gendered poverty and subjugation documented in more detail in chapter six of the thesis.

'These things are very stressful for me. When there are no vegetables for the children to eat, this puts big pressure on me. Like when the children come to ask me for food and when we have no money, well I cannot provide them with any food' (Ivete, housewife 30s, mother of 7, Harupai).

'My husband gets angry with me because there is no food and so our children do not get anything to eat during the day and go to bed hungry. My husband angrily asks me: 'what are you doing? Why are you not cooking any food for the family?' (FG discussant Tafara).

'In the morning I try to prepare breakfast but there is no rice so I cook yam, cassava and banana and this is a problem as my children do not want to eat it. This causes problems in the family and is the reason why myself and my husband end up angry with each other. My husband does not want to work to get money to provide food for the family (FGD discussant Tafara).

According to the findings poverty and maternal food-anxiety also compelled financially dependent wives to remain in violent marriages for the sake of their children. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 7. Reluctant to risk further hunger, Filomena an unwaged mother of eight was driven by her maternal duties and poverty-induced fear to tolerate her husband's physical beatings and his extra-marital affairs. As she told me:

'He is cheating with other women behind my back. I don't care anymore what he does. The only thing I care about is feeding my children and getting them out to school' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai).

#### **5.1.3.4 Women's Burdens Caring, Providing and Dealing with Housing Poverty**

Mothers' care burdens were exacerbated by poor living conditions. Housing poverty heightened maternal distress, with insecure tenancy, overcrowding and lack of access to water representing primary stressors and strains. Also underlying maternal hardships were women's poor living conditions including insecure and inadequate housing and limited access to water and sanitation. Acknowledging that as women they tended to spend more time in their homes than their husbands, bore greater responsibilities in terms of maintaining the home and for collecting water and were more dependent on water to perform their maternal duties, a number of participants felt aggrieved that their husbands escaped the physical hardships and affective encounters with this aspect of family poverty.

The array of practical inconveniences of raising families in temporary shelter was a constant source of everyday hassles or 'low-level' chronic stress for many women,

especially urban women. Mothers were not able to feel in control or settled which affected their health and well-being. For example whilst providing a physical dwelling was a basic responsibility, mothers were frustrated at their lack of ontological security, described as a sense of confidence, trust and reliability in the world as it appears to be. Housing securing represented for them a rite of passage, achievement and source of pride which was very much tied to their adult identity. On-going precarious tenancy impeded this as well as their ability to provide their children with a permanent, secure and reliable home. Women were further frustrated when, performing even the most essential of domestic duties was compromised by dilapidated conditions and utilities, standards of which could not be improved upon owing to insecure tenure or lack of clarity on legal title.

An overarching sub-theme in the study was the consequences insecure tenancy had for mothers' interpersonal relationships and their day to day interaction with family members and neighbours. Having to squat with in other people's homes created anxiety and numerous and endless practical complications for women as well as tense interpersonal relations within the family. Mothers with nowhere else to raise their families but in temporary shelter occupied by natal families described feeling embarrassed, under constant strain and emotionally trapped by situations of gratitude and indebtedness. With no choice but to accept make-shift shelter on plots of land owned privately by neighbours or wealthier relatives women were severely constrained by not only the complicated logistics of maintaining family survival but also the unequal and uncomfortable relationships these types of arrangements fostered. Jacinta shouldered most of the affective and material outcomes of having to squat indefinitely with her family in her aunt's compound. As the primary carer it was not on her husband but Jacinta to compensate and repay the 'debt' by providing no end of in-kind labour. She constantly felt stressed trying to comply with the living rhythms, standards and ways of doing things of others. She also felt inadequate and indebted to her aunt, her non-commercial landlady, as the power imbalance within the relationship and arrangements placed additional pressure on her.

'[...] there are inequalities between different families and different women here in this bairo. Not everything is equal. For example my aunt gave us a small corner in this compound where we can sleep and also where I can cook food for the family but in return I have to help her do all sorts of jobs around the house whenever she wants. [...] We are constantly indebted to them. We are like their servants or slaves. We are still stuck in this slave position today' (Jacinta, housewife, 30s, mother of 4, Harupai).

A second major source of maternal anxiety was the actual conditions of women's housing. Dilapidated structures, severe overcrowding and limited infrastructure including lack of toilets and wash areas were identified as incessant stressors on mothers as they struggled to fulfil their care responsibilities in the home. Overcrowding and dilapidated housing made food preparation complicated and stressful and aggravated physical work that was already exhausting. Such deprivations also adversely effected mothers' relationships with family members and neighbours as inadequate kitchen space frequently gave rise to conflicts of interest between mothers all of whom were under tremendous pressure to fulfil food-related responsibilities. Consequently throughout their day and at multiple intervals, mothers were having to contend with simmering low-level tensions and invest their energy to keeping the peace. Urban and rural mothers also received complaints and bore the brunt of the consequences of dilapidated housing that obstructed basic order, hygiene standards and smooth functioning of the family. In rural areas especially mothers were blamed and sometimes reprimanded with harsh physical violence (personal observation) when food and meals - destroyed by roaming domestic animals - were no longer suitable for human consumption. Urban mothers rearing families in confined spaces with shared access to water sources reported high levels of anxiety as it was they and not husbands who had to negotiate access and endure water-related tensions with neighbours. According to the data, the size of individual dwellings was grossly inadequate as there was insufficient space to accommodate large families. Mothers felt anxious when their children were unable to complete homework in crowded conditions, particularly at night when space was needed for sleep. Cramped conditions triggered further maternal stress as inadequate sleeping spaces typically compromised gendered privacy and children's personal safety, for which mothers felt entirely responsible. Like others,

Catarina worried about the potential vulnerabilities confined and cramped conditions exposed her children of mixed age and gender to, particularly as they lived with a violent and alcoholic husband. She exercised vigilance by putting in place single-sex sleeping arrangements:

'As we only have this living space, my daughters sleep with me, and the sons sleep with their father [...] but if my husband has been out drinking and playing cards with his friends, I make sure all my children sleep with me' (Catarina, housewife, young mother of 8, petty trader, Usululi).

Agusta, a mother of 4 from Usululi worried about her teenage daughters' lack of space for privacy and basic functions whilst her neighbour Armanda, mother of 7 had concerns about the personal safety of her teenage sons as without the space and comfort of their home, they often resorted to roaming unsafe streets late at night where they were at risk of generalised physical violence. Also featuring in a number of urban narratives were women's concerns about gang violence and teenage and young adult sons' personal safety exacerbating maternal anxieties. Meanwhile overcrowding, whether in single one-roomed spaces or small rudimentary houses was reported to trigger tensions that typically affected mothers' relationships with family members and neighbours. Young women in the early years of motherhood found caring for children in such conditions very challenging. Valintina from Marobo who had recently given birth to her first child found the tensions caused by overcrowding in her home very stressful which made post-natal care a more challenging experience than it already was. Regina an abandoned housewife and mother rearing her 5 children in her mother's dilapidated and three-roomed home with 11 others explained:

'I have lots of children so I want to have a house of my own because living with some many others creates fall-outs and misunderstandings for us and is very stressful for me' (Regina, 40s, mother of 5, subsistence farmer, Tafara).

Urban women living in overcrowded compounds lacking in adequate sanitation facilities raised the problems they encountered performing vital functions in private like going to the toilet or bathing which they said were not simple matters for women, especially for menstruating, pregnant and post-natal women. None of the participants'

families had access to safe drinking water or a piped or mechanised water system and the lack of access to water emerged as one of the major sources of maternal distress and exhaustion for older women and rural women. Avo Joesfina an elderly housewife and mother of co-resident adult children highlighted the strain on her body caused by the drudgery of water-related work which despite her age she was compelled to perform on a daily basis.

'[...] I have to draw the water myself even though I am old. My God its tiring. I feel sick from this difficult situation and also all my body is in pain from the hard physical work. I am an old woman. It is tiring and painful. I have to do it. I need to get water in order to cook food. I have to cook food for people. I have to cook for the pigs' (Avo Joesfina, housewife, 70s, mother, Harupai).

Lack of water emerged as a serious problem in all study sites but it dominated the vast majority of rural narratives. Like many others living far away from water sources, Pasquela and Rita suffered exhaustion fetching water and high levels of stress and frustration when water was not available to undertake essential tasks expected of women. Though Pasquela identified dilapidated housing and lack of money, food and water to be the major stressors and constraints on her ability to care, she ranked 'water to be my biggest concern' as not having it affected hydration and sustenance of everyone in the family. Because of the lack of water she said she often found it impossible to provide clean laundry, bath her children and grow vegetables which she wanted for domestic consumption and to sell to send her 6 children to school. As well as water anxieties, Pasquela found it physically exhausting drawing and hauling water and making four hour return trips to the nearest water source on foot, daily and on her own 'because my daughter is studying in Lospalos' (Pasquela, housewife 40s, mother of 6, subsistence farmer, Marobo). She was deeply frustrated with the xefi aldeia who she felt was doing little to address poor living conditions of local families. Inadequate living conditions that undermined women's ability to care for and care about their families also affected maternal and marital interpersonal relationships. For example as well as imposing on her hard physical labour, lack of water caused Rita distress and marital tensions. It is possible that underlying her reaction was her fear of moral judgement of

herself as a mother which as Sayer notes, has an affective outcome as people experience shame and embarrassment when judged to be of lower moral worth (Sayer, 2005).

'[...] I don't like it when I see my children looking dirty or wearing dirty clothes because we have no water [...] so sometimes I get angry with him [husband] and ask him to get the water' (Rita, housewife 40s, mother of 4, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

#### **5.1.3.5 Women's Experiences of Gender Inequality Caring, Providing and Dealing with Poverty**

The kind of economic and care work that was expected of women and that women were committed to was not just physically exhausting and emotionally demanding. It also appeared in the narratives as thankless, typically lacking in support, reward or recognition. Over and over, women conveyed doing far more domestic and care work than husbands, requiring not only the hard physical labour but also the kinds of continuous coverage and invisible labour – caring for and about - that enabled their families to exist. Besides being emotionally and physically depleted, participants felt aggrieved and frustrated with this state of affairs. Many were very articulate and eager to disclose their negative feelings and make known their adverse experiences at having to constantly shoulder the burden of rearing their families in severe material deprivation with little or no affective involvement or financial contributions from husbands. The study is replete with accounts of men benefiting and exploiting women's labour and care commitments. Irrespective of who brought in family income, husbands had their material needs taken care of on a daily basis by wives who sourced food, cooked and served them meals at multiple times throughout the day, provided them with clean laundry and worked hard to ensure physical and social order in the home to men's standard and satisfaction. Furthermore, women's care labouring enabled their husbands engage in paid work. Similar findings appeared with remarkable frequency to the extent that accounts such as the following were replete across all four communities:

'Women are always working very hard even throughout our pregnancies.'

Even when we are heavily pregnant we'll still go to the fields but our husbands won't [...]' (FG discussant Tono).

'Cooking and washing, as women we have to do all these things before our husbands come back home from work. We have to clean all the things and have them ready for them. As a woman these are the things I have to do in our home. I must stay in my home, do my jobs as a wife and woman' (Balbina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, Usululi).

'No. He does nothing around the house. He goes out to work and when he comes home he relaxes and waits to be fed. I am always working and when I stop, then I am always thinking, planning and organising [...]' (Luseila, housewife, 30s, mother of 7, domestic worker, Harupai).

'Sometimes men just sit around and don't work. And they never wash the clothes or cook food' (FGD Tafara).

'When we compare our jobs with men's, well things are not the same. As women, we have to do so much more work than them. We have to cook, wash clothes, clean the house, prepare the lunch which men don't. And we have to find the time to earn the money and work alongside men in the fields. All this to make sure our families survive' (FG discussants Marobo).

Husbands benefited in other ways too. Men used family income – the generation of which relied on women's unpaid labour and was destined for family survival - to fund their leisure activities. These included heavy drinking, gambling, extra-marital affairs and the purchasing of casual sex. For example Filomena's unpaid care work in the home enabled her husband to work in full-time paid employment and generate an income which he barely shared, using it instead to fund most of the leisure activities mentioned above. Driven as much by terror and fear as gendered duty, Fernanda, in addition to tending to his food and clothing requirements would also: ' [...] organise for my children to get up early to prepare coffee for him so that he won't get angry' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai).

Husbands were depicted in the data as having the freedom to escape unpaid work in the home, absolving themselves and avoiding sharing childcare and domestic chores by employing such tactics as being constantly sick, displaying traits of ineptness or childlike neediness and by being absent and occupied in recreational activities including drinking and gambling. When husbands did help, they were depicted, at best,

as occasional 'helpers', or mostly responsible for house repairs and other 'masculine' tasks. Meanwhile in terms of childcare and the provision of the kind of 'continuous coverage' needed by infants and small children (Thompson 1989, p.861), examples of husbands' help were almost absent from women's narratives. When women were at work they relied on daughters, who, as they got older, helped out with chores and childcare until women themselves returned home from the workplace. In cases where women were gone for the entire day, working office hours or travelling long distances to farm the land or market their produce, the presence of informal social supports was crucial and responsibility for minding children and preparing food was passed not only to daughters but also other female family members, usually sisters, mothers and mothers-in law. There was one example of an exception provided by a farmer who stated that:

'I go farming everyday. I weed the grass and take care of our animals. I feed the pigs and carry firewood and sell it to earn money for the family. When I do this my husband take care of the children' (FDG discussant Tafara).

The extent of the backstopping provided by female family members enabled women to engage in the public sphere. However critical this was for generating income to meet family survival needs, it did little to alter gender care relations that disadvantaged women as it served to compensate for husbands' lack of sharing in childcare thus reinforcing women's role as primary caregiver and assignment to the domestic sphere. It is possible that husbands' lack of sharing in childcare in the household constrained the productivity of women's labour considerably and reduced their mobility. Heavy physical workloads and lack of childcare emerged as a key barrier facing women in relation to their ability to generate income - by being an obstacle to employment and to participate in other activities in the public sphere such as training and education.

There were a few references suggesting exceptions to the gendered division of unpaid care and housework in which economically active husbands carried out some 'feminine' tasks or where wives were unencumbered by this kind of work. For example, in the cases of Natalia, Julianna, Teresinha and Jesuina below:

'My husband helps me as well in the house. For instance he helps me cook for the family, look after the children and he boils the water whether I am at home or not. We do everything together' (Natalia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, businesswoman, Marobo).

'Here in our house we hire people to do the housework [...] My children are in boarding school in Ainaro and both myself and my husband work to pay their fees. I do not have a lot of housework to do. My husband goes out to work like me in the mornings and then we meet in the evenings. The young girl does the housekeeping for us' (Julianna, housewife late 30s, mother of 6, businesswoman, Harupai).

'We both always help each other bake the bread. I prepare the dough and he puts everything into the oven and bakes it. [...] My husband helps me carry water. He also contributes financially by cooking meals for the local school' (Teresinha, 30s, housewife, mother of 7, subsistence farmer, entrepreneur, Marobo).

'My husband has always supported me to run my business and volunteer with SISCA, our community health programme. For example every Saturday he often helps me bring produce to Lospalos to sell in the market. He'll also cook me my lunch so when I come home there is a meal already prepared for me' (Jesuina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, businesswoman, Tafara).

Although unclear, there was a sense from the data that rather than the principle of gender equality, what might have been motivating these exceptions was the unavailability or absence of women themselves, requiring husbands to carry out some 'feminine' tasks to free up women's labour and time to generate income. Although the data are limited it is possible that the husbands of Teresinha and Jesuina increased their involvement in housework to 'help them out' when, as providers – their wives were not available, because they had to cut back on their time in family work in response to their participation in paid work that ensured family survival. In such cases it is likely husbands recognised the imperativeness of family tasks and the financial benefits and necessity of women's paid work and of thus freeing up their time. A number of women confirmed that where husbands involved themselves in the drudgery of domestic work, it was incidental, as in when women were ill or recovering from childbirth or optional, minimal and confined to certain tasks. As Emilia a clerical

officer in the public sector explained: 'As for work in the house, he helps out only when I am sick. But otherwise I have to do everything, all of the time' (Emilia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, waged worker, Usululi).

Husbands were often perceived as being incompetent, uninterested and unfamiliar with the kind of caring responsibilities and raft of anxieties that afflicted women. Even if it was difficult, hands-on, boring, dirty and tiring, mothers still took their love labouring very seriously, to the extent that their lives revolved around their care responsibilities in a way that did not apply to husbands. Some felt their husbands knew nothing of the drudgery of domestic work, had little appreciation of the weight of responsibilities and the intensity and scale of physical and emotional hardship women themselves encountered. If they did they did not seem to care which caused women pain and unhappiness in their married and family life. Commenting on family life and the lack of support from her husband and unemployed adult sons Avo Amelia a frail urban woman regretted that: 'They never take care of me. They don't both trying to find a job or earn any money. They just eat, sleep and do nothing' (Avo Amelia, elderly housewife, mother of 7 and petty trader, Usululi). Sabina also explained that:

'My husband never experiences what I am experiencing, like the suffering I face when there is no rice for the family. I am the one who feels the pressure. My husband is insensitive to all of this. Even when I tell him about the problems, he never cares. He just gets drunk and starts to fight with me. I am the one who is responsible in the family. My husband is drunk everyday' (Sabina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 7, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Many other women too conveyed feeling overwhelmed and resentful towards husbands who were neither encumbered nor familiar with the raft of corporeal work and weight of anxieties afflicting women. For example it seemed mothers lived in a permanent fear of hunger, were constantly preventing hunger and coping with food hardships. This compelled them to make enormous sacrifices and endure higher levels of physical strain and emotional turmoil than did fathers who participants felt did little to ensure sustenance or ease the strain on them and women more generally. As conveyed below, women, urban and rural, were frustrated and felt emotionally

abandoned by husbands who they viewed as negligent and complacent towards their children's immediate and future wellbeing.

'It is very difficult for us to find enough money for our family. #But our husbands do not think about this problem a#and other family problems like paying children's school fees. That is why we cannot pay the school fees. Its because the husbands don't bother to face up to the problem' (FGD Marobo).

'I am really scarred because I am the only one who takes care of my children. My husband is not well mentally. Well he doesn't care about those children' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi).

Concerning the other household responsibility – decision-making - even though feeding the family, providing clean laundry, sending children to school and general up-keep of the home were taken care of by women and also considered their responsibility, men had overall authority over this sphere, particularly in relation to the organisation of everyday life, the control of women's labour and access to family resources. In every study site a distinction was depicted between masculine and feminine unpaid work providing men with power and control over decision making and family resources especially finances. Quotes such as the following featured throughout the study, particularly in rural areas illustrating the strength of this family norm.

'Men insist they are the head of the family so that is why we women have to respect them ... Generally here in Marobo husbands make all the decisions but wives cannot. If the husband is not at home then no decision can be made until he returns' (FGD Marobo).

Nevertheless, the data are unclear about women's access and control over family finances. On the one hand the data depict women's low involvement in decision making about spending family income especially income generated by husbands. There were some accounts of participants who received no cash to purchase essential commodities because husbands insisted on withholding it entirely or large portions of it. These women had little or no say in how large or small household assets or agricultural produce were used, or had to defer to husbands for permission to make even the most minor of financial transactions. There were also accounts of women

holding and spending family income, allowing them varying degrees of access and control. A small few participants told me they jointly made decisions with their husbands whilst others took charge of large allocations and expenditures of resources in areas such as house building, education and also in the amount of family income allocated to *lia mate*, the East Timorese traditional ceremony of funeral rites. Where women managed family income, it was explained to me that they typically held onto their own income which they pooled with income handed over by their husbands. As explained by Rosalina, a waged woman who managed family finances:

'He always sends me money, sometimes every month or two. That way I was able to build this house, bit by bit. I bought cement blocks one at a time and eventually built the whole house' (Rosalina, married, young mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

Given their family roles, women that held the money were responsible for making small everyday financial decisions and transactions, often independent of their husbands. Such decisions usually required women to allocate the bulk of their time, energy and labour to particular activities and make routine, small but essential purchases of food and other basic commodities to complete housekeeping chores and care work. All of this aimed to ensure the planning, organisation and smooth management of the household. Women making regular financial decisions and transactions thus relied on being able to spend family income at their own discretion and on assuming a role similar to that of family banker. It is possible that husbands were supportive of this, only in so far as it satisfied men's needs and interests, reinforced the status quo, and their own household gender roles. Furthermore it cannot be assumed that women's involvement in decision making necessarily entitled them to be dominant or even equal when making decisions within the family. In many of the narratives regardless of who earned the family income women remained economically subordinate to their husbands as men were reported to always have the right to dominate household decision making.

## **5.2 Women's Experiences of Gender-Based Violence**

### **5.2.1 The Nature and Presence of GBV in Women's Lives**

Women's narratives also frequently depicted husbands as violent, controlling and having multiple sexual partners, suggesting that gender-based oppression and violence were common problems in their everyday family and care worlds. According to the data, GBV was prevalent across all four suku under study. Participants were unanimously of the belief that most women in their communities experience violence. Women mentioned many different types of violence including physical violence, sexual violence, emotional abuse, financial abuse and coercive control (Manjoo and McRaith 2011). No matter of what type, the vast majority of GBV reported implicated the husband. In some cases natal and in-law family members mostly - mothers-in law – also emerged as perpetrators. In respect to mothers-in law, this was particularly evident in cases of extreme psychological violence but one mother-in-law was also reported to have inflicted physical violence on her daughter-in-law. In Timor-Leste it is expected that the daughter-in-law lives with her husband's family and takes responsibility for the bulk of household chores and caring for the in-laws. In some of the cases where in-laws were abusers, the violence was compounded by other family members including the sister-in-law and father-in-law but mothers-in-law were the predominant instigators and perpetrators of GBV against their daughters-in-law. Members from participants' natal family including fathers and brothers were reported to use violence to control women and girls. Boyfriends and intimate dating partners committed gendered violence towards adolescent and young adult women and male school teachers, individual men unfamiliar to women were also identified as perpetrators. GBV was found to take place across multiple contexts of women and girls' lives such as within their natal and married families, in dating relationships and in the community. In Dili, participants experienced GBV in the general community, including educational institutions and elsewhere in public spaces. Whilst it was suggested that intimate partner GBV generally took place in the private space of women's homes, away from parents, friends and neighbours, one woman reported public humiliation as an ultimate display of power and control by her husband.

No form of interpersonal violence is devoid of structural violence. Strong synergies and linkages exist between the two (Manjoo and McRaith 2011). All acts of violence exist on a continuum of violence facilitated by a patriarchal gender order promoting gender inequality between women and men and between women (Davies and True 2015). Very few of the participants were aware that non-physical forms of violence such as verbal abuse, threatening behaviour, abandonment, having extra-marital affairs and not sharing income constitute forms of violence. Whilst respondents associated GBV mainly with physical and sexual acts of violence, their narratives also show how their everyday life experiences are marred by multiple forms including psychological and socio-economic violence.

Psychological violence emerged as the most common form of GBV whilst physical violence and socio-economic violence was also widespread. The extent and degree of GBV experienced by women varied. Although there were a few cases where it was reported as an isolated incident, it was mainly depicted in the study as occurring on an on-going basis such that a great many of the participants experienced a lifetime of GBV.

The vast majority of the participants described experiences of gender-based psychological violence as endemic which they also endured alongside other forms of GBV. For example physical violence was always accompanied by degradation and psychological violence. Typical examples included verbal attacks on the women. Women endured victim-blaming and also reported physical rejection by partners, being disrespected, name-called and humiliated based on their gender.

Most married women testified that throughout their marriages they had experienced gender-based psychological violence by husbands and sometimes mothers-in law who used a range of tactics such as threats, denigration and verbal insults. Verbal abuse was also expressed in the form of cursing, name calling, shouting and the use of harsh words. Women were subjected to demeaning remarks, repeated humiliation and belittlement all of which aimed to undermine their self-efficacy, self-esteem and control over the presentation of self. Other abusive tactics included physical rejection,

victim blaming. There were many cases of participants being shouted, screamed at and blamed for not preparing adequate or palatable food, serving husbands on time, for not providing a living environment or clean laundry or not having enough family income to host visitors or husbands' recreational activities. One woman was blamed by her husband for not bearing him a child who told her that: '...I have a good reproductive health and can produce a child, but you, you are a woman and you cannot conceive and get pregnant'...' (Agrafina, middle-aged urban housewife, mother of 4 and businesswoman, Usululi).

Many married women conveyed living in constant marital anxiety, often referring during their interviews to their husbands' intimidating and threatening behaviour, suggesting that men coercively controlled women (Stark 2007). Several women said they were frequently faced with menacing behaviour when they did not abide by husbands' demands and wishes. When women such as Feliciano from Harupai refused to fund husbands' recreational activities such as drinking and gambling (playing cards and cockfighting), their husbands threatened them with physical violence and/or to kill them. As Feliciano explained:

'The next morning he started asking me for card money. When I told him not to ask me again, he told me: 'if you refuse or speak to me like this again, I will kill you' (Feliciano, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

Another example of husbands threatening to kill their wives was provided by Sabina who lived in a very isolated rural area and faced severe physical and psychological violence. She told me that her husband: 'always says that he has more power than me and that if he were to hit me he would kill me. So I prefer his harsh words' (Sabina, middle aged housewife and mother of 7, Marobo). The data exposed many cases of women living in a constant state of marital fear of emotional and economic abandonment instilled by husbands who controlled them via threats of desertion and neglect. Discussants in a rural focus group (FG) recalled how disagreements within their marriages often escalated into their husbands threatening to leave the family and emigrate to Ireland. These participants took the threats seriously as they recalled how

other women in their communities had never received any remittances from their husbands who were also said to have started new families when living and working abroad (FG, discussants, Marobo). The propensity for men to desert their intimate partners was raised as a serious issue throughout the study. It was discussed as a form of gender inequality and was often the first item to be identified by participants as a contributory factor and a cause of women's everyday emotional and financial hardships. The tendency for husbands to conduct extra-marital relationships also dominated the findings. Sexual practices such as paying for sex with a sex worker and formal and informal extra marital relationships including polygamy characterised many marriages. In all FGDs but particularly in urban ones, discussants stated that they had observed the prevalence of such practices in their communities and several themselves stated that it was an ongoing problem for them, causing them deep emotional pain.

Gender-based economic violence also dominated many women's narratives. This included husbands denying women access to and control over basic resources, husbands refusing to contribute financially and husbands' stealing and controlling women's wages, employment and other economic activities. Psychological GBV also extended to social isolation, women having their choices limited and prohibition on personal freedom. Other forms of coercive controls ranged from teenage women's education choices, ability to visit friends, family members and attend family funerals and bereavements, to involvement in family decisions and participating in public life. Although this was a dominant finding in rural areas, many women living in Dili also complained about excessive controls across public and private aspects of their lives. In rural areas women had their movements regulated to the extent that they were often prevented by husbands from participating in micro-credit schemes and public events such as community meetings, training and also in this research project. Anarilha from Usululi and Filomena from Harupai were two of several women who stated that their husbands had stopped them from working outside the home. Meanwhile Joia's husband's curtailment on her attendance at funerals, cultural rituals and other ways of grieving the loss of people important to her was one of several ways her husband controlled her life.

A number of participants commented that within the natal family, GBV against girls, adolescent and young adult women was common, particularly in rural areas and most young women participating in the study testified that they have experienced this form of abuse. The study also found that separated women too experienced GBV perpetrated by natal family members including mothers and aunts. Psychological abuse was reported as a routine feature of growing up and included excessive parental-controls, verbal insults, humiliation and emotional denigration, explicit forms of discrimination favouring male family members and strenuous work which extended to domestic servitude.

Fernandez has argued that violence against women in Asia usually involves the husband's family, particularly senior women such as the women's mother-in law (Fernandez 1997 cited by Chan *et al* 2009). In this study participants spoke about the propensity for women in their communities to suffer a life-time of mental cruelty at the hands of their in-laws and many themselves said they endured such forms of GBV. This was reported far more by urban women than rural. In-law psychological abuse took place at the outset of and continued throughout participants' married lives. It was described as brutal and severe, routine and systematic. It also took place in the form of specific or isolated and extreme incidents as well as multiple isolated incidents. Participants experienced it in direct and indirect ways. Direct forms of in-law psychological violence included strenuous work which also extend to domestic servitude, intentional food deprivation, repeated attempts at child snatching and disallowing interactions with children and forced eviction. Indirect forms included verbal insults, humiliation and emotional denigration, enforced unconditional obedience, scolding, bickering and subtle blackmail leading to the breakdown of women's marriages. Women reported feeling unhappy, uncared for, discriminated against and believed in-laws to be intolerant of them as sisters and daughters-in law. Emilia from Usululi said she faced cruelty living with her husband's family where she was subjected to slavery and physically excessive workloads even when pregnant. Mothers-in-law emerged as the most common perpetrator of in-law abuse in the study. In Dili, a number of participants testified in private interviews about the severity of

such experiences, whilst it was ranked in one urban focus group by an overwhelming majority of discussants as a feature of their everyday oppression and hardships alongside material poverty and violent and adulterous husbands. Reports of in-law psychological abuse against women also involved multiple perpetrators including fathers but mostly sisters-in law. For example Alcina and Anarilha both from Usululi and Feliciana from Harupai experienced instances of abuse perpetrated by intimate partners in tandem with their mothers-in-law as well as other isolated episodes involving different in-laws.

Transphobia was a further feature of psychological GBV against women reported in the study. Dulce from Usululi recalled the effects that discrimination and prejudice had on her life as a young male-to-female transsexual woman. She associated her negative feelings with minority stress resulting from her stigmatised status and the non-consensual exposure of her transgender identity. Racism also emerged in women's experiences of GBV as reported by Feliciana from Harupai, one of 3 minority ethnic participants, who testified to the combined forces of GBV and racial discrimination perpetrated by her parents- in law.

Gender-based physical violence was one of the most common forms of GBV across all the communities. It was often described as brutal and pervasive and a large number of participants themselves had experienced it on a routine basis. According to the data, women suffered a life-time of physical cruelty. It took place throughout women's lives, including childhood, early adulthood and married life. Instances of pregnant women experiencing brutal forms of violence featured in several narratives. Far more urban women reported their experiences to me than did rural women.

The most common forms of gender based physical violence involve slapping, beating, kicking, biting, punching, dragging, pushing and throwing objects at women. It was depicted as a systematic part of women's everyday lives and often as severe and brutal. It involved multiple perpetrators, with husbands emerging as the most common perpetrator. There are also accounts of fathers, brothers, sons and mothers-in law

being physically violent towards participants. The following quotes capture some of these points.

'[...] My husband was always physically violent towards me [...] He kicked me night after night' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged urban mother of 8, Usululi).

'In Bauro, there is a lot of discrimination against women. For example many husbands use bad words to their wives. They also use the big knife or the machete to cut their wives. This has happened in the past in our village and we know that it is happening in other villages. Husbands also beat their wives with their fists and we know that they did this in the past as well' (FG discussants, Marobo).

Addressed in greater detail later in the chapter, women's risk of marital GBV victimisation was high when marital conflicts and verbal disagreements occurred especially over challenges to male dominance that ensured husbands' desires, preferences and privilege were met. Such challenges were manifested in perceived transgressions of female gender roles or a failure to conform to cultural stereotypes of good womanhood (Jewkes *et al* 2002; Sitaker 2007). Women were threatened, intimidated, shouted at and got beaten for questioning husbands' behaviour, disobeying husbands, not having the dinner or laundry ready on time, or not maintaining domestic care or housekeeping according to some standard. They were beaten when they refused their husbands sex, did not hand-over money to husbands to fund their recreational activities, when they raised suspicions of infidelity or expressed the needs and protected their children (Heise 2002; Sitaker 2007). The following examples illustrate these points.

'Like one time when he hit the children I tried to stop him and that was when I got a slap myself' (Emilia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, waged worker, Usululi).

'It was like his daughter was his wife and I was his daughter. There was something wrong with my husband having sex with his daughter. When I asked him about this he beat me [...] this is when the problems started' (Inacia, separated housewife, mother of 4, Harupai).

'The violence would start when I'd refuse to give him money for gambling

and playing cards' (Feliciana, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

Sexual violence was also a form of GBV that the women spoke about. Their narratives suggested that it was commonplace, took place in many forms – both within and outside the marriage. SGBV took place in the form of physically coerced sex involving the use of extreme violence, sexual initiation and sexual assaults such as grabbing and touching for sexual reasons. Non-physical coercion involving men using tactics such as blackmail, trickery and threats, and non-physical harassment including stalking and verbal sexual abuse were also reported in the study. In some of the women's lives, sexual violence was routine, persisting for extended periods. For example there are reports of rape occurring systematically throughout women's dating relationships, marriages and also during women's pregnancies. Sexual violence involved a range of different perpetrators including intimate partners, namely husbands and dating partners and men in positions of authority, such as school teachers. Even though perpetrators of sexual violence were mostly known to the women they also involved gangs of men unfamiliar to women.

The prevalence of SGBV in participants' communities was raised in three of the five FGDs. 'Marital rape' in Timor-Leste is a taboo subject and has been considered more a cultural issue rather than a crime. Thus whatever happened between wife and husband has generally been perceived as a private matter posing great risks for married women. During one urban FG discussants raised their concerns that in their community: 'some husbands rape other girls, like under 18 years' (FG discussants, Usululi). Marital rape, when it was raised, appeared in far more urban narratives than in rural narratives. A number of women also testified in private to having endured it at some point and also repeatedly throughout their lives. For example Anarilha endured endless and brutal rape throughout her marriage and pregnancies. 'When I was pregnant he demanded sex. When I was pregnant he always beat me, always kicked me and always forced me to have sex with him' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged urban mother of 8, Usululi). Despite separating from her husband, she still lived in constant terror as he continued this violence against her. In a number of focus groups, the participants talked a great

deal about the expectation that a wife would satisfy the sexual needs of her husband. The participants' narratives suggested that there was often little or no consideration for woman's consent to engage in sexual intercourse. Related to the issue of being forced to have sex, the women felt that they had no control over how many children they had. That sex was expected to take place whenever the man wanted it was not necessarily named as violence but it was clearly recognised as wrong and consequential for women by the participants. When women objected, physical force and violence sometimes ensued (Ella, married, middle-aged mother of 6 and street trader, Usululi).

Sexual violence occurred as isolated episodes as well as multiple isolated incidents. Dulce, a transsexual woman was raped by her school-teacher as a child and later as a young adult by a gang of men. Sexual assaults and sexual harassment against women featured in the everyday reality of some of the urban young participants. Margarita from Harupai had experienced sexual assault, harassment and intimidation by gangs of young men leaving her in constant fear when walking home from university. Reports of sexual harassment was confined to urban areas - mainly in public spaces such as the streets and specific routes taken by women. Adolescent and young adult women are said to be coerced into sex through threats of abandonment by men with whom they were in intimate relationships that women were emotionally attached and committed to. Celastina, a university student and Carmen who works as an elected woman youth representative (EWYR) both from Usululi raised their concerns about the increasing rate and prevalence of dating violence and non physical sexual coercion of teenage and young adult women in their community.

This study found women in every stage of life to be at risk of GBV. In every study site adolescent and young women were reported to be vulnerable to GBV perpetrated by natal family members. This was particularly the case for young single mothers abandoned by intimate partners who without alternatives were forced to return to their natal family where they experienced psychological abuse and stigma. Although the data are limited, the study also found that the practice of early marriage of

daughters still existed in certain parts of Timor-Leste and put rural adolescent women from poor families at increased risk of marital GBV. Meanwhile the study reveals that childhood, adolescence and early adulthood appear to be high risk periods for sexual harassment, sexual coercion and rape. Reports of women being sexually harassed by men were limited to women in their teens and early twenties. Some participants depicted this form of GBV as widespread particularly in urban areas. Also as intimate relationships before marriage become more common in Timor-Leste, adolescent girls increasingly encounter pressure from young men to engage in sexual relations. This finding dominated amongst others, the narratives of Carmeneza, an elected woman youth representative in Usululi and Cesaltina who raised it as a serious issue for her peers living in rural areas. It was conveyed that adolescent girls and young women in dating relationships experience sexual coercion and do not have the negotiating skills to confront and resist such coercion. They were said to acquiesce out of fear of the perpetrator's threat of abandonment. Dulce disclosed experiences of rape as a child. The perpetrator was her school teacher. Rape by older married men of young and adolescent girls was reported by discussants in a FG as a serious issue in Usululi. These findings do not discount the vulnerability of women in mid-life stage to GBV. It is evident from participants' narratives that being married increases women's vulnerability to all forms of GBV which does not occur just once; rather it is severe, of multiple forms, frequent and occurring throughout women's married lives. Pregnant women were also reported to be vulnerable to GBV. This was highlighted as a serious problem by FG discussants in a rural area. Meanwhile Anarilha and Fatima both from Dili testified to having been beaten whilst pregnant.

'I got beaten before like when I was still pregnant with my daughter. He still continued to beat me, until I was all black and blue in my eyes. My daughter died when she was one year' (Fatima, young deserted housewife, single mother of 3, petty trader, Harupai)

'Actually not just my husband but also my mother-in law kicked me during the pregnancy' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged urban mother of 8, Usululi).

For the majority of participants then, psychological violence, routine beatings and

other forms of GBV were a common feature of everyday life. Whilst many complained about their experiences, there was a sense in which the violence was largely accepted as an inevitable part of married life rather than a social problem or even a crime. GBV was thus institutionalised and reproduced in women's interpersonal relationships, to the extent that however upsetting it might have been, the violence did not appear 'out of the blue', but was 'normalised' and viewed rather as an inevitable and acceptable feature of married and family life, an understandable if undesirable aspect of male 'nature' and relations with marital kin such as mothers and sisters-in-law. In seeking to contribute to some understanding of this, I turn to the explanations I was given in terms of its causes and to accounts revealing the underlying factors and processes through which women's gender relations became violent. I also present findings regarding the processes through which women responded to the varieties of gendered violence described above.

### **5.2.2 Women's Responses to GBV**

In the interviews and focus groups, though participants recounted many different types of violence, most defined GBV in terms of gender-based physical violence. Thus women generally did not name what law, researchers and policy-makers commonly identify as GBV. If this was the case, how then did women understand and respond to victimisation and what is typically defined as GBV? To address this question I displace an exclusive focus on whether or why participants might have stayed in violent relationships or might not have reported violent incidents to authority figures, to explore instead more broadly the continuum or spectrum of responses. My intention - by exploring how women made sense of and managed intractable situations, - is to discover their autonomy and resistance to everyday gendered violence and controlling behaviours (Gondolf and Fisher 1988 cited in Hayes 2013) and how, in these processes, women might have been doing and/or undoing gender.

To skilfully manage GBV, women responded to it in a number of complementary ways, from normalising and adapting, to challenging and resisting it outright. Women experiencing marital GBV tended to remain in violent marriages, not confront their

husbands or seek separation from them. There was also a strong proclivity for wives to minimise it, justifying and accepting violence as a 'normal' and expected part of everyday married and family life. A major finding of the study therefore was the culture of tolerance of GBV, exposing women to on-going victimisation. Whilst normalising and tolerating it, where possible women also worked to stop the violence from (re)-occurring and make themselves and their children safe. They did this by managing complex dilemmas and employing a number of 'resistance strategies' that ranged from preventing and avoiding the violence to challenging perpetrators outright for their use of it. Thus another major finding of the study was women's active resistance to GBV and their readiness to use and move between a combination of well calculated strategies. My research thus rejects notions of women as 'victims' and confirms Frieze and McHugh's (1992 cited in Collis 1999) finding that women with less power in unequal relationships tend out of necessity to employ a wide range of strategies and are flexible in their use of them.

#### *5.2.2.1 Adapting and normalising GBV*

The findings suggest that women managed and adapted to GBV by normalising it by minimising and justifying perpetrators' violent behaviours (Boonzaier and de la Rey 2003). This was evident in discourses of blame and justification that were common to women's accounts. Routine physical beatings were typically depicted as a normal part of women's everyday lives, as conveyed by discussants in a rural FG: 'Here in [Marobo], men just walk around everyday, drinking traditional wine, getting drunk and going home to beat their wives' (FG discussants, Marobo). Certain forms of GBV were also depicted as 'not that bad'. There was a strong tendency to draw upon the commonsense understanding that 'violéncia baibain' (normal or routine violence) involving less overt forms of physical violence, verbal abuse or emotional violence does not constitute serious violence (Grenfell *et al* 2015). Even though it inflicted suffering, 'violéncia baibain' was not considered by the women in this study to be as damaging as 'violéncia grave' (serious violence), the kind that results in broken bones, severe bleeding and open lacerations. Sabina from Marobo for example minimised psychological violence and her husband's threats that he would kill her: 'My husband,

he always says he has more power than me, that if her were to hit me he would kill me. So I prefer his harsh words'. Many other participants too such as Agrafina from Usululi and Fernanda from Harupai whose husbands kept money from them, conducted extra-marital sexual affairs and abandoned them downplayed psychological GBV suggesting that it was less significant and damaging than physical violence.

'Actually he never hit or kicked me. He just shouts and insults me. I just avoid the problem to stop it from happening again' (Agrafina, middle-aged urban housewife, mother of 4 and businesswoman, Usululi)

'[...] there was never any beatings. My husband never hit, punched or beat me. But I suffered as sometimes we had hard conversations when he would say bad words to me, like \*\*\*\* you' (Fernanda, middle-aged abandoned housewife and mother of 7, Harupai).

There was a tendency also for participants to depict occasional or incident-based physical GBV as not very serious or warranting attention. Filomena explained how: 'The violence, well its only sometimes. If things are not going the way he wants' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife and mother of 8, Harupai). Throughout her interview Catarina simultaneously highlighted and downplayed the severity and regularity of the violence. She initially reported experiencing: 'a few slaps', and then recalled how the 'bleeding' and open lacerations caused by beatings inflicted by her husband required her to be hospitalised. Even though she also spoke about beatings being a daily occurrence in her married life, she quickly dismissed it, minimising its seriousness by describing it as a 'once-off' occurrence.

The tendency to minimise gendered violence was also evident in narratives conveying an eagerness to accept, forget or 'move on' from the violence, a common response among women experiencing violence noted in research elsewhere (Gill 2004). Gill cites Kelly who observes that: 'we forget experiences in order to cope with an event that we do not understand, cannot name, or that places acute stress on our emotional resources' (1990 p. 124 cited in Gill 2004). For example Emilia and Filomena conveyed that they 'just get on with things' as soon as physical violence happened. A sense of hopelessness dominated Filomena's narrative who explained she no longer cared

about the severity of the violence in an attempt to move on as she wanted to focus her energy on raising her children: '[...] I told him he can do whatever he wants to me. I don't care anymore' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife and mother of 8, Harupai). Though her daughter Marciana initially found the gendered violence inflicted by her father on herself and her mother distressing, explaining that 'all that shouting and aggression made me cry all the time', she had become so accustomed to it that nowadays she accepted it as part of everyday life. Meanwhile in her narrative, Emilia recalled growing up experiencing regular beatings inflicted by her father and then casually described the more recent injuries sustained from marital GBV as: 'not really that bad' as 'he did not beat me, just slapped me on the head' (Emilia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5 and civil servant, Usululi).

Celastina, the young university student who had migrated to Dili, justified her brothers' coercive control on the basis that they were protecting her and thus fulfilling their gendered roles as they were responsible for her well-being. Most women disclosing marital GBV also tended to make excuses for their husbands and remove them of responsibility for their violent behaviour. To explain the violence some drew on psychological understandings and blamed human distress and loss of control. These women viewed the violence their husbands inflicted on them as an expressive release of frustration driven by anger and triggered by a wide variety of external factors. These included poverty, being drunk, losing gambling bets, poor communication between spouses and husbands' lack of education or understanding of women's situation. For example some depicted their husbands as 'normally' good, except when they 'lost control', were mentally ill and going through bouts of stress or depression, were drinking heavily or became distressed when children became upset or when there was a lack of money to put food on the table.

'I just leave it. The violence comes in slaps. When he's very stressed he slaps me. I cry. I am not afraid. I am not happy. Then things go back to normal' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife and mother of 8, Harupai).

'Domestic violence happens when there is no money in the house [...] Husbands get very frustrated and angry. They take it out on their wives and

beat them' (FG discussant, Marobo).

'Husbands beat their wives because of poverty and also men's lack of education and awareness' (Rosalina, married, young mother of 5, elected woman representative, Marobo).

'Husbands hit their wives because the children who are complaining about the corn are driving him crazy' (FG discussant, Marobo).

'Domestic violence happens when the husband loses money from gambling and asks his wife for more money. Then the fighting starts' (FG discussant, Marobo).

Husbands' violence was also believed to be provoked by other women and alcohol and aimoruk at - black magic. Fatima and Fernanda, both deserted housewives, removed the blame from their husbands, placing it squarely on other women who they believed drove their husbands to behave violently.

'I think in my situation, my sister-in law said bad things about me to my husband and that is why he beat me. Its what created problems between myself and my husband' (Fatima, young abandoned housewife, single mother of 3, petty trader, Harupai).

'[...] but he really loved me. When he brought me here, I can say that he really loved me very much. Others say that he still loves me. Its just because of the other woman. Maybe she used some poison or black magic like aimoruk at to make him fall in love with her. She took my husband and now they live in Baucau [...]' (Fernanda, middle-aged abandoned housewife, mother of 7, Harupai).

Alcina was reluctant to acknowledge her husband as responsible for his behaviour, directing the blame for his violent actions and the breakdown of their marriage on her mother-in law. Despite being physically violent towards her she depicted her husband as a loving good man.

'In the early years of our marriage my first husband really loved me. After we had our first child he still loved me but the problem was my mother-in law who did not like me. She told me I was not good enough for her son' (Alcina, housewife, young mother of 4, Usululi).

Armanda who also presented her husband as 'normally' good thought he was violent

because he was mentally unwell and also came under the influence of friends and alcohol.

'Actually I love my husband but sometimes he makes me angry. Sometimes he makes me afraid of him because he always comes home drunk with those red eyes. I am scared' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi).

'[...] When my husband is helping out, like minding the pig, well he does it very well but when he heads off and hangs around those stalls he ends up chatting to his friends [...] And then he comes back drunk and roars terrible abuse at me' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi).

Justification often went hand in hand with women's minimisation of men's violent behaviour by blaming themselves and believing that they deserved to be treated in such ways. Husbands' use of violence was often presented as arising over a combination of aggravating incidents related to interpersonal dynamics characterised by tensions and disagreements provoked by women's behaviour prior to the violence, the most prominent of which were related to their neglect or failure to complete household duties, challenging husbands or refusing to acquiesce to their demands. When Alina, a businesswoman and middle-aged mother of 2, told me her husband beat her, she quickly followed up her account with justifications that she had not completed all her errands as she should have, conveying the idea that she was to blame for her husband's violent outbursts and beatings. University student Cesaltina too justified the physical violence her brothers inflicted on her believing that she deserved it and was to blame as she had 'failed' to complete the housework and fulfil other domestic duties. In the following narrative, an elected woman representative (EWR) conveyed husbands' use of violence as the result of wives' uncooperative behaviour: 'Once I witnessed a husband beating his wife in public. It was because she refused to give him money to buy cigarettes. That's how the conflict began' (Rosalina, married, young mother of 5, EWR, Marobo). Some participants believed that aspects of their own personality and their appearance that transgressed hegemonic gender norms of femininity to be the cause of these tensions and marital GBV. Like other depictions, this constructs men as 'out of control' and thus not accountable for their

actions (Boonzaier and de la Rey 2003). Referring to endless and very painful psychological GBV in her marriage, Agrafina described herself as being confused and struggled to make sense of behaviour so incongruous with her expectations from her marriage. Like several other abused women in the study, she also wondered what she had ever done to deserve this. As the quotation below illustrates, she asked questions during the interview process, openly reflecting on whether she was to blame for her husband's abusive behaviour:

'I don't know why he is like this. I'm thinking maybe it is because I have a disability with my leg or that I cannot give him a child. I want to ask you: is there something wrong with me, with my body?'(Agrafina, middle-aged urban housewife, mother of 4 and businesswoman, Usululi).

Those experiencing woman-on-woman inter-generational GBV also blamed themselves for the violence inflicted on them. Their narratives highlighted how justifications for GBV were interwoven with natal, ethnicity and heredity. Reflecting on why they were the subject of violence inflicted by their mothers-in-law, these participants mostly believed it was because of their family origins, or because their mothers-in-law did not like their character leading them to believe that they were not good enough wives for their husband's family.

#### *5.2.2.2 Resisting, avoiding and challenging GBV*

The overwhelming majority of women experiencing marital GBV stayed in violent relationships. These women managed complex intractable dilemmas associated with the violence that they actively worked hard to stop by drawing on a range of 'resistance strategies'. 'Managing' gendered violence required 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987). It meant complying with emphasised femininities and drawing on varieties of strategic essentialism - described as an in-between place with very pragmatic goals, doing essentialist things when it is useful, and doing constructivist things when it is useful (Spivak 1987). To avoid (re)victimisation women were compelled to behave in ways that presented no direct threat to the man's overall authority and power (Cavanagh 2003), to act in ways expected of them according to the local gender script, doing things their husbands' way and that were demanded of

them by other perpetrators such as fathers, brothers and mothers-in-law. The responses presented below such as maintaining patience, observing silence, obedience and complying with their gender roles are not seen in this study as representing passive acceptance but are interpreted as being designed to protect and avoid making their situations worse.

'My husband beats me when we are angry with each other. I just stay patient. I have so many children. As a family we have to remain patient' (Catarina, housewife, young mother of 8, petty trader, Usululi).

'I obey him and just stay in the house. My father does not allow me go out and be with my friends. He is very controlling. He controls where I go, who I meet, what I wear and what I study' (Marciana, high school student, 18 years, Harupai).

At different stages of her marriage Anarilha remained wary of her physically violent mother-in law and was careful to not antagonise her by fulfilling her domestic duties.

'My mother-in law treated me like an animal and servant. I always did my jobs silently. When she threatened me I just stayed patient because I was pregnant with my first daughter' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged urban mother of of 8, Usululi).

Armanda also managed her violent husband in the same way.

'[...] he makes me afraid of him because he is always drunk with red eyes. When he asks me for noodles, then I buy and cook noodles for him. If he changes his mind and decides he wants to eat vegetables, then I prepare some vegetables for him. And then finally he asks to eat some fried chicken' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi).

Though it compelled women to remain in violent relationships, maintaining privacy and staying silent was another way women avoided and prevented further violence as this protected the integrity of their family and marital relationship. Filomena who was terrified of her husband and eager to keep the matter private never reported him to the police. She viewed the violence as a family problem and felt compelled to reconcile with her husband.

'We just keep it within the family. We never go to the police, or the xefi

suku to talk about our problems. Its a family problem so I just want to solve it within the family, between me and my husband' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai).

In the rural study sites it was reported by a number of participants including an elected woman representative that to avoid further GBV and retaliation, women experiencing victimisation typically did not report violent incidents to the police so as not to provoke violent husbands. Silence was also employed as a protective mechanism by women during the FGDs in all study sites. Whilst initially raising GBV as a serious problem, discussants were still reluctant to speak openly and in more detail about their own experiences and its prevalence in their communities. In a FGD held in Tafara for instance, there was a decision imposed by a few participants at the outset not to discuss the problem of GBV as soon as it was mentioned. It seemed as if discussants were anxious that by exposing the violence any further, they would bring disrepute on local families and the community and trouble on themselves and other women. They feared retaliation from husbands and the wider community. Issues of respecting family privacy dominated their rationale for silencing the debate even if a few other participants seemed eager to continue the discussion. There were also several instances of participants having raised the issue of GBV during a FGD and subsequently refraining from talking about their experiences during the one-to-one interviews, choosing instead to downplay and in some instances withdraw previous statements about its severity or frequency.

Some participants actively sought to end the violence. They did this by using 'influence' strategies (Collis 1999) attempting for example to bargain or reason with husbands or persuade them to engage in a dialogue about their behaviour. These strategies illustrate the emphasis women put on communication and their desire to use non-violent ways of managing the violence. Some used 'placating' strategies (Goodman et al 2003 p. 169 cited in Allen and Ní Raghallaigh 2013). The goal was to avert violence by aiming to change their abuser's behaviour without challenging husbands' sense of control (Goodman *et al* 2003 cited in Allen and Ní Raghallaigh 2013). For example, Filomena a housewife from Harupai said she tried to 'talk to my husband about what

the effects the affairs and the violence were having on our children' whilst Armanda, a housewife, in Usululi made it her business to keep her husband in a good mood when he was drunk, placating and cajoling him to reduce the risk of violence. By using measured tactics deduced from knowledge and years of experience she actively sought to stop him from using violence and employed a range of tactics to this end. By drawing on psychological understandings of her husband's behaviour she also responded by embracing emphasised femininities, taking on a nurturing and caring role, almost mothering her husband as if she had another dependent in the house: 'Hey my old dear, just come along with me now so that we can cook the food together and don't talk so much' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi).

Cavanagh has categorised women's efforts to stop, reduce and avoid GBV in relation to the extent to which they 'do gender' or not (2003). As previously mentioned 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman 1987) in this context meant responding to violence in ways that presented no direct threat to the man's overall authority and power (Cavanagh 2003), otherwise described as 'emphasised femininity'. There were many accounts of participants 'doing gender', which in some ways depicted women as 'tolerating' and 'enduring' the violence. Indeed acceptance of their situation could be identified as the most dominant response adopted by women experiencing victimisation, unsurprising given the lack of financial and legal supports for abused women across all of the study sites, particularly rural areas. These data are presented in greater detail in chapter 7. However whilst these responses were grounded in gender roles and feminine hegemonic constructions of passivity and acceptance, they can also be viewed as constituting a raft of strategies which women purposively crafted to 'manage' the violence. I concur with Cavanagh who defines managing violence as something more than 'coping' with or 'accepting' it. Like managing a household or caring for children, managing violence requires women to apply their affective energy, resources and skills to know when and how to reduce/eliminate it from their married and family life. Managing violence implies agency, resistance and in turn making calculated decisions and taking action, all of which rely on a critical awareness and ability to identify some thing or event as problematic.

To manage the violence women drew on a combination of resistance strategies that they moved between and involved them 'doing' and 'undoing' gender. Out of desperation, a yearning for a life free from abuse and/or sheer fear, whilst adapting, avoiding and attempting to prevent it, these same women also challenged the violence outright. Fighting back, confronting perpetrators instantaneously, seeking support and telling others about the violence, reporting it to the authorities and leaving the relationship or family setting emerged as ways women did this. Another resistance strategy was attempted suicide. The strategies illustrated women's resistance to traditional constructions of emphasised femininity such as sufferance, endurance and the 'good' woman and 'obedient' wife. Abraham argues that suicide ideation represents the extreme isolation, depression and loss of hope abused women experience (2005 cited in Hayes 2013). Feliciano believed that death was the only way she could escape the violence at a time when her husband and mother-in law controlled everything else. Later in her marriage she drew on a number of other strategies. She fled the family home on several occasions for protection and also confronted her husband for his extra-marital sexual relationships. She stood up to her in-laws directly and challenged their attempts at child snatching.

'When I was seven months pregnant my mother-in law started abusing me. I ran away from the house, barefoot, hardly dressed and asked a taxi driver to take me to where my husband's uncle was living' (Feliciano, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

'She physically forced me and tried to take my baby away. I reacted telling her that this was my baby. I was the one that carried it. So then there was pulling and shoving between the two of us to take the baby. I did not allow her' (Feliciano, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

A number of other women too actively worked to stop and prevent GBV through physical and mainly verbal confrontation, or what Rew *et al* term as using 'retaliatory' violence (2013). For example Olympia from a remote rural aldeia explained how: 'My husband is always violent, hitting me and the children. My life is very difficult with him. [...] I force myself to fight back' (Olympia, second wife in polygamous marriage, middle-aged mother of 3, Marobo). Armanda, a housewife from Usululi purposively

confronted her husband and asserted herself in front of his friends to avoid violent incidents. Anarilha also from Usululi challenged and pleaded with her husband not to continue extra-marital affairs and also asked him to stop the beatings. Even though she remained wary of her physically violent mother-in-law and was careful not to antagonise her whilst living in the joint family setting, once she moved out of the joint-family setting she managed further episodes of mother-in-law violence by confronting her, using retaliatory physical violence. Both Emilia and Ines who were also under obligation living with their husbands' extended families confronted their sisters-in-law about their verbal violence and domestic slavery. Though they feared homelessness in the capital city, they removed themselves from the situation, left the respective districts and re-located to Dili.

Abraham (2005 cited by Hayes 2013) identifies accessing formal and informal help as forms of resistance. In this study a number of women sought knowledge, advice and assistance from the formal and traditional justice systems, social service agencies, civil society, the family and religious institutions. These participants were responding to experiences of marital gender-based physical violence. They all lived in Dili. The other form of resistance which participants drew on was disclosing the violence to me as the researcher. By speaking out about it during the FGs and by naming the violence during one-to-one interviews, the women broke a significant silence. Through other individuals and formal systems women sought to make themselves and their families safe from harm. Lourenca told me she 'went to the police twice and my husband was put in jail for 75 hours for beating me' (Lourenca, housewife, 30s, mother of 5, Harupai). Alina sought support from a local Church group which brought her some relief whilst Alcina and Feliciana both reported the violence to the police and sought refuge for several months in Fokupres a safe house located in Dili. Feliciana also reported the violence to the *suku* council and her extended family:

'I just took all my clothes and children, called my godparents to bring me to Fokupres [...] things were really bad back then as my husband started to beat and kick me when I found out about his affair with a prostitute' (Feliciana, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

Anarilha whose violent husband had extra-marital affairs decided to divorce him. 'I had a plan to have a better life. I decided to live alone with my children' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged urban mother of 8, Usululi). The only other participant to have engaged the court system and to have left their husband was Inacia, a separated housewife and mother of 4 from Harupai. She who also reported the violence to the *xefi suku* and the police.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This chapter described women's encounters with gendered poverty and GBV in the family domain. The first section focused on the gendered and multiple dimensions of poverty that were intrinsic to women's marital and maternal lives, and their feelings, commitments, relationships and daily routines underlying their care worlds. The overwhelming majority of participants undertook economic activities whilst also maintaining full responsibility for childcare and domestic work in situations of harsh material poverty with little support from husbands who headed women's households, dominated decision-making and controlled family resources. Key insights emerging from the fieldwork were the affective inequalities, interdependency, depth of engagement, intensity and significance of women's inputs for family survival. It is also clear from the data that women's work and activities were not given respect or recognition, did not undergo redistribution, or result in reward such as increased representation, female negotiating power and improved status vis-a-vis men in the household, fundamental components of marriage equality. Furthermore husbands tied to traditional gender attitudes and roles restricting them to limited involvement in caregiving were depicted as having a low level of affective interest and interaction within the family and limited emotional connection with their wives (Barker *et al.* 2014; Doyle *et al.* 2014).

Section two sketched out the nature and ubiquitousness of GBV in women's lives. It then presented the processes through which participants responded to its varieties, portraying what women actually 'did' when violence occurred, when attempting to make sense of it and make their relationships safe for themselves and their children.

This section specified how women managed GBV by employing a broad range of complimentary responses that involved them 'doing' and 'undoing' gender to varying degrees. Most women normalised GBV and some also tended to resist the representation of perpetrators as violent. Even though the participants who experienced physical and psychological violence provided accounts of being cheated on, name-called, insulted, slapped, pushed, hit with closed hand or hit with an object, many minimised it and were reluctant to name and acknowledge that it was violence they were actually experiencing. Instead they downplayed it depicting it as not overt, routine or serious enough to constitute as violence. At the same time where women acknowledged behaviour as violent, they often represented perpetrators as not in control of themselves or responsible for it, blaming themselves, other women and external factors such as stress caused by poverty. According to Eisikovits the 'loss of control' metaphor which depicts violence as uncontrolled serves as a coping mechanism for women (Eisikovits 1999 cited in Boonzaier and de la Rey 2003). By normalising, detaching and disassociating violent husbands from their actions, participants' strategies could be seen as ways of making sense and understanding the violence and rationalising it so as to come to terms with having to live with a violent partner. It might have been that participants saw no escape from the violence so minimising their experiences as 'not really that serious' seemed an effective mechanism that helped them to adapt and survive it.

Whilst normalising GBV, a dominant 'doing gender' mechanism on the spectrum of responses, there is also evidence to show that women remaining in violent relationships were also going to great lengths to stop, reduce and prevent it from occurring by 'undoing gender'. For the vast majority of these women safety and not separation appeared to have been their end goal. Meanwhile reports of women seeking care, disclosing violence to relevant institutions and leaving violent relationships were in a very small minority and confined to Dili. Despite the high rates of marital GBV among participants, just two women told me they left their husbands and sought a separation from them. Of those remaining in violent marriages only a minority stated they had reported intimate partner violent incidents to authority

figures. Not one participant who had experienced GBV perpetrated by their mothers-in-law mentioned that they had reported it to the authorities or spoken about it to others, apart from myself the researcher.

For the majority of participants then, it would seem that the unequal distribution of inputs, burdens and rewards of paid and unpaid care work, as well as psychological violence, routine beatings and other forms of GBV were a common feature of women's everyday lives. Whilst many complained about and were eager to represent their experiences from their own perspective, there was a sense in which such levels of subjugation, suffering, hardship and violence were to some extent accepted as understandable if undesirable aspects of male 'nature' and relations with marital kin such as mothers and sisters-in-law rather than an injustice to women, a wider social problem or even a public crime. GBV appeared to be institutionalised and reproduced in women's interpersonal relationships, to the extent that however upsetting it might have been, the violence did not appear 'out of the blue', but was 'normalised' and viewed rather as an inevitable feature of married and family life. In seeking to contribute to some understanding of this, the next two chapters turn to the explanations and accounts women gave in terms of the underlying processes through which their affective and other aspects of gender relations became unequal and violent.

## CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS

### Gendered Poverty and Motherhood

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter explores gendered poverty with an emphasis on care relations. It does this through the paradigmatic context of motherhood and the empirical context shaped by indigenous social relations, conflict and cultural re-vitalisation. There appears to be no qualitative studies of this nature conducted in Timor-Leste. Owing to the marked absence of the voices of mothers and care as categories of analysis in the gender and wider Timor-Leste development scholarship, little is known about gendered poverty from mothers' perspectives and less still about the complexities and ambiguities of motherhood and care relations in conflict-affected areas. The data in the chapter address these knowledge gaps. They suggest that intrinsic to the experience of gendered poverty and mothering is the role gender played in the feminisation of obligation and responsibility (Chant 2008) or what Lynch *et al* describe as the unequal distribution of the burdens and benefits of women's love and care work (2009a). I posit that this affective aspect of gendered poverty and inequality is shaped by the dominant gender order and set of social norms that are deeply embedded in Timorese women's personal, familial, maternal and marital circumstances and a structural context affected by years of domination, violent conflict and under development. Combining Chant's 'feminisation of responsibility and/or obligation' thesis (2008) with Lynch *et al*'s conceptualisation of affective equality (2009a; 2009b) the analysis of the data rely on a holistic conceptualisation of poverty that privileges both its material and its more complex inter-subjective and relational dimensions (Chant 2008; Johnson 2005; Moore 2010). To bring meaning to the social construction of gender, the analysis relies predominantly on Heise's multi-level ecological framework and Connell's Theory of Gender and Power, focusing on the three interdependent structures of gender, namely labour, power and cathexis (Connell 1987).

Drawing on Heise (1998; 2011), the chapter is organised along three levels, namely the

socio-cultural, the immediate and the situational respectively. By disentangling their interaction, the first section analyses how social norms underlying women's maternal activities and the gendered organisation of family life result in an asymmetrical setting for them, socially constructing the feminisation of obligation and gendering mothering and poverty to women's disadvantage. Section two moves onto women's immediate environment exploring how their marriages, interpersonal relationships and family circumstances reinforce affective gender inequality and the exploitation of women as mothers. The third section deals with how the broader structural context might be exacerbating these experiences including ways in which the legacy of colonialism and violent conflict might be determining the structural disadvantages specific to women's localities.

## **6.1 The Relationality and Intersectionality of Motherhood and Gender**

### **6.1.1 Motherhood as Imperative, Inherent and Intensive**

According to the data collected for this study, underlying the social construction of gender and women's vulnerability to exploitation and poverty was maternal cathexis. This included the imperative of motherhood resulting in an emotional attachment and investment in the notion that the ideal and expected life for women was to bear children and raise them to the best of their ability, requiring from them a type of intensive mothering. A striking feature of the data was that motherhood was considered an inevitable and essential part of the 'normal' female life cycle, the defining gender role for women to the extent that almost every participant was a biological mother and the small few who told me they could not bear children were foster mothers. Most participants embraced the idea that being a woman was synonymous with being a mother. Some also associated having children with being a 'good' woman. Women's narratives conveyed that their ties and relationship with their children was very important to them and that their most weighty domestic responsibilities focused on their children's well-being. Alongside marriage, the paradigmatic focus of the following chapter, maternal identity appeared as women's overarching social identity and one that was highly valued by them. This

imperativeness of motherhood was evident in the narratives of women who, when reflecting on decisions they made as young single women to discontinue post secondary education and vocational training, told me they had been influenced by their own assumption that one day they would marry and become mothers as soon as they became adults. Some were eager to point that their decision ran counter to their parent's preferences for them to concentrate on their studies. Ella believed the inevitability of motherhood rendered redundant the benefits of education and training which represented little more than a waste of scarce 'time and money' that she needed to take care of her parents. Her decision to invest her resources in their care as a 'dutiful daughter' was based not only on her love for them but also her assumptions and expectations that one day – not just as a mother but also a wife – she would have less time to devote to their welfare, knowing that her culture compelled her upon marriage to re-locate to her husband's *suku* far away from her natal family. Like many others Ella and her neighbours Balbina and Cesaltina all assumed that women will become mothers and rear children. For Cesaltina adulthood and marriage was synonymous with procreation and child rearing. She indicated that rural women's lives were heavily influenced by gender ideology related to marriage, motherhood and the public private divide. Meanwhile an elected woman representative identified maternal competency as the area of women's lives requiring public support.

'So in the end I thought it was wiser to continue selling vegetables to support my parents as anyway even if I did go to university I would just end up looking after children and staying at home once I got married [...]' (Ella, housewife, 30s mother of 6, street trader, Usululi).

'I asked him how were we supposed to stay together if we did not have a child' (Balbina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, Usululi).

'In my *suku* when a young woman marries she is obliged to stay at home to rear the children. According to tradition married women must stay at home' (Cesaltina, unmarried, university student in her 20s, Usululi).

'I would like to share my own life experiences especially with newly married women about how to plan for the future, how to look after children' (EWR, Tafara).

Women's views of themselves as biologically predisposed to bearing and raising children were influenced by beliefs held by others such as their husbands and mothers-in law. For Alcina motherhood and contributing towards kin and patrilineal lineage functioned as a way of 'redeeming' her social identity that had been vilified by her family and community on account of her divorce. Meanwhile Agrafina accounted for her pain, suffering and effects of her husband's blame on her for not conceiving a child as every woman should. She internalised a belief that was based on the prevailing ideology of motherhood that views women as innately predisposed to childbearing, an imperative along with its association with patrilineal lineage that was so strong that it fuelled marital tensions and GBV including on-going husband infidelities and threats of wife desertion. It caused her deep marital anxiety. As Alcina and Agrafina explained:

'After I gave birth to a baby boy, my parents-in law accepted me as I gave them a child that resembled his father and the family [...] It was the only way I was able to prove myself to them that I was not the woman people had made me out to be' (Alcina, housewife, young mother of 4, Usululi).

[...] So my husband gets angry with me. Because I couldn't give birth my husband does not stay with me [...] I am worried that one day he will abandon me completely because I cannot conceive a child [...] He says this to me, 'my reproductive health is fine and I am able to produce a child. Its you. You are a woman and cannot conceive and get pregnant?' This makes me really upset and very stressed as I cannot give him a child, neither a son nor a daughter' (Agrafina, middle-aged housewife, foster-mother of 4, businesswoman, Usululi).

Some women felt that having children was the most effective way for them to demonstrate love for their husbands, prevent wife desertion and maintain their marriages and family unity for which they felt responsible. For Alcina motherhood enhanced her marital relationship as she felt that 'giving' her husband a child, particularly a son had brought him great joy and a sense of family continuity. This contributed profoundly to her positive emotional energy and feeling of marital security which was critical for women given their vulnerability to financial insecurity and social stigma generated by marriage breakdown. Agrafina, Alcina, Ella and many more women were attached and heavily invested in their marriages. Illustrating the

disempowering interaction between maternal and marital cathexis for women's status in the family, Ella's narrative conveys the idea that motherhood was instrumental for maintaining marital relationships and keeping the family together. She insisted that bearing children affirmed men's masculinity, breadwinning norms and was a mark of adulthood for men. One of the reasons why she has had to bear so many children was because: '[...] it makes my husband happy, focuses him, makes him feel responsible and forces him to go out and find work'. These data illustrate the interaction of hegemonic masculinities and emotional and symbolic relations as, together, they reinforced the imperative of childbearing on women in subtle ways. Ella also believed that having many children to rear and care for was not always the outcome of women's own desire or agency but rather of a combination of historical, personal and cultural factors. There is some albeit limited evidence linking mothers' experiences of affective and material inequalities to aspects of maternal cathexis influenced by a natalist ideology of the postwar nation. Conveyed by Ella and also during casual conversations throughout the field work was the instrumentality of motherhood and a depiction of Timorese mothers as objects of the post-war nation state with little worth apart from compensating for the high death toll as a result of the conflict during the Indonesian occupation and ensuring population growth and a positive outcome for the next generation.

'My mother-in law [...] explained that because we lost so many children during the war and as she has only one son, she wants me to bear many children so that they can come and live with her [...]' (Ella, housewife, 30s mother of 6, street trader, Usululi).

As well as being inherent, women's mothering was also 'intensive'. Chapter five of the thesis described the organisation and drudgery of family life and the inordinate amounts of paid and unpaid work mothers performed on a daily basis. Even if it was pressurising, difficult, dirty and exhausting, mothers still took their mothering and unpaid care work very seriously, to the extent that their lives revolved around their care responsibilities in a way that did not apply to fathers or men. Mothers seemed constantly burdened with getting their children to school everyday, with the fear of

hunger, preventing hunger and coping with food hardships, compelling them to make enormous economic, corporeal and material sacrifices and endure higher levels of physical strain and emotional turmoil than did fathers who women felt did little to ensure sustenance or ease the strain on them and women more generally. This type of motherhood was tied to the prevailing ideology of intensive mothering and the notion of a 'good mother', requiring women to be emotionally involved and always available to their children (Arendell 2000). Intensive mothering found strength in the interaction of several highly influential norms governing a traditional view of gender mandating women to be altruistic and wholly other-centred - and the gender division of labour requiring women to occupy the private sphere and undertake the bulk of unpaid domestic labour, freeing men up to always dominate the public sphere with the expectation that they undertake paid work (Arendell 2000; Fineman 1995). Not restricted to the Timor-Leste context, Timorese mothering was rooted in an indigenous view of gender as dichotomous and, consonant with Arendell (2000) and Tronto (1996) was also linked to the universal notion that mothering was synonymous with cooking, cleaning, caring and having responsibility for the well-being others. Resonating with other research on Timor-Leste, there is strong evidence illustrating the operationalisation of Timorese patriarchal logic and the gender division of labour expecting men to dominate the public sphere and fulfil the role of 'breadwinner' and women to occupy the private sphere and undertake unpaid domestic and care work. Arendell and Fineman's discussion of 'intensive motherhood' fits with these study findings. They argue that 'intensive' motherhood assumes and maintains the traditional dichotomic gender-based division of labour, assigning fathers to the world outside the home that is synonymous with independent adult life and mothers to the private domain of unpaid work, representing dependency and intimacy (Fineman 1995 cited in Arendell 2000). Actualisation of this norm was apparent in every study site with the vast majority of women rearing husband-present families conveying that it was they who were associated with the private sphere whilst their husband dominated the public domain. The data show that the organisation of women's households and everyday family life and the intensification of women's mothering was thus governed

by the political economy of masculinity, the second principle of the gender labour construct that distinguishes between men's and women's household responsibilities, allocating decision-making - especially around income and household resources - to men whilst women were assigned full responsibility, performed far more housework work and provided the bulk of childcare than men, even though they too undertook subsistence and economic activities outside the home. As conveyed in the narratives below:

'According to our custom men's responsibility is to earn the money so we can buy food for the family' (FG discussants Tono).

'[...] And women have to stay at home. Women believe that they are obliged to prepare food and rear the family. The men go outside and that is their job' (Cesaltina, unmarried, university student in her 20s, Usululi).

Celastina associated the obligation felt by women to occupy the domestic sphere with Timorese culture and tradition. She furthered that it was something women had come to internalise and an assumption she was not in agreement with:

'As for who told the woman she has to stay at home, well, she believes it herself that she has to do it. It comes from herself. I feel that this is a traditional decision. I also do not know why there are decisions like this – that make me uncomfortable – in our community' (Cesaltina, unmarried, university student in her 20s, Usululi).

'Cooking and washing, as women we have to do all these things before our husbands come back home from work. We have to clean all the things and have them ready for them. As a woman these are the things I have to do in our home. I must stay in my home, do my jobs as a wife and woman' (Balbina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, Usululi).

### **6.1.2 Gender**

The data suggest that behind the imperativeness of motherhood and the kind of intensive mothering that was expected of women and that women were committed to lay rigid gender norms about male and female gender identities that interacted with the gendered division of labour and moral economy. According to women's voices, inherent in women's mothering were views that men, as fathers, were 'naturally' less

concerned about the mechanics of family life or inclined to experience similar interactions and emotions compared to mothers - such as worry about children. Depicted in narratives below and in the previous chapter many participants essentialised gendered behaviours, often underscoring the 'naturalness' and comparing women's caring to men's egoistic behaviours. Husbands were perceived as having little interest or commitment towards sharing with their wives even the most basic of domestic tasks and childcare responsibilities. Meanwhile men who 'came and went' and who had permanently abandoned their children were consistently depicted as 'egoistic', shouldering none of the heavy burdens nor experiencing the poverty-induced stress associated with running households as mothers did as single parents. For example the absent fathers of the children of Fatima, Olandina, Cedaliza and Fernanda escaped the incessant worry, humiliation and physical burden of childrearing in poverty as these women did as lone parents. For example Fatima stated that: 'He did not look after my children, my family. He just left them, [...] he ran away' (Fatima, young deserted housewife, single mother of 3, petty trader, Harupai). Women conveyed feeling overwhelmed and resentful towards husbands who were not encumbered with the kind or similar levels of caring responsibilities and thus unfamiliar with the raft of anxieties that afflicted women. Married women such as Armanda were frustrated and felt emotionally abandoned by husbands who they viewed as 'careless'. They blamed their maternal anxiety and guilt at not being able to provide their children with decent food and support their daughters to continue their education on uncaring paternal attitudes underlying their husbands' lack of material and affective support essential for family survival and well-being. For example a focus group discussant and Agrafina identified the gendered dimension of the moral economy as underlying husbands' attitudes and affective and financial behaviours:

'[...] my husband has a job but he does not share the money he earns with me or our children [...] Its like I have a moral responsibility in comparison to my husband' (Agrafina, middle-aged urban housewife, mother of 4, businesswoman, Usululi).

'Men never care about their children. Myself and my husband have eight and he never cares if any of them are in trouble. As a woman I am the one

who leads my family. Men just don't care, even if we face many problems. Their only concern is that things are ready on time, for them' (FG discussant Usululi).

Furthermore there are data suggesting that the organisation of family life and intensive motherhood driving maternal burdens relied on the gendered interaction between male breadwinning norms, gendered identities and the gendered moral economy. This was evident in Luselia's quote below.

'[...] In comparison to my husband well, as a woman I have a lot of pressure and things to think about. When we wake up in the morning the children always to come to me and ask me for money for transport to go to school. They're always asking me for money [...] Men don't have to think about family things. They just go out to work and when they come home they give us the money. But they do not have the same feelings as us women. The men, as fathers, do not feel the same kind pressures about these kinds of things because it is the mothers to whom the children go running to and ask for all sorts of things. As a woman we are forced to think more about these kinds of things. We are just more inclined to think more about these family pressures than the men' (Luseila, housewife, 30s, mother of 7, domestic worker, Harupai).

Amongst others Luselia's narrative suggests that this interaction might be alleviating or distancing men as fathers and husbands from the private world of affect whilst generating an expectation for women - as mothers and thus 'naturally' and morally inclined to care for and about others - to be children's primary carers and take on inordinate amounts of work to ensure family well-being. Timorese women's mothering found support in the traditional notion of gender and the prevailing emotion culture of Timorese society that enabled and moved women to care for their children in ways that were not available to their husbands as fathers as they differed from dominant forms of caregiving masculinities (O' Brien 2009). This interdependency between emotions, ideology and cultural norms underlying maternal cathexis starts to explain why women did not report 'bargaining with patriarchy' or even convey feeling entitled to negotiate the burden of poverty and care with husbands or other family members. For example mothers seemed to accept and see themselves as solely and wholly responsible for all aspects of their children's well being, emotional and material. Like

childbearing, some described feeling compelled to perform domestic and care-related work in that, as mothers they had to do it, even if they did not like or feel like doing this kind of work. For example in one focus group discussants regarded their care responsibilities and food related activities as hard work, about which they had no choice to perform, explaining that: '[...] whether we like it or not, as mothers we have to take care of the family [...] for example we always have to prepare food for the family' (FG discussant Tafara). Meanwhile as well as her unpaid work Francisca described having to: ' [...] wash other people's clothes every morning. I have to do it. I have to earn enough money to send my children to school' (Francisca, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, domestic worker, Harupai). Mothers prioritised meeting their children's needs, going to great lengths to ensure these were met. It is clear from these data that Timorese mothers felt compelled and were expected to be self-sacrificing, caring, industrious, deferential and accepting of inordinate amounts of intense physical, cognitive and emotional family work (Pearse and Connell 2016).

Women engaged in a multitude of maternal practices that included nurturing, protecting and training their children (Arendell 2000), responding to their care responsibilities in ways that also demonstrated their deep emotional engagement in their work. As well as intensive motherhood, this type of maternal behaviour was maintained by the prevailing gender ideology promoting what Whitehead terms as maternal altruism (1981), constructing women as 'responsible' mothers and 'good' wives conducting a 'moral career' (Liamputtong 2006) and 'proper' family life (Chodrow 1978). This point was well captured in Agrafina's earlier quote. Maternal altruism was cast as a strong moral basis for women's everyday interactions, 'preferences' and 'decisions', and when intersecting with women's conjugal and maternal roles, fuelled the social construction of gendered exploitation, poverty and violence. Consonant with Badgett and Folbre who assert that caring norms tend to 'assign women greater responsibility for the care of dependants, an assignment that almost literally requires altruism' (1999 p. 316), the most salient of feminine norms found to be constructing Timorese women's adulthood, unitary complex conjugal-maternal role and respective conjugal and maternal roles was female altruism. Substantiating the current feminist

literature on care (Folbre 2012; Brickell and Chant 2010), female altruism was driven by the simultaneous operationalisation of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations<sup>12</sup> that were guided by a constellation of interests intended to serve the collective and the self, with the former dominating by far much of women's 'compulsory caring' (Folbre 2012) and the inflexible and inertial institutional arrangements they endured. Bubeck refers to these an 'interlocking set of constraints and practices that channels women into doing the bulk of care that needs to be done in any society' (1995, p. 181). She furthers that women - as unpaid carers - even when empowered, may remain more vulnerable to exploitation. Notwithstanding their compulsory dimensions, Timorese women's altruistic practices ranged along on a continuum (Folbre 2012) occasionally reflecting women's own desires, but mostly their tender affection and deep love for their children, their 'prosocial' motivations growing out of an elemental 'moral' drive to care that helped to legitimise their female identity (Bubeck 1995; Brickell and Chant 2010; Folbre 2012) and their socially imposed 'female' obligation to familial duties given the cultural importance of family and children for which Timorese women are deemed responsible.

There was a sense from the data that the actualisation, ubiquitousness and resilience of this norm was also fuelled by the very nature of care and love labour itself, making women even more vulnerable to exploitation as, affect, feelings and emotional attachment which underpin caring activities (Lynch *et al* 2009a; O' Brien 2009) would have moved women to care more for and about others thus discouraging them from modifying their care responsibilities. As Kittay asserts: 'by virtue of caring for someone who is dependent, the dependency worker herself becomes vulnerable' (1999, p. 49). According to the findings, female altruism featured in multiple varieties including economic, affective, corporeal and socio-cultural. When interacting with other norms, emotions and ideologies relating to marriage and motherhood, it appeared to constrain women's agentic capacity to negotiate their vulnerabilities to gendered poverty and inequalities. Lying at the heart of the normative expectations and

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12 Extrinsic motivation concerns the expectation of reward in the form of pay, benefits or other resources (Folbre 2012).

conventionally accepted dimensions for women's conjugal-maternal roles was female affective altruism defined by Brickell and Chant as the provision of emotional labour based on a concern for the well-being of others (2010). This was something strongly present in the data. Resonating with recent research concerning the ethic of 'love' as a process for sustainable structural change in Timor-Leste (Godden 2016), *domin* ('love' in Tetum) and desire to care for their children and their well-being expressed by mothers in my study appeared to motivate their children-centred corporeal, economic and affective altruist behaviours. This interaction between the gendered moral economy and maternal responsibility with maternal love, care and family poverty resulted in heavy physical workloads and emotional burdens, evident for instance in the desperate need women as mothers felt to earn money and the lengths mothers went to cope with poverty and shield their children from it by directing income towards feeding and sending children to school, improving living conditions and keeping a pace with day to day demands of their fast growing families. The study is replete with empirical evidence of participants placing love labouring over and above their own gains, making any number of economic and personal sacrifices in order to prioritise the care of those they love. Mothers constantly took special measures, going without food and depriving themselves of adequate rest and recreation, interaction with friends and engagement in civic, social and political life. For example Anarilha prioritised her children's emotional welfare over her own by complying with her husband's sexual demands so as to protect their children from witnessing physical violence. Meanwhile the kind of compulsory economic altruism displayed by Jesuina is illustrative of her love for her daughter and intention to support her in every way possible.

'I just do whatever he wants me to do because all of my children are around. And I am ashamed when the problem is going on in front of the children. And my children go to Church and as a mother I don't want this violence to continue so I obey my husband and give him what he wants [...]' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged mother of 8, Usululi).

'I've one daughter attending university in Dili so she needs more money. That's why I must work a bit harder. So its to support our children's

education that women have to work hard' (Jesuina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, businesswoman, Tono).

Mothers' reluctance to negotiate disparities in gendered care also appeared to be influenced by wider patriarchal social relations, where prevailing structural inequalities fuelled a number of women's expectations of future payback from children especially sons would care for them in later life (Brickell and Chant 2010). This expectation was mentioned by a number of urban mothers such as Filomena from Harupai. Mothers' 'decisions' to maintain their workloads also suggest strong links between female gender identity, unpaid care work and the more general concept of 'internalised oppression'. Across generations and in all study sites participants seemed to have internalised ideas assigning them lower social status compared to husbands, fathers, brothers and sons that might have encouraged them to accept work that was undervalued and discouraged them from believing they deserved equal treatment and from striking a better deal for themselves as women (Folbre 2012). Balbina's narrative suggest that female oppression and low self worth was something she internalised from a young age. It underscores the role hegemonic gender norms play in shaping women's subjectivity, their perceived differential worth and the notion that women deserve no better than shoulder the bulk of undervalued domestic work. Her quote below and her earlier quote underscoring the compulsory nature of women's care worlds begin to provide insights into the manner in which the social construction of Timorese gender care relations find strength in gendered ideologies underlying women's internalised oppression, the gender division of labour and women's role and identity as a good 'woman' and obedient 'wife':

'When I started dating my husband my mother told me: 'Oh you are such an ugly woman. But its ok now, because you have a handsome boyfriend. It will improve your reputation in the community [...]'. Today I'm still not able to believe how my husband loves me the way he does, because I'll say it again, I'm so ugly. I do not deserve to get a man like him. He loves me very much' (Balbina, middle-aged housewife and mother, Usululi).

Almost nowhere in the study did women convey a desire or expectation of reciprocity in the form of mutual aid and help with housework and childcare from husbands. This

suggests that maternal affective and corporeal altruism might also have been compelled not just by women's internalisation of their own subjugation but also by their perceptions of how men and women should be in the home that precluded the notion that husbands would help with domestic reproduction and nurturing and caring for children thus leaving women with no choice or hope. Very much related to the elemental 'moral' drive to maintain gender identities (Brickell and Chant 2010), this dynamic might have influenced participants like Agrafina who conveyed a desire and expectation to have a 'real man' in the house and thus encouraged them to disassociate men with emotional labour and caring, particularly given the eroding effects the conflict-affected context appeared to be having on breadwinning masculinities. Therefore women, especially those in paid work may not have wanted their husbands – particularly those that were unemployed - to help them with 'feminine' tasks such as nurturing children, cleaning and cooking, 'choosing' instead to maintain the corporeal and affective 'altruistic burden' themselves (Brickell and Chant 2010).

In sum and keeping in mind a high degree of interrelatedness with other major social norms and women's immediate and wider structural context discussed later in the chapter, the cultural constructs maternal cathexis and female compulsory altruism seemed to be shaped by the expectations women had for themselves, their husbands and other male family members in terms of fairer arrangements ensuring family survival and the provision of unpaid care in the home. There was a sense from women's narratives that any negotiation of gender care relations might have given rise to painful feelings of guilt, shame or a real fear of the consequences of thwarting altruistic femininities and motherhood. Given the tendency for norm violation to cause emotional discomfort even in the absence of penalties or punishment (West and Zimmerman 1987), it is possible that a combination of components created or intensified normative pressures or internalised caring 'preferences', increasing mothers' tolerance of and vulnerability to domestic servitude and exploitation (England and Browne 1992 cited in Folbre 2012). These included the dominance of maternal cathexis alongside Timorese women's expression of domin in the form of care and a

strong desire for *domin iha familia* (love in the family) as well as gender socialisation of perceived lower self-worth and appropriate gender roles, responsibilities and behaviours.

As well as being responsible for domestic and care work, women also generated an income destined for family consumption needs acting either as dual, secondary or sole earners irrespective of household headship. This aspect of women's mothering reflects another resilient dimension of the prevailing feminine norm, namely economic altruism (Brickell and Chant 2010). Driven by a concern for the welfare of their children and families women went to enormous lengths to make ends meet, cushion the effects of primary poverty and also make up the shortfalls generated by secondary poverty (Chant 2007a; 2007b; Kabeer 1999). This was illustrated not least in their workloads and in the types of paid work women engaged in - namely informal, flexible low paid activities performed close to women's homes which had to accommodate women's caring duties and domestic workloads.<sup>13</sup>

'Well, I just ran my own business from home, a small restaurant and I earned enough money so that I could save and buy things like rice or a chicken' (Alcina, housewife, 30s, mother of 4, Usululi).

'It is important for the husband and wife to both earn money so we can support each other. I and other women have to think about the hard work our husbands do. So that is why it is also important for us women to do things like keep pigs [...] so that we can sell them to earn money' (Balbina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, Usululi).

'In my family everyone is supportive especially my husband. He helps me plant the vegetables and looks after some of our animals as well. We do everything together' (Natalia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, businesswoman, Marobo).

On the expenditure side of the economic norm, whilst the data do not provide details

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13 Both urban and rural women relied heavily on the availability of childcare, especially their daughters, who, as they got older, helped out with chores and childcare until women themselves returned home from the their workplace. In cases where women were gone for the entire day, working office hours or travelling long distances to farm the land or market their produce, the presence of social supports was crucial and responsibility for minding children and preparing food was passed not only to daughters but also other female family members, usually sisters, mothers and mothers-in-law. Single mothers earning an income were entirely reliant on parents and siblings.

on the different financial responsibilities culturally assigned to women and men, they convey that both were expected to contribute their incomes towards household budget. There was an abundance of data describing women's contributions to a variety of major and minor expenditure categories, from food, house repairs, children's clothing and school fees, meals and transport. There were also references to husbands' earnings paying for similar consumption needs. However it would appear that mothers with a personal income tended to devote the bulk if not all their earnings to household expenditure and contribute a significantly larger share of their earnings to family needs than earning fathers (Badgett and Folbre 1999). This corresponds with Chant's observations in The Gambia and the Philippines and Malhotra and Mather's observations in relation to Sri Lanka (1997, p.623 cited by Brickell and Chant 2010) and with Agarwal's assertion that, '... poor women spend the income they control largely on family needs rather than on personal needs' (1997, p. 25). Generating positive effects on their husbands, children and other family members, 'responsible' mothers and 'good' wives working for pay were compelled to surrender control and ownership of their earnings. Whilst appearing to hold onto their wages, they directed them into a 'common' pot, as mothering involved not only doing housework and providing love and care to their children but also covering household expenses (Brickell and Chant 2010), precisely because these related to consumption needs for which mothers were responsible such as food, education and health. The following quote illustrates these points:

'The money from market trading and selling vegetables I used to install a toilet and water pump in my place [...] I also bought myself some land' (Alina, married, middle-aged mother of 2, business woman, Usululi).

So strong were gender norms reinforcing mothers' moral obligation to care for their children and mother's love for their children, that their unpaid care responsibilities were thus inalienable from their role as income earners, resulting in a double burden of care and providing. Lourenca's narrative below captures the dilemma most women found themselves in on a daily basis confronting income poverty caused not least by the lack of paid work. In it she described the onus she felt to financially support her

family whilst also uphold her traditional role as primary carer without either support from husbands or the state.

'When we have no money we cannot buy anything to feed the family. So then the stress comes and forces me like other women to be always thinking and worrying about where the next meal is going to come from. It falls on women to provide and worry. We would like to ask the government for help but we do not know the way' (Lourenca, housewife, 30s, mother of 5, Harupai).

Compelling mothers, urban and rural, to endure labour-intensive and time consuming economic activities were the disempowering effects of the gender division of labour, whereby employment was not just lacking for women and men but was also considered deeply biased against women on a number of fronts. A notable asymmetric dimension of the dual or supplementary earner model being practised by participants was that, the kinds of jobs they held down were designed to be flexible enough to accommodate their reproductive duties and workloads. Women generally organised their daily lives and tailored their livelihood arrangements around their caregiving responsibilities. In Dili, as independent informal workers, vegetable vendors and street traders like Catarina and Ella were able to locate their kiosks and stalls outside or in close proximity to their homes. In rural areas Palmerina and other farm labourers were able to organise their agricultural activities around their care-giving duties, dividing their time between home and farmland depending on the ages of their children. Some women said they took their non-school going children to work with them or remained at home when they were new born. As this solution was not possible for most formal jobs, such as teaching and working in the *suku* council, it was largely women who worked in the informal economy who literally combined paid and unpaid work by taking their children to the fields or the food stalls. Though this flexibility enabled women to fulfil maternal caregiving and breadwinning obligations simultaneously, the nature and organisation of women's informal paid work reinforced their assignment to the domestic sphere. Meanwhile many women also described employment in their *suku* as highly segregated by gender so that most jobs were categorised either as women's or men's jobs. When compared to women, men were said to generate

personal income from positions and occupations that were more secure, less menial and better paid - such as carpentry, mechanics, construction and transport and public service work beyond administration. These were skill-based occupations and were considered 'men's work'. In the formal public sector positions of power and leadership such as *xefi suku* and *aldeia* were normally the preserve of dominant families and especially elite men whilst the positions in this type of work held by the very small minority of participants were low status and also low paid. For example clerical work categorised as 'female work' had the lowest social status on the *suku* council. Formal public sector workers also felt that they worked longer hours for far less pay than those in higher status jobs held usually by men:

'I love my job but the salary is too small. I earn \$85 per month [...]. The *xefi aldeia*, they earn \$83 but in comparison I do a whole lot more work than they do. I work from 8.30 to 1.30 everyday. They only attend meetings once a month. I have no idea what else they do. Its the same for the women representatives. And the *xefi suku*, well he earns \$163 per month and gets a state motorbike which I don't. My salary is not enough when I consider all the work that I do' (Emilia, part-time clerical worker).

A number of urban participants stated that whilst unskilled jobs in the hospitality and retail sector were open to women and men, women barely found work anywhere else. Women were excluded outright from occupations deemed to be men's work and gender discrimination was mentioned on several instances as one of the main barriers to young unemployed women finding work. Maria, an elected woman youth representative (EWYR) in an urban *suku* explained how local private construction firms recruited men only, for none other reason than 'labouring was not for women'. The study found evidence of this practice in both urban and rural areas. It was reinforced by male *xefi suku* responsible for important job seeker initiatives including information dissemination and recruitment drives and who explicitly excluded women from the such process.

'The canalisation work is a man's job so that is why none of the young women here are employed in public works projects like these. [...] women only do things like cleaning the *suku* and they don't get paid for this [...] When it comes to employment opportunities, the *xefi aldeia* only includes

men's names on the list. It is the *xefi* that is responsible for the names and there are no women on this list. But for general things like maintenance and cleaning of the *suku* a lot of women are involved, much more than the men' (Maria, EWYR, Harupai).

All public representatives participating in the study stated that unemployment and the lack of waged work was an on-going serious issue facing women in their constituencies. In Dili participants repeatedly raised the problem that compared to men: 'Women have no opportunity to earn money' (FGD Harupai), and in rural focus groups women explained that because of poverty, some women had left the *sukus* and migrated to Dili where they remained jobless (FGD Marobo). Poor urban women with rural origins felt hopeless at ever finding meaningful work and escaping the cycle of poverty as they considered the public and private sectors biased towards people who already had jobs and a good education and were from dominant wealthy urban families with 'government connections'. The lack of waged work for women in the formal sector emerged as a key driver intensifying women's manual labour in the informal sector, thus fuelling maternal economic related corporeal altruism. An overwhelming majority of women eking out a living from petty trading identified this as a major source of maternal hardships. In a focus group non-earning women and market-traders identified the government's lack of support for women's economic empowerment as a key constraint on their desire to move from informal to formal sector work:

'[...] the government to create employment opportunities for women. I am complaining because the government is always importing things like vegetables from abroad when we have many of these things here in Dili. I want the government to support women sell their produce' (FG discussant Harupai).

Resonating with Connell (1987), who asserts that occupations which are considered 'women's work' are the occupations with the lowest pay and social status, the paid work that women were compelled to perform was typically menial, non-skilled based and low paid, confined mostly to the informal sector. For example:

'The only income that I get is from working on other people's farms [...] most of the time four times a month so roughly a month I can get \$20' (Erminia, 20s, abandoned and single mother of infant twins, farm labourer,

Tono).

'Its very difficult because the monthly payment for washing clothes is \$40' (Francisca, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, domestic worker, Harupai).

'Now I am selling traditional wine and in one month I made a profit of \$20' (Zelia, 20s, Petty trader Tafara).

As depicted by Inacia, women had no choice but to engage in types of paid work that was demeaning, precarious and took a toll on mothers' bodies fuelling economic and corporeal altruism.

'Even though, my back is sore, I have to be patient as there isn't anyone here that can give us money. But I have to go even if the money is not good. I have to go and do things to get the money. Even when I get sick I just go to the hospital and get medicine and then continue. I get back ache and my shoulders also ache and sometimes at night I feel cold and shaky with a fervour [...]' (Inacia, separated, mother of 4, Harupai).

Likewise Dulce a sex worker endured a low paid, risky and hazardous working life and was forced to work hard to make sure she earned enough money to support her parents and siblings.

Whether as urban petty traders or rural farm labourers, women's paid work was described as temporary, occasional and volatile. This was explained by Fatima and Erminia, young mothers both abandoned by the fathers of their small children:

'But now I have a job. Its temporary and when it finishes up, I won't have any job, like I wont have any more work' (Fatima, single mother of 3, petty trader, Harupai).

'The only income that I get is from working on other people's farms. Usually when I hear that people need help to do their farming [...] It usually happens quite irregular, but most of the time four times a month so roughly a month I can get \$20' (Erminia, 20s, single mother of infant twins, farm labourer, Tono).

The strength and compulsory nature of mothers' economic and altruistic behaviours also appeared to be driven by the impoverishing interaction between multiple inequalities inherent in marital and maternal cathexis, women's marriages and

distinctions between masculine and feminine unpaid work. These are analysed in the following section, the wider focus of which is women's immediate environment. Representing another level of the social ecology (Heise 1998) this constituted marital and other interpersonal family relationships and family circumstances. These were heavily influenced by a constellation of interrelated socio-cultural norms about and beyond motherhood, deepening maternal burdens of care and compelling women to work for pay and intensify their affective, and subsistence activities.

## **6.2 The Relationality and Intersection of Gender and Motherhood with Marriage and the Family**

### **6.2.1 Marriage Inequalities**

Discussed in detail in chapter seven, marital cathexis - meaning forms of emotional attachment and investment in marriage - appeared to be one of the major drivers of mothers' burdens and economic, affective and corporeal altruistic behaviours. Most women participating in the study characterised their marriages as unequal. Marital norms supported husband dominance and the customary practice of *barlaque* both of which were embedded in everyday life. Husbands dominated women's marriages and mothering, a direct result of the interaction between the gender division of labour, hegemonic masculinities and greater male power in women's marriages which also reinforces that power. For example alongside the imperativeness of motherhood, the theme of coerced motherhood was raised by a number of urban women who drew attention to the consequences this had for their emotional and corporeal well-being and experiences of affective inequality. These findings suggest that motherhood was not just expected but also explicitly imposed on them by the interaction between unequal marital power relations privileging husbands and the deferential and submissive behaviour expected of wives, compelling women to obey their husbands, least they face abandonment, family disapproval and GBV. In the narratives below motherhood is conveyed as enforced by women's fears of a decline in their moral worth as women, and of coercion and forms of GBV including abandonment and verbal and physical violence.

'Woman suffer. We are poor. We have nothing. And many children. Why? Because men depend on their wives to always say "Let it be". Women suffer as a consequence of marriage. Women suffer because of our limited rights and big responsibilities to take care of children because this is what men expect from us. Women never feel happy with their husbands because we are always suffering, always pregnant and always having to follow men's orders' (FG discussant, Usululi).

'The woman does not have the choice [...] I am the one that suffers. I am always pregnant and giving birth. Its like back and forth, always pregnant and then always nursing babies and feeding children. Its a big sacrifice trying to manage everything, from bearing children, rearing them and always trying to make sure we've enough money. Oh God' (Ella, housewife, 30s mother of 6, street trader, Usululi).

'Women have lots of children here as men want to have large families. Some women really do not want to have so many, but just go with whatever their husbands want. If they don't they're afraid their husbands will leave them [...] It's also because it will be remarked upon by both families if they don't reproduce more children' (Ella, housewife, 30s mother of 6, street trader, Usululi).

Amongst others, Agrafina and Alcina too underscored the important role played by intimate adult relationships governed by family politics in shaping women's experiences of motherhood and gendered poverty. According to their narratives it was not only husbands but the extended marital family that demands and commands high fertility at considerable costs and burdens of care for individual women. Ella also had much to say about this, speaking at length about her mother-in law as the source of the intense pressure she felt to bear many children as she considered children as a form of material security in her old age and associated high fertility with the continuity of family lineage. Demonstrating the powerful effects of unequal intergenerational power relations between women, throughout her married life Ella had to negotiate with her mother-in law the number of children she was to bear. Childbearing emerged as an unwanted imposition that placed enormous pressure on her, particularly as she and her husband lacked adequate income and living conditions to bring up a large family. To exercise leverage over Ella, her mother-in law reminded her that her father-in law left his first wife when she refused to have more children.

'For family size a lot depends on the mother-in law [...] The problem is that they can demand up to six or eight children And if the woman only wants two or three children it is very difficult for her to negotiate. At least that is how it is in my case. The woman does not have a choice' (Ella, housewife, 30s mother of 6, street trader, Usululi).

Resonating with Chant's insights into gendered poverty in Costa Rica (2010b) marriage in this study ensured multiple forms of maternal altruism, compelled women to 'accept' inordinate workloads and burdens thus making them vulnerable to exploitation. The power marriage commanded over women's mothering and levels of altruistic behaviour relied on the socialisation of ingrained socio-cultural norms linking Timorese women's gender identity to female obligations to kinship and familial duties compelling them to act more responsibly and altruistically towards the family than men and therefore be less willing to follow a self-orientated path and negotiate the burden of care, family size and setting and other such aspects of family and married life (Badgett and Folbre 1999; Brickell and Chant 2010). Evidence of socialisation was ubiquitous, from the narratives of young unmarried women describing the constraining consequences of the domestic gender order dominating their natal family to descriptions of forced marriages in rural areas and descriptions of the sacrifices women were expected to make to satisfy the desires of their husbands and mothers-in law for many children. Coined by Brickell and Chant (2010) and interacting then with affective and corporeal forms of compulsory altruism seen in the toll many pregnancies, bearing children and rearing children had on women's bodies was socio-cultural altruism This had its roots in multiple ingrained norms deriving from Asian values emphasising the collective over the individual, Timorese values emphasising the cultural importance of children, kinship norms underscoring son preference and continuation of family lineage, and the religiously-ordained imperatives and Catholic Church's emphasis on family unity, community and wider nation. These norms variously deemed women responsible for their marriages, families and children, requiring them to subjugate their desires in order to maintain the family and uphold its 'honour'.

Women's narratives also depicted the strong presence of customary marital norms that appeared to reflect and condone gender injustice. They interacted with power relations

and generated highly asymmetric outcomes for women. The power of these norms appeared to be strengthened by the post-conflict revitalisation of Timorese culture and the adherence to custom seen in the widespread (mis)-interpretations of barlaque. The most dominant customary marriage ritual found to be shaping women's family and married lives, the manner in which this was being practised reinforced gendered poverty on two fronts. First it reinforced the gender division of domestic work as husbands were said to draw on it to control women's domestic labour, reinforce their confinement in the private sphere and women's financial dependence on men. The study is replete with depictions of lisan impressing upon participants that their domestic obligations and duty to care were continuous, compulsory and thus non-negotiable where barlaque had been paid. Second the high cost of barlaque drove families into further poverty. Many women found the financial obligations associated with barlaque to be expensive and there was general agreement in focus groups that lisan related commitments played a major role depleting family income and maintaining women's poverty. This was often articulated in ways similar to the following narratives:

'If you ask me why us women suffer from all these problems, its because of lisan and how it is with us and effects us everyday. For example with our custom of barlaque here in Tafara, we have to bring money and sometimes we do not have enough so we have to borrow it and this puts extra pressure on both women and men in the family' (FG discussant Tafara).

'Many women in this focus group think that they way culture is going, it is causing a lot of economic problems and keeping women poor' (FGD Harupai).

The other important and interrelated customary marriage practice influencing affective maternal altruism was patrilocality resulting in married women in extended and joint-family settings shouldering almost full responsibility for third party needs such as those of parents, siblings and in-law family members. This social practice and feminine behaviour was reinforced by unequal intergenerational power relations between women enabling more senior female members of the family – namely mothers-in law - to enforce altruistic behaviours and where necessary through the use of force. There

are data showing how women's interpersonal relationships served to constrain their agency and ability to negotiate as marriage norms and power relations relegated women to a subordinate position relative to more senior female family members especially mothers-in law who manipulated women's relationships with their children over whom they threatened, attempted and assumed informal custody partly to leverage power and control over women's labour and household inputs. Expressing unwavering devotion to the family and care of others and reverence to male and senior female family members, socio-cultural altruism was further ingrained when interacting with other feminine traits of sufferance, acquiescence, endurance and obedience all of which would have been called upon by the synergy of socio-cultural norms.

Also fuelled by a complex and deeply ingrained web of marriage inequalities was maternal economic altruism. In every study site, there was a strong sense of feminine grievance that masculine gender roles and breadwinning expectations were not being fulfilled by their husbands. Even though it was articulated that typically: 'Men are the ones who find the jobs, support our family and provide us with the money to buy rice which women cook for the family' (FG discussant Tafara), husbands were often found to be refusing to work and to share financial responsibilities and income with women, leaving many with no choice but to work outside the home to make sure their children did not starve and could go to school. Women themselves testified to power inequalities in their marriages enabling husbands to do as they pleased, such as indulging in economic behaviour and homosocial activities, frequently described as integral to hunger and the double burdens of poverty that women shouldered. In a rural focus group participants concluded that because their husbands would not perform paid work, possibly because it was menial, low paid and requiring hard manual labour, they themselves - already subsistence and unpaid care workers - had to take on paid work as they were under enormous financial strain to cover basic needs. For example the following rural women rearing families encountering secondary poverty and whose husbands had divested themselves of masculinist forms of caregiving responsibilities – earning income - were compelled to compensate and be subsistence and paid workers as they were under enormous financial strain to cover basic needs:

'It is very difficult for us to find enough money for our family. But our husbands do not think about this problem and other family problems like paying children's school fees. That is why we cannot pay the school fees. Its because the husbands don't bother to face up to the problem' (FGD Marobo).

'Sometimes we do not have enough food because of the weather. Other times we do not have enough food because the man in the house is either too sick, lazy or spoilt to work in the fields' (FGD discussant, Tafara).

'Men do not want to work or even look for work so the women have to work. The women are expected to find the money. The men are only interested in money when it comes to gambling and cockfighting' (FGD discussants Marobo).

Participants' narratives are replete with examples of how masculine privilege bestowed husband control over financial decision-making and generated male financial independence whilst obstructing women's economic empowerment and reinforcing their maternal burdens. In every study site, husbands were said to withhold their income and control women's income by either appropriating it or compelling women to hand it over to them. Echoing Chant's findings, Cedaliza a single mother viewed her married friends as worse off than herself as these women, in addition to the drudgery involved in caring and providing for children and other dependants, had to contend with managing difficult power imbalances and non-earning husbands who were akin to having a troublesome child in the house. Women not alone had to compensate financially for husbands' refusal to work but were also compelled to hand over their money or directly finance their recreational activities lest they face marital tensions that often escalated into marital violence.

'[...] But their husbands just go around demanding food and cigarettes. If my friends do not come up with the money and whatever else they want then husbands create problems and then the shouting starts' (Cedaliza, 30s, single mother of 3, Usululi).

Eldina's powerful account below also documents what happens to women's income once it enters the household. Her narrative exposes both the manner in which marriage inequalities render women's earning capacity redundant in terms of financial independence whilst also increasing their vulnerability to GBV.

'Men's power affects women's lives like here in this suku. In the family, the men just sit around [...] They are unemployed. They have many children. And the women work, selling vegetables on the street or in front of their houses. The problem is that when women go out and earn money, in some cases the husbands take the money off their wives and take control of it. The money you know is important for the family. If the wives try to hold onto it they will get beaten. This is what happens to most women in this suku. If a woman has a job [...] and so does her husband, the woman hands over her salary to him. He manages the money directly, making all the decisions about how it is to be spent' (Eldina, married, NGO worker and former refuge worker, Usululi). (Eldina, married, NGO worker and former refuge worker, Usululi).

Meanwhile Sabina's husband - a violent alcoholic - confiscated family income earned from the sale of livestock.

'If we sell our crops or some of our animals my husband will take the money and just leave us with very little. When I run out of money to buy food and other stuff I ask him but he just says that I should go and find it myself. My husband is in charge of the money' (Sabina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 7, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Even with economically active husbands, many women explained that family income remained grossly inadequate to cover basic needs in households, most often because husbands refused outright to pool their wages. This produced constraints on mother's ability to fulfil their domestic and care responsibilities, compelling them to work longer hours, make enormous sacrifices and endure higher levels of physical strain and emotional turmoil than did husbands who participants felt did almost nothing to ensure sustenance or ease the strain on them and women more generally. As well as appropriating family income generated by the sale of small livestock, Sabina described how her husband, a rural and unemployed veteran:

'When he got his veteran payment of about \$1,300 from the government, it was not enough to meet our family needs. I didn't get any of it. About half he used to build our house. If I ever ask him for money to buy food or detergent he would roar at me saying 'its mine not yours'. So I am the one who has to find the money to support my children' (Sabina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 7, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

These data describing male egoistic economic behaviours provide insights into the

social construction of conscience, the gendered-ness of facing up to family responsibilities and the effect male dominated marital power had on the well-being of men's children and their wives. Notable for example were widespread accounts of husbands - irrespective of their breadwinning status and earning capacity - using earnings destined for family survival to fund forms of leisure such as heavy drinking, gambling, extra-marital relationships and the purchasing of casual sex. There were extensive reports of husbands spending more time gambling than working and consistently waging the entire family income on the outcomes of popular gambling activities, especially cockfights and playing cards. Though reports of cockfighting being funded by family income were far more ubiquitous in rural areas, many urban husbands too were said to re-direct family resources to support this form of male homosocial recreation. Participants from the two rural sukus described the problem of gambling as integral to family poverty. In a focus group held in Tafara, women repeatedly raised this as a problem, clearly identifying male egoistic behaviours as a major driver of family poverty and female economic altruism:

'If we compare our jobs with men, ours are very difficult. Some men are lazy and do not want to work. Some just walk about and hang around with their friends. Us women are the ones who have to take over from the men and do their jobs as well as our own. Sometimes the only thing that men do is go to cockfights, play cards and snooker. Because of this the money is finished. And that is why women are facing so many difficulties rearing our families and helping them to get an education' (FGD discussants Tafara).

According to these women, gambling was widespread in their communities, with husbands pursuing and losing very risky gambles that kept their families trapped in poverty and frequently drove them into deeper levels of deprivation. In another focus group, discussants were united when they told me that husbands were in the habit of:

'taking the money that their wives earn and using it to go drinking and gambling at cockfights in Asalaino, Fuiloro and all over Lautem district. They go to cockfights at least two or three times a week' (FGD Marobo).

I also came across this with extraordinary frequency throughout the rural phase of the fieldwork, especially when I was travelling with truck loads of men on their way to large

cockfighting circuits whilst I was on my way to conduct interviews with research participants. I often accidentally fell upon the fights, where cocks, armed with steel spurs in cock rings, were surrounded by hundreds of men placing heavy bets. Women were also present at these large gatherings working as market-traders generating an income for their families. Linking cockfighting to family poverty and GBV, a number of local leaders and NGO workers were very alert and worried about the extent of cockfighting and the regularity of men's gambling not just in their own communities but in sukus across Lautem district. They highlighted patterns associated with other risky behaviours such as aggression, violence and heavy drinking and the attendant social costs, namely severe familial poverty and GBV. Some said they felt hopeless about finding ways to address it. The cultural identification of men with their cocks and the cultural value placed on cockfighting and as an aspect of rural masculinities was unmistakable. So too was its effects on women's material poverty and affective condition and also their vulnerability to GBV. This was an important finding in the study and one which is discussed in greater detail in chapter seven of the thesis. Fataluku culture was referenced on many instances, both when problematising the practice of cockfighting in the context of family poverty and violence, and legitimising its resilience to change, as cockfighting was seen as a way of social life for men, not to be contested or meddled with. Gambling and attending cockfights was not an activity confined to Fataluku communities as it also emerged in Dili as a common form of male leisure and homosociality in Dili the capital, also.

The findings indicate that the other male dominated marital arena that resulted in an asymmetric economic setting for women was unequal sexual relations enabling husbands to do as they please. According to the data, husbands were able to engage in extra-marital relationships as dominant marriage norms particularly in conflict-affected contexts permitted promiscuous sexuality for men, a direct result of the sexual male drive discourse interacting with greater male power which also reinforces that power. Hence for many women, husbands asserted their power by dictating the terms of the marriage and their sexual relationships, reinforcing women's vulnerabilities and subordinated positions as wives and mothers. The deleterious effects of the interaction

of asymmetrical marital norms with male power in the arena of sexual relations was something clearly illustrated in urban women's narratives which were often dominated by accounts of husbands practising formal and informal polygamy and paying for commercial sex which women identified as another resource depleting activity and source of female hardships. There were two reports of formal polygamy which were confined to rural areas whilst informal polygamy was raised repeatedly by urban women who were aggrieved with husbands for directing family income towards extra-marital and informal non-consensual polygamous relationships and funding second families. For example husbands with second families and who 'came and went' were reported to free themselves entirely from all family responsibilities, providing neither emotional or financial support to their first families and formal wives. They were also said to shoulder none of the financial burdens nor experience the poverty-induced stress associated with running households. In at least two focus groups discussants were strongly united when they ranked normalised male infidelity as one of the most damaging of problems effecting their family and married lives.

'When we talk about our daily hardships as women, well when our husbands marry other women this leaves us with no money (FG discussants Harupai).

'In my family we suffer from poverty. My husband has two wives' (FG discussant Marobo).

Filomena an urban mother enduring economic anxiety was under tremendous pressure to address secondary poverty and compensate financially for her husbands' 'egoistic' behaviour toward their families. As well as experiences of GBV, she testified to the difficulties of feeding and sending many small children to school owing to a combination of structural poverty and her husband's cheating, refusal to share an income and resource depleting homo-social recreational activities. Despite his violent reactions, Filomena constantly attempted to generate an income by selling cooked food.

'Sometimes its hard for me because of other women who he goes with which means that there is less money for our family [...]. There are times

when there is no money [...] There are problems as he gambles his salary at cockfights and playing cards. I feel that he wastes the money so the family suffers [...] maybe the salary goes on other women [...] there is not enough money to feed the family and I have no money to send the children to school' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai).

Anarilha, Feliciano and Julianna too stated that their husbands used family income when visiting sex workers often leaving them with little money to purchase essential resources needed to meet basic needs and fulfil their maternal obligations. Meanwhile Ella, Maria and Dulce all described prostitution as a well established commercial activity in their *suku* that poor women especially single mothers abandoned by the fathers of their children relied on to generate income.

So far the evidence suggests that the economic norm underlying the traditional breadwinner model was under severe pressure from a number of interacting factors. Not least was impoverishing effects generated by marriage inequalities. These inequalities found strength in the gender division of labour and power that favoured husbands who refused to perform menial low paid work or share their income, using it instead to fund resource depleting leisure and recreation. All this compelled women to generate an income, the totality of which they were expected to surrender once it entered the household.

A significant determinant of women's burdens of care, love labouring and economic work was not only the presence but also the absence of fathers, suggesting that post-marital inequalities too brought about highly complex situations and hardships for women. Another key finding in the study was the high levels of financial stress and strain experienced by single mothers raising families alone. According to the data, whilst there were some accounts of female-headship coming about through male labour migration in rural areas, the vast majority of mothers rearing children alone had been abandoned entirely by husbands whilst some were separated or had been widowed. Single mothers' narratives were dominated by accounts of poverty-induced exhaustion, maternal guilt and anxiety. In rural areas although one participant received weekly remittances from her husband who worked in Dili, there were complaints that

migrant husbands typically failed to remit any money at all, conveying the idea that husband migration was a 'male survival strategy' and a 'polite word for desertion' (Elson 1992) viewed in this study as another manifestation of power inequalities within marriage. In all study sites separated and deserted housewives received no financial support from ex-husbands. Fernanda for example deplored her former husband's family attitudes, behaviours and practices that left her struggling to ensure the survival of a highly-food insecure family that her husband had abandoned. Now supporting a second family, she felt he neither 'cared for' nor 'cared about' their children: 'My husband has moved to Baucau and has started a new family so I do not see him anymore. He doesn't provide us with any financial support' (Fernanda, middle-aged abandoned housewife, mother of 7, Harupai).

Not all single mothers received cash payments from the state and those that did felt they were grossly inadequate. These included mothers such as Olandina and Cedaliza who were burdened with incessant worry, humiliation and physical burden of hard manual labour required to earn money and run their households:

'To support my family I have worked as a domestic help for other Timorese families doing different jobs like cooking and washing clothes. I was like their servant. I needed the money to send my child to school and to feed us and to pay the rent. [...] As a single mother I work hard to support my children [...] Because I have no husband I am alone and there is only me to look after my children. This is the difficulty, I have no husband' (Cedaliza, 30s, unwaged single mother of 3, Usululi).

Poverty-induced stress was intense for single mothers with many small children. They found feeding their families almost impossible. At the time of her interview, Inacia had very little income to buy food, a situation she faced regularly.

'[...] I live here alone with no husband [...] Sometimes when I work the money I earn is so low its not enough to buy food. I wash peoples' clothes everyday for \$2 [...] I have no money to buy things like [...] rice' (Inacia, separated housewife, mother of 4, domestic worker, Harupai).

Though not in the form of regular paid work, Fernanda was driven to economic altruism, generating an irregular and dismal income from selling off her own

belongings owing to the fact that she lacked income support from the state and her ex-husband, the father of her seven young children. She conveyed the physical and emotional strain of not being able to care for her own and the needs of all family members. She complained of headaches and dizzy spells on account of curtailing her eating habits to provide food for her children but also because: 'Sometimes when I think too much about these problems I don't want to eat'. Unlike her ex-husband who Fernanda described as unencumbered as a father by economic anxieties, she was at a loss as to how to feed her children and keep them in school. She suffered terrible guilt at witnessing them bear the brunt of bullying and harassment amongst peers in their community. She also internalised humiliation at having to field requests to borrow food money from her family from whom she was estranged.

Rural single mothers abandoned by the fathers of their children endured extremely heavy burdens demanding multiple and inordinate amounts of economic, affective and corporeal altruism. They conveyed feeling trapped in a constant state of poverty-induced stress and sadness about the levels of hunger their children experienced. The data suggest that the vast majority were landless as they lacked customary inheritance rights and access to family plots belonging to their natal family and former husbands. Hence they barely survived on meagre and irregular earnings eked out by selling foraged fruit and firewood and providing seasonal labour on other people's farmland. Even when performing inordinate amounts of physical labour they were unable to generate much income or produce food to feed their children. As Erminia and Olandina explained:

'I work for other landowners. I clear and weed their fields to get it ready for farming. They pay me \$2 for a day's work. Really this is not enough to support my family needs like buying rice and other essential food. Honestly I don't have any money at all' (Erminia, 20 years, abandoned and single mother of infant twins, farm labourer, Tafara).

'I make oil from coconuts which I sell at about 50 cent so that I can help my family have the basics. Like rice and other food. I also weave tais and generate a small bit of money from this' (Olandina, abandoned housewife, 40s, mother of 4, subsistence worker, Marobo).

Some said that they faced corporeal hardship as they lacked husbands and extended family manual labour to help them maintain the household and shoulder extremely heavy workloads over long distances. This was especially so for women whose children were very small and not yet old enough to help with physically demanding chores such as house repairs and maintenance and fetching water essential for women to provide regular meals and clean laundry. Furthermore juggling childcare with paid and subsistence farmwork located far from the home constrained their ability to generate income. To work as a farm labourer, her only source of income, Erminia who was abandoned by the father of her twins soon after they were born relied entirely on her parents and siblings for childcare. She already depended on them for food and shelter and though grateful for this and aware that she was doing all she could herself as a mother, she resented her sense of dependency and never ending state of gratitude. In her interview Erminia conveyed feeling anxious, deeply frustrated and powerless, emotions which were exacerbated by her lack of money, job prospects and state support, her insecure housing, irregular availability of childcare and fraught relations with family members who held negative attitudes towards her as a young unmarried mother. Single mothers most of whom were barely surviving on low levels of subsistence agricultural production also had to contend with the effects of poverty alone. Despite the long hours in the fields Olandina struggled to keep all her children healthy, a maternal responsibility she took very seriously and that constantly worried her. As she explained: 'Another problem is that I only grow corn but the children find it very difficult to eat as they usually get stomach ache or diarrhoea' (Olandina, abandoned housewife, 40s, mother of 4, subsistence worker, Marobo). Poverty-related stress was intense for those juggling conflicts of interests on their own, like where there was a debt, as once a debt existed, it was mothers alone who were responsible for the recovery process as well as ensuring daily sustenance. The anxiety associated with poverty-induced debt dominated the narrative of Erminia who found balancing meeting repayments with feeding her infant twins almost impossible. She worried about having defaulted on repayments and felt guilty that she had re-directed the loan to feed her children. Unable to meet the terms and conditions and determined to

relieve herself of debt-induced stress, Erminia in the end decided not to renew her membership in the micro-credit scheme. As she explained:

'I borrowed money from the NGO *Tuba Ra Meting* [...] I use the loan for running the kiosk but also for supporting my children's everyday needs. I only borrowed \$100 but its really hard to pay [money] back every week. I find this really difficult [...]' (Erminia, 20 years, abandoned and single mother of infant twins, farm labourer, Tafara).

### 6.2.2 Family Circumstances

Partly related to socio-cultural dimensions inherent in women's interpersonal and marital circumstances, maternal poverty and affective and material burdens were also exacerbated by their family circumstances. These concerned large family size - mainly related to large number of children, women's obligations to care for the extended family and husbands' inability to take up economic activities owing to alcoholism, old age, mental and physical illness and disability. In relation to family size, Fina who was rearing ten children and also caring for her elderly and disabled husband suffered sadness and high levels of maternal anxiety owing to incessant family deprivations such as hunger caused by income poverty, inadequate state support and large family size: 'I have a daughter who works in a shop and earns \$100 per month. But still this is not enough as there are so many of us in the family' (Fina, housewife in her 50s, mother of 10, Harupai). Stress, strain and exhaustion appeared with remarkable frequency in the narratives of women mothering large families with many small children, which when combined with high costs of living and a lack of decent income made rearing families difficult. Whether they liked it or not, it compelled Palmerina and Ella to take up paid work which added to their burdens yet barely helped them to meet family needs.

'I have a lot of children. Five children and we lack everything. I never feel good or happy. The children always make me mad and angry. I have to work really hard to support my family, especially when they want something and I cannot give it to them. This is a very tough situation for me. I get headaches when I think about my family's problems. The doctor tells me there's no medicine for this kind of sickness because it is all to do with my family situation' (Palmerina, housewife 40s, mother of 5, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

'[...] Because we have so many children I need to get extra work. This is all in good but I am the one who suffers' (Ella, married, 30s mother of 6, street trader, Usululi).

Mothers rearing large families with children of school-going age faced severe pressure caring, providing and coping with poverty. As their children had not yet reached working age, mothers in their 20's and 30's like Luseila were being compelled to work as they did not benefit from inter-generational cash transfers from adult children. Whilst somewhat unclear the data suggest that mothers rearing many children in two-parent households were also compelled to earn an income as such households did not qualify for the *Bolsa da Mae*.<sup>14</sup>

'I have no job and I stay at home looking after my children. Now I'm thinking of going back to selling vegetables as the present situation in our family is pushing me to do this (Luseila, housewife, 30s, mother of 7, domestic worker, Harupai).

Meanwhile the lack of formal and informal support to help rear her large family forced Pasquela to abandon her ideas or any hope she had of developing her business. Her case reflects the competing investments and demands between mothering and women's economic advancement.

'If [...] the NGO came, well my dream to open up a small kiosk would not come true anyway. Because even though I'd have the credit from the NGO, how would I pay them back the loan? I have to look after my children and I have so many other things to do' (Pasquela, housewife 40s, mother of 6, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Worried about the well-being and care world of single mothers with many children Ella observed that in their community: 'Some of these women have so many children, like seven or eight and have to come up with the money for school and food' (Ella, married, 30s mother of 6, street trader, Usululi). Single mothers themselves described in detail the difficulties they faced and heavy burdens the shouldered coping with poverty and meeting the needs of many small children on their own. As Fernanda explained:

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<sup>14</sup> *Molsa da Mae*, the conditional cash transfer programme targets primarily female-headed households (UN 2012 ).

'I have a problem. My husband has just left me and I have 7 children. I rear them alone and don't know what I can do to support my children to go to school. It is very difficult for me to find money to support my family [...] If I have money my children can go to school and if I don't, well then they cannot go. [...] As a woman I also have my own illness and sometimes I have nothing and have to go to my family to ask for rice and food. I need to buy books for my children but I have nothing. (silence. Crying). My children try to find friends and sometimes people say that they do bad things like prostitution [...] They say these things because our situation is so bad they think my children are prostituting themselves. I have no money to support them to have a decent life [...] Like I told you the problem I face right now is that I do not know where I'm going to get food. We have no rice to cook and we have no electricity or wood to cook on a stove [...] Today I have no idea who will help me solve the food problem and the other problems like paying for the school report. And what should I prepare for me children's lunch and dinner?' (Fernanda, middle-aged abandoned housewife, unwaged mother of 7, Harupai).

It was not just in their capacity as mothers but also as wives, sisters, daughters and grandmothers that women's family circumstances and settings compelled them to work for pay. There is an abundance of data illustrating how women provided for dependent husbands unable to work due to old age and poor health and disability. Breadwinning mothers of large families, Cecilia and Nina illustrate this point. Both conveyed suffering dizziness, headaches, physical pain, had low morale and also became upset during their interviews when describing their painful encounters with poverty as mothers and wives. Married to a man some 20 years her senior Nina was compelled to work hard in the fields and markets barely generating sufficient income as the sole breadwinner in a rural and impoverished aldeia. As she explained:

'I have 10 children [...]. Some of them are studying. I am struggling to find the money to support them all. I work all the time in the market but what I earn is very little and not enough' (Nina, housewife, 60s, mother of 10, subsistence farmer and market trader, Tafara).

Meanwhile it was the breadwinning grandmother of Fatima's children that provided them with their main source of income and made sure they did not starve. Abandoned by the father of her children, she explained: 'My mother looks after my children, by buying rice and other food for them' (Fatima, young deserted housewife, single mother

of 3, petty trader, Harupai). Adult daughters were said to also provide critical sources of income to their mothers who were often elderly, widowed and living alone. For example Avo Senghorina an elderly and visually impaired widow living in a remote part of suko Marobo explained how as well as drawing her old age pension:

‘My daughter is the one taking care of me. She earns money making tais for other women. She buys food and other things for me. Other than that, money for food comes from selling firewood and chickens but it is not enough. So little. My life is very difficult’ (Avo Senghorina, widow, 70s, visually impaired, Marobo).

It was also not unusual for women from poor natal families to come under enormous pressure to finance their parents and siblings whilst also supporting their own children.

As Margarita recounted:

‘Here I am the only one of my siblings who is married and so I have to look after my parents who are now old and sick and my brothers and sisters as they have no job and money to look after themselves. So that is why I asked them to come and stay with me (Margarita, Housewife, 30s, mother of 3, Harupai).

Likewise her neighbour Lourenca, a domestic worker and mother of five conveyed strong obligations and altruistic tendencies compelling her to look after her marital and natal family. She explained her obligation to support her sister and her motivation to support her brother:

‘But here I have five children to support and one sister also as my parents have passed away. This sister wants to go to school and because I am the eldest I have to support her also’ (Lourenca, housewife, 30s, mother of 5, Harupai).

‘My brother was supported by my mother in the past but as he wants to continue his education I now have to support him as well as my 5 children and my younger sister. I have to support my brother as in the future he will be able to support my children as well. So even though all this is hard work, its an investment as he will be able to support my children in the future (Lourenca, housewife, 30s, mother of 5, Harupai).

Lourenca was not alone exhausted from the drudgery of low paid hard manual labour but she had internalised painful feelings of guilt and faced difficult dilemmas trying to

care for and about everyone in the same way. As she explained:

'We have a lot of difficulties. On top of everything else I have to support my brother [...] Every month we allocate the money I earn from my cleaning job as follows: \$50 of it goes on his boarding school education. However I cannot support my sister's education. I have to look after my own children's needs too. For that we use the remainder \$70 [...]' (Lourenca, housewife, 30s, mother of 5, Harupai).

So far the data have delineated the complex operationalisation of multiple levels of interaction, at which a number of key forces contributed towards the social construction of inequitable gender care relations shaping gendered poverty. These related to socio-cultural-gender norms fundamental to women's mothering and sense of personhood, and to power inequalities permeating women's immediate environment particularly their marriages, interpersonal relationships and family circumstances. There are also findings illustrating the deleterious consequences of the interaction between these and the wider conflict-affected context, demanding even greater levels of 'other-orientated' affective and economic behaviour from mothers if they were to cushion primary poverty, make up the shortfalls generated by secondary poverty and fulfil their gendered and cultural obligations as mothers and wives (Chant 2007a; Kabeer 1999). The focus of the following section, this context is characterised by the informalisation of the Timorese economy and the militarisation of hegemonic Timorese masculinities, both devastating, long-lasting and intersecting legacies of the country's conflict-affected violent past that generated even further far reaching material hardships and affective inequalities for women (Niner 2016).

### **6.3 The Relationality and Intersection of Gender, Marriage, Motherhood and the Family with Women's Socio-Economic-Historical Context**

#### **6.3.1 Gendered Poverty, Rural Underdevelopment and the Informalisation of the Timorese Economy**

The data presented in this final section of the chapter delineates the structural context shaping mothers' material, affective and corporeal burdens and inequalities. The focus is on the structural disadvantages specific to gender and participants' rural and urban

localities. According to women's narratives these appeared to be key drivers of income poverty, hunger and inadequate living conditions. They featured as major stressors on mothers, elbowing them into paid work and pushing them to intensify their economic activities. When speaking about the constraints they faced meeting basic day-to-day family consumption needs, many mothers especially in rural areas linked the pressure on them to diversify and intensify economic activities to the high cost of living and low purchasing power in their communities. The following narratives of rural focus group discussants engaged in labour intensive subsistence farming, foraging and petty trading highlight this: 'Sometimes we want to eat rice but we cannot as we do not have any. That is why we try to sell our corn but no one wants to buy it' (FGD Marobo). 'No money to pay the school fees. That is why we have to collect firewood and sell it. That is why we make coconut oil' (FGD Marobo). Across both rural study sites, women often told me that compelling them to intensify subsistence and economic activities was a combination of low agricultural production and underdevelopment including poor infrastructure and weak economic environment - indirect consequences of the conflict. Informal work opportunities offering women and men decent pay were said to be extremely limited, insecure and temporary as conveyed earlier in this and the previous chapter. Farmers constantly highlighted how they yielded very low returns for their work, citing poor weather conditions, lack of public and private transport and very weak purchasing power across communities. Earning opportunities for landless women reliant on non-farm economic activities were extremely limited, particularly for those living in remote areas. Widows and their children were extremely vulnerable in such circumstances:

'Widows suffer a lot here in Bauro because it is difficult for us to find enough food to eat [...] That is why we have to sell firewood. But sometimes no-one buys the firewood from me and I may only earn \$1 during the week from this. This is why we suffer and feel very sad' (FG discussant Marobo).

Rural women running small home-based kiosks remarked on the difficulties they experienced sustaining their business and generating an income, citing constraints such as their remote location, poor infrastructure and low economic activity owing to the

lack of customers as well as customers' weak purchasing power. As Yuliana stated:

'Here in this suku its quite hard to get money because we are living far away from the centre and its just so remote. We when we open a small business there is no-one to buy' (Yuliana, middle aged housewife, mother of 2, subsistence farmer Tafara).

The likes of Rosa and Cesarina, mothers of large families almost entirely dependent on them for daily sustenance said they were forced to keep their prices low owing to customers' weak purchasing power. For example Rosa, who was a mother of five and worked as a farmer and an elected woman representative captured the difficulties highlighted by many other rural women:

'The problem for me is when I sell corn in the market I don't make enough money to even pay for transport to and from the market which is always very expensive and even exceeds what I take in from selling vegetables. Also I've had to reduce the price of my corn otherwise customers cannot purchase it' (Rosa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

As sole breadwinner Cesarina was under tremendous pressure as she could barely provide for her 8 children and husband and make repayments to the local micro-credit scheme.

'There is a small number of people living in this aldeia so it really depends on them. All together they might spend \$4 or \$5 or just \$1 or \$2 in one day' (Cesarina, 40s, mother of 8 businesswoman Tafara).

Like many other farming mothers, Pasquela cited low agricultural production destined for domestic consumption and income generation as integral to hunger and difficulties sending children to school. She was rearing a large income and food-insecure family with her husband in a remote aldeia in Marobo. They relied on the vegetables she cultivated on a small family plot as it was their only source of daily sustenance. They had hoped to produce enough food to sell at local markets. Pasquela went on to explain that to farm the land, put food on the table, ensure her family's health and hygiene and run and maintain the home, Pasquela depended on the availability of water which she did not have. She explained the effects of the lack of water in a rural farmland on her ability to cultivate vegetables for family consumption. 'When the sun

comes the water dries up and there is very little water and I find it very difficult if I want to get the water for my vegetable plants'. With almost no means to acquire food, her children were constantly hungry and she was worried and frustrated as a mother at never being able to meet their most basic of needs.

'[...] Everyday we can find hardly any food to eat. We are trying to manage but water is a big problem. If I had water near my house, I would not worry so much. It would be easy for me to plant and grow vegetables so that we can eat them. I could sell them and that way support my family. Without water I cannot do anything like cook food and water our plants and vegetables' (Pasquela, housewife 40s, mother of 6, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Nearly every woman from Marobo cited the lack of water as integral to their hardships. Again Pasquela's narrative captures the central role water played in rural mothers' world of caring and providing and the demands the multiple interconnected consequences of rural poverty and underdevelopment placed on them including inordinate amounts of corporeal and economic altruism if they were to fulfil their maternal obligations.

'We hardly have enough food to eat everyday. Water is a big problem. If I had water I could cook and get on with my daily activities. I could plant and grow vegetables, sell them and get some money to sustain the family. I have to walk several kilometres to Somoco to fetch it but only when there is electricity to work the pump. And I don't have money to buy a trolley to carry all the jerry cans. That money goes on rice and food. If there's no electricity I have to walk far into the forest to get water. I really want to have water near my house' (Pasquela, housewife 40s, mother of 6, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Over and over farmers – the vast majority of whom had no access to any form of motorised transport - said they found it difficult to spend long hours farming if they are rearing families with baby infants or small children, when they are post-natal or heavily pregnant as they lacked time and energy to travel long distances by foot to plots of farmland. To reconcile competing demands and the limitations imposed by lack of transport and childcare, a number of women food producers said they temporarily abandon agricultural activities that take them away from home-based care work. Single

mothers such as Olandina living in such circumstances faced inordinate challenges meeting maternal obligations:

‘I am the one who looks after them, preparing breakfast. Everything. I have a field where I plant my vegetables and grow food to feed my children. But unfortunately my field is very far from where I live’ (Olandina, abandoned housewife, 40s, mother of 4, subsistence worker, Marobo).

Lack of credit was another constraint on rural women's agricultural activity and ability to provide for their families. Several farmers said that they could not cultivate the land as they lacked the money to enable them to rent and purchase agricultural inputs. This was raised by focus group discussants who stated that: ‘Sometimes it is difficult for women farmers because we do not have enough money to rent the tractor and the driver and pay for petrol to plough our land’ (FG discussants, Marobo). Underscoring the extreme vulnerability of elderly widowed women, Avo Senghorina, who was blind, frail, undernourished and living alone explained:

‘Actually I have my own land [...] the problem is when I asked for the tractor to come they said I have to pay. Well I don’t have any money to give them. I want to plant corn, potato and cassava. If they were to help me cultivate my land my daughter would help me do everything because I am blind. I can just sit down and spread the seeds. The problem is that there is no man to help me plant the corn’ (Avo Senghorina, widow, 70s, visually impaired, Marobo).

Farmers also explained that they could no longer rely on food produced from livestock as they did not have the credit to replace their animals who were sick and had died from disease in the early years following the conflict. As Sabina explained: ‘We farm but our crops are not very good. We also keep animals but many have died due to disease’ (Sabina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 7, subsistence farmer, Marobo). Farmers like Sidonia reported that agricultural productivity was constrained by the effects of field mice and roaming livestock that destroy already scarce land women cultivate and the crops they grow and harvest.

‘The problem is that we have prepared the land but roaming animals keep destroying everything [...] even though I have some farmland its not enough to feed my family. And if I’m lucky – that’s if the field-mice don’t

destroy our harvest – I get one barrel of corn per year. Otherwise we don't have any food everyday. We have to sell bananas to survive' (Sidonia, middle aged housewife, mother of 3, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Food poverty across rural communities under study was also linked to unpredictable changes in the weather. One farming mother participating in a focus group provided the following explanation for hunger in her community: 'Changes in the climate are making the population here in [Marobo] go hungry. If it rains too much and at the wrong time it destroys our crops'. Crops were said to have been destroyed, planting postponed on account of unavailable seeds and growth was severely stunted by the previous year's extreme and unpredictable weather changes. As Nina another farmer and sole breadwinner explained:

'For example when the rain is heavy, like really bad we cannot farm the land. Usually we plant the corn twice a year [...] but last year due to the heavy rains we couldn't plant anything. So there was no food at all. We went to Dili to find some seeds but could not buy any and even there people experienced extreme hunger [...] This terrible weather – raining throughout the year was not only in Lospalos but throughout Timor-Leste' (Nina, 60s, housewife, mother of 10, subsistence farmer and market trader, Tono).

### **6.3.2 Gendered Poverty, Urban Underdevelopment and the Informalisation of the Timorese Economy**

In urban areas too a combination of underdevelopment, widespread unemployment, lack of decent paid work and high inflation were depicted as integral to family poverty, fuelling maternal burdens and anxieties and intensifying women's efforts to safeguard family survival. Both of Agustina's quotes illustrate this:

'Sometimes we do not have food because there are no customers to buy our vegetables so then we just borrow rice from our neighbours and pay them later when we find a way to earn money'.

'Right now, [...], it feels like there is more poverty. During the Indonesian time [...] everything was cheap, cheap rice, cheap food and we had enough food. But since Independence we can see that everything is expensive, [...] when we started to use the US dollar, everything became expensive and prices in the market went up day by day' (Agustina, 50s, housewife and

vegetable vendor, mother of 4, Usululi).

An important finding in the study were the direct and indirect impacts of the conflict on urban maternal livelihoods fuelling economic obligations, with data suggesting that underlying family poverty and women's material and affective inequalities was the legacy of the war and recent violent conflict generating structural disadvantages specific to gender and to participants' localities. A number of vendors operating street-side stalls and trading in the city's large markets told me that along with the routine hardship and low earnings they also had to endure hazardous conditions and loss of earnings when the security situation had forced them to cease trading or when customers had fled during outbreaks of violent conflict on the streets of Dili. This was a theme that featured in the lives of several urban petty traders. Referring to the effects of the violent situation in 1999 and again in 2007, some were very descriptive in their recollections of their exposure to occupational hazards that forced them to cease trading and resulted in loss of earnings and material deprivations. Amongst others Alina spoke about the difficulties she faced working as street traders, her loss of earnings and turbulent experiences of family displacement and upheaval during the crises and violence in 1999 and again in 2007:

'And when the conflict happened again in 2007 I could not sell my vegetables. My husband was always sick and conditions were very bad for me and my family during the crisis' (Alina, married, middle-aged mother of 2, business woman, Usululi).

Avo Amelia another petty trader from Usululi spoke about food related consequences of conflict and in particular the harms inflicted by urban violence on families' food security and immediate and long-term livelihoods. Referring to stock depletion, loss of earnings and subsequent hunger brought on by the conflict in 2007, she explained how her vegetable stocks were depleted when customers fled to the mountains to escape the violence that erupted in her locality. In addition to immediate loss of earnings, she lost important livestock assets which have been difficult to replace. As she explained:

'[...] but when the crisis happened all the shops shut-down, I had no money as my vegetables withered because nobody bought them. My pigs also had

no food and they died. I just stayed in my place, just by my small vegetable stall even if was all broken up but I hoped that one woman, one man or some customers would come and buy because at that time as I had no money. I was very very thin in 2006' (Avo Amelia, elderly housewife, mother of 7 and petty trader, Usululi).

It was in this context that first generation urban women spoke candidly about the protracted food related consequences of war and forced migration, explaining the multiple losses they incurred as rural women some thirty years ago when they were driven off their ancestral lands and forced to migrate to Dili by the Indonesian military. They said they lost their own productive assets such as land and livestock, as well as access to farm land and its produce, and lost their ability produce food.

'When we lived in the district [...], we had buffalo, a big garden, rice fields, and also we had pigs and chickens but after the crisis in 1975 [...] I myself lost everything. I lost my plantation. The Indonesians took everything [...] took my land and made it theirs like Indonesian land. So that is why I had to go to Dili as everything was lost' (Agosta, housewife 50s, mother of 3, subsistence worker, Usululi).

As a consequence many first generation urban women had neither access to their ancestral rural lands and its food produce nor farm-able land in urban areas to produce food crops for both domestic consumption and income generation.

'The difference between life in the district and life in Dili for women is like this: in our suku in Ainaro if we [...] go to school and come back home and there is no money, at least we have food from the land. But if we live in Dili we need to pay for food and we need to rent a house but in the suku we do not. We can live for free. But here in Dili we are completely limited. That is the difference' (Cesaltina, unmarried, university student in her 20s, Usululi).

Augusta and Cecilia, both mothers and street traders also from Usululi also captured women's vulnerability to poverty and economic burdens and how they and other women had to cease operating well-organised market stalls once earning them a regular decent income, owing to displacement and marginalisation, triggered during Timor-Leste's early years of post-conflict reconstruction and development. Augusta explained how she successfully started vending fruit and vegetables some 18 years ago

in Mercado Lama a historically busy trading hub in and around Usululi. The area provided her and other women with a suitable and bustling economic space to run a vegetable stall and make a living, earning enough to enable them to meet basic needs of their families. However in 2003 and along with numerous other women street vendors she faced a dramatic change in her trading circumstances when her economic space and wider trading location was demolished by a post-conflict 'renewal and revitalisation project' that saw the construction of Dili's new Convention Centre. None of the women were consulted prior to the process and when the market space was ruined, trading and sale of goods became difficult and unprofitable, leading to a sharp drop in women's income. The lack of space, customers and earnings forced Augusta to relocate to one of Dili's larger and newly established markets where she faced a lack of space and additional and unaffordable operating costs including high rents and transport. In the end for Augusta to maintain her business and meet family needs she was forced relocate again, this time back to her suku where at the time of the interview she was trading daily off a tiny street outside her home under a makeshift stall. Like her neighbours who work as informal street vendors, she depends entirely on the small pool of Usululi customers to generate enough income to meet basic needs of her family. Notable in her narrative was her frustration at the lack of government support for women's economic empowerment.

'Actually for us women vegetable street vendors, we feel that the government just doesn't want to support us. But its a different story for the business people who have a big store or supermarket. I feel that this is not fair. How can we change? We do not even have the power to tell the government' (Augusta, housewife 50s, mother of 4, vegetable vendor, Usululi).

Meanwhile Cecilia a sole-breadwinner and mother of 5 children was compelled to relocate to a large volatile market-place located far away from her family on the other side of the city. Exposed to gang and street violence she slept on a dirt-track under her small make-shift vegetable stall for several months at a time without personal security, bedding, sanitation and proper lighting. As she explained:

'Sometimes I stay in *hari-laran* to sell things and I never come back home [...] I live in the big marketplace [...] I sleep under the vegetable stall for many months [...] all this is very difficult for me as I am the only one who works and brings in the money [...] there have been problems recently with people throwing stones' (Cecilia, 40s, mother of 6, market trader, Usululi).

### **6.3.3 Hegemonic Masculinities and the Informal Economy: Alcohol, Gendered Poverty and GBV**

Across all study sites, participants cited male unemployment as another reason for the chronic poverty and women's heavy work burdens and inequalities. Poverty-induced malaise and fatigue was endless for Agosta who seemed fatalistic about her situation. Frail, exhausted, under-nourished and in poor health she despaired about her ability to survive it. Neither her husband nor her two adult sons living at home ever had any kind of paid work. Everyone in the household had grown up during the conflict without completing education beyond post-primary level. No-one made financial contributions towards their upkeep or helped Agosta with housework. She felt deeply frustrated at having to still look after her teenage and adult sons who she said sat around bored with nothing to do all day. She felt sad as they: '[...] never take care of me. They don't bother trying to find a job to earn money. They just eat, sleep and do nothing'. When I met them at the beginning of the interview they seemed hopelessness and depressed about their everyday lives. Her husband was a violent alcoholic who controlled whatever financial assistance the family was entitled to by appropriating money once it entered the household to fund his addiction and leisure activities. Feelings of pain and despair dominated Agosta's narrative. Her well-being and personal circumstances were not unique to the study. She also pleaded for material assistance.

'I am already old. It is impossible for me to change my situation [...] I am suffering too much. Can you help me with my daily life? Just basic food [...] I feel like, right now, that I do not have any more energy, so I am just waiting for God to call me' (Agosta, housewife 50s, mother of 3, subsistence worker, Usululi).

Both petty traders and mothers of large families, Avo Amelia and Armanda had to work hard to provide for co-resident unwaged adult children who they considered dependants like their non-earning husbands. Armanda barely eked out a living from

the occasional sale of pigs but, for daily sustenance relied heavily on her own subsistence activities and intergenerational transfers from her daughter who was a sex worker. She conveyed feeling emotionally and physically depleted from the burden of coping and under pressure to scrape a living, highlighting that:

'[...] and why isn't there enough money? I have so many children [...] and all my grown-up children are unemployed and even if they have finished their education, they do nothing [...] this is my condition. No money' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi).

Meanwhile Avo Amelia too continued to provide for her husband and co-resident adult sons all of whom were unemployed. She was exhausted and frustrated as none of her sons provided her with the economic security and rewards she had invested in and expected in her old age, compelling Avo Amelia to work as a street trader even though she was elderly. She hurled abuse at her husband who she felt was unable to meet male breadwinning expectations.

'I am a very poor woman and I have a husband [...] who is mostly unemployed, no jobs and when he does work he just gets \$1 or \$2 a day [...] We always have problems in the evenings [...] and I say to him 'hey you are a man, and you go from morning til evening and you only manage \$1?. You know that I am hungry and that I didn't eat since early morning'. So our life is very hard, very very hard, [...]' (Avo Amelia, elderly housewife, mother of 7 and petty trader, Usululi).

Cecilia juggled enormous material and affective burdens as wife and mother, rearing a large food-insecure family on a single income. Owing to a physical disability, her husband was unable to undertake manual labour, most often the only type of paid work available to poor urban men, a direct result of the conflict-affected informal nature of the Timorese economy and the limited vocational and education background of men who grew up during the conflict. Her circumstances and that of her husband were not unique to the study.

'If my children want to eat breakfast or lunch, it costs me \$8 per day to feed the 5 of them. All of this is very difficult for me as I am the only one who works and brings in the money [...] I have five children who go to school [...] and so I have to find money because my husband broke his arms and legs.

So I am the one who has to bring in the money and I do it alone. I just live in hari laran, the market place where I sell vegetables to earn money. I have to stay there' (Cecilia, 40s, housewife, market trader, mother of 6, Usululi).

In some narratives it was conveyed that the informal economy and the menial character of male employment was driving gendered poverty as men refused to do it, compelling women to intensify their economic activities. There were very few reports of economically active husbands finding work in the formal sector and these were mostly confined to urban areas. In the rural study sites there were two accounts of husbands working in the public sector, one as a school teacher and the other a xefi suku. Public sector salaries were said to be inadequate to cover high consumption costs incurred rearing large families especially with many school-going children. This compelled mothers such as Jesuina to work for pay even though she maintained her role as full-time primary carer:

'I personally believe that if women only depend on the men, it will become very hard for them. For example one sack of rice costs \$20 and it only lasts a week in my family. If we only depend on my husband's salary then its very hard for us to survive because he only gets his salary every three or four months' (Jesuina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, businesswoman, Tafara).

Like Avo Amelia and Agosta's husbands, the vast majority of husbands generating an income worked in the informal sector as unskilled manual labourers, fishermen and subsistence farmers and petty traders. Some were tradesmen working as carpenters. In rural areas men were also farm-hands and some brewed and sold alcohol. Overall as well as being irregular and often not available to them, men's work was unskilled and low paid, like for example Agosta's husband, who: '[...] helps other people collect dry stones' (Agosta, housewife 50s, mother of 3, subsistence worker, Usululi). Male earnings and wages were said to be too low and rarely adequate or enough to cater for family survival needs so that feeding families and sending children to school was an extremely heavy burden that lay firmly on mothers' shoulders. Even with her husbands' wage, Ivete a mother of seven children still struggled to feed their family whilst the intergenerational transfers Avo Amelia occasionally received from her married son did

little to alleviate income poverty compelling her to work.

'During the last ten days of every month things are very difficult in the family when the money for food runs out completely. My husband who has work from time to time earns just \$100 in a month. Its not enough to feed seven children, send them to school and fix the house. Sometimes we have food to eat and other times we have nothing' (Ivete, housewife 30s, mother of 7, Harupai).

'Well, [my son] is a good man but he can only give us a little money as his salary is too small to support us [...] and anyway he has a family of his own now' (Avo Amelia, elderly housewife, mother of 7 and petty trader, Usululi).

Francisca's situation mirrored that of many other women. She explained that the informal, low paid, insecure and unreliable nature of her husband's work compelled her to work for pay.

'[...] Every morning I have to go out to wash other people's clothes. I have to do it. Every month I get money to support my children for school. I cannot wait for my husband as his job is not permanent, and he sometimes has nothing. Its casual so I have to find something in order to support my school children's school fees' (Francisca, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, domestic worker, Harupai).

There are also findings showing how the impoverishing interaction between multiple inequalities interacting at different levels of the social ecology enforced women's domesticity and constrained their access to financial decision-making and family income - the preserve of men – critical elements for family welfare and survival - the preserve of women. A number of narratives suggest links between male unemployment and 'egoistic' family attitudes, the interaction of which contributed towards women's burdens and primary and secondary poverty in families in her community. For example according to Ella: 'Here in Usululi many men are unemployed but they also do not take responsibility to help the family' (Ella, Usululi). Discussants in a rural focus group too were united when they described the effects male rural unemployment and lack of income had on breadwinning masculinities including husbands' self-efficacy and sense of self-worth:

'Sometimes the reasons why husbands want to escape from the household

and hang around with their friends is because they are stressed and want to forget about all the family problems. For example they feel bad because there is no money in the house to pay for school fees' (FGD Tafara).

The are salient data bringing to the fore the relationality and interconnectedness between gender norms, roles and responsibilities with the wider context that generated specific dynamics, compelling maternal economic altruism. These included marriage inequalities interacting with the legacy of the conflict that thwarted breadwinning masculinities, as underlying the major drivers of secondary poverty seemed to have been a perceived need felt by husbands to counter the pressure on the breadwinning norm caused by male unemployment and informalisation of the Timorese economy. Many husbands were reported to be doing this by tightening their grip on family income irrespective of its source. For example the study is replete with cases of husbands engaging in financial autocracy, resource depleting recreational activities and other forms of 'traditional masculine behaviour' over which they still had some control and which women may have tolerated through their own perceptions of how men and women should be. Section 6.2 has already described the manner in which the widespread tendency for husbands to spend more time engaged in recreational activities than working - and using family income to do so - was driving women's families into further poverty and compelling altruistic responses from women. These data underscore the gendered consequences of conflict-affected male homosociality, which the data suggest were key sources of both family poverty and marital tension. Some participants saw boredom as a main problem owing to the lack of employment for their husbands which left them 'just sitting around doing nothing', spending too much time gambling and drinking with friends. With little or no work and 'nothing to do', husbands were conveyed as having too much time on their hands and so gravitated towards recreational activities, privileging their own desires and need for a social outlet to drown their sorrows over the practical needs of their families#. Alongside descriptions of husbands using family income to fund gambling and extra-marital sexual relations were accounts of widespread male alcoholism which appeared with remarkable frequency in every study site and identified as a key source of secondary poverty within the family and a trigger for marital GBV. Across urban and

rural homes and communities husbands were reported to be drinking heavily and on a routine basis. In their narratives, Alina, Armanda and Rosa made points raised by several other women in relation to the effects of male alcoholism on husbands' health, inability to work and provide for their families not to mention loss of earnings, the squandering of family income and marital tensions and violence. For instance Alina explained how the physically violent husband of her neighbour who rears a severely food insecure family: '[...] comes home drunk every night and the money that the Social and *Caritas* give the family, well he just steals it again and again and goes out to buy more drink' (Alina, Usululi). Sabina too described her husband as turning to alcohol when confronted with family hardships such as food shortages and to gendered violence when Sabina would request him to share with her the burden of care. She also blamed his lack of care for the family on his drinking, leaving her to shoulder most of the material and emotional consequences associated with family poverty. Rosa, an elected woman representative associated male drinking with family poverty and women's unequal burdens, all problems which she felt were not being dealt with by public officials as they were considered private matters.

'Here in this *suku*, the big problem is that men get drunk. Women are the only ones that work hard in the family. Drinking has been part of the culture. When it happens it has a terrible affect on the family's situation. When the husband is drunk he has no energy to work. So women have to do all the work alone. The xefi aldeia never talks about this because he thinks it is a family problem' (Rosa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

Like many others Armanda captured the cyclical relationship between the informal economy, male unemployment, alcoholism and lack of paternal care and their links with family poverty and her experiences of affective inequality. She highlighted the far-reaching effects lack of work had on her husband and children who she struggled to feed and send to school.

'In the past during the Indonesian time my husband worked for the Church and he earned money washing floors [...] but after independence he no longer works [...] and now he is sick and why? Its because he is always drinking that traditional wine [...] and the effect of his drinking, well we do

not have any money. I am the one who is always pushing him to help prepare the vegetables so we can sell them [...] I remind him: 'hey *katuas* [old man], you waste much money I earned from selling the vegetables; you just buy *tuak mutin* [wine] and drink with your friends; don't you think that we need to save the money so that our children can go to school?' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi).

There were other impoverishing consequences of strained breadwinning masculinities, 'paternal irresponsibility' (Kabeer 1994) and husband control over family income fuelling female economic altruism and exploitation. Many narratives characterised hegemonic Timorese masculinities and the behaviours of women's husbands as violent that most likely discouraged wives from either demanding financial support or challenging male financial autocratic and egoist behaviours, leaving wives with little choice but to take on paid work to make up the shortfall and take care of children's welfare. Gendered poverty, constituting the feminisation of affective and financial responsibility, inputs and burdens seemed thus to be constructed by the interaction between the legacy of Timor-Leste's past, emotion, culture and ideology. This generated wives' fear of husbands and also ensured that their maternal-conjugal complex role continued to follow the traditional cultural themes of female self-sacrifice, deference and altruism. Discussed in detail in the next chapter, this increased women's vulnerability and tolerance of domestic servitude, exploitation and their risk to GBV (England and Browne 1992 cited in Folbre 2012).

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has paid attention to the role poverty, gendered through the lens of motherhood, played in shaping affective and other forms of gender inequality. Fundamental to the organisation and survival of family life and to the social construction of gendered poverty experienced by women participating in the study were complex relational dimensions of gender intersecting with maternal cathexis and women's immediate context and wider environment. Not least was the role played by the gender division of labour distinguishing between market work, said to be the domain of men, and unpaid household activities that, following tradition, were performed by women. However women also had to work for pay to meet shortfalls in

household production, distributing large portions of their time and energy to labour-intensive paid as well as unpaid work. Whilst this suggests a relaxation of the male breadwinning norm that played a key part maintaining family welfare, the data gathered during the fieldwork do not convey symmetrical outcomes for women, first because rather than the ideals of gender equality, norm relaxation appears to be motivated by the dire need for women to address material poverty; second because of the unequal nature of women's paid work compared to men; and third because women's economic activities and generation of family income did not seem to bestow them greater power in their marriages or the wider household. Constraining the potential for economic and other forms of empowerment, women found themselves compelled to work for pay and surrender control over their income as soon as it entered the household, whilst continuing to be responsible for day to day physical, cognitive and emotional care work. Meanwhile the findings provided little evidence of husbands engaging in physical, cognitive and emotional care work. Women got no help from husbands who 'came and went' or did not live with their families. In husband-present families, irrespective of who brought in resources and who had the most time to do unpaid housework and provide childcare, women were expected to and did far more than men who were largely exempt from such work but yet continued to command authority and dominate the private sphere. Furthermore, the data suggest that the economics of women's families, meaning the way decisions are made and resources allocated - were not based on a unitary and collective model but rather a bargaining model (Lynch 2009a, p.12). Empirical evidence indicates that wives had less power than their husbands who headed up their families, dominated decision-making and escaped housework. Some variations or relaxation to aspects of this norm were found but like economic norms this was not driven by the values of gender equality. Where husbands performed housework, provided childcare or shared the burden of family survival with women it was usually out of necessity. This suggests that when the norm on the gender division of labour relaxed it did not produce a symmetric family setting. When reinforced by gendered power relations – resulting in asymmetrical marriage inequalities, the norm served to strengthen husbands' interests, helped them

control and dominate marital relationships and reinforced women's vulnerabilities and subordinated position as wives.

The most prominent dimensions of the labour construct affecting women's lives appear to relate to motherhood, gendered marriage inequalities, family responsibilities and caring arrangements, low paying jobs, job discrimination and material deprivations. This affected women's status in the family and their potential to gain economic independence. In term of gendered care relations, the labour construct interacted with the gendered structure of cathexis that involved the motivational aspects of care work and women's attachments and investments in mothering. The findings suggest that women as caregiving mothers and wives constructed their gender identity through motherhood. Women's care work was deeply rooted in their maternal consciousness which is both de-ontological and sentimentalist - operating as much out of love for their children as out of moral imperatives about duty, obligation, gender roles and ruled governed behaviour according to what was considered appropriate mothering and good quality care. The pressure women were under to provide this - in situations of poverty and most often without the help of husbands or the state - was enormous. Emerging as a major force shaping gendered poverty then was the gender construct of motherhood that, when interacting with inequalities in women's marital and familial environment fuelled the feminisation of responsibility and material and affective hardships. The findings convey poverty-induced stress as intense and endless and an aspect of motherhood from which women got no relief nor for which they got recognition, restoration or reward. There was a particularly strong sense in the data of gendered asymmetry in relation to the burdens and benefits of their love labouring and this emerged as one of the hallmarks of women's accounts of mothering. Whilst the vulnerability of single mothers to high levels of poverty and distress was a key finding in the study, so too was the vulnerability of mothers raising families headed by husbands. Highly significant therefore in shaping women's mothering, love labouring and encounters with poverty were their family circumstances, marital status, the presence or absence of their children's fathers and their family attitudes and caring practices of fatherhood. Many women felt aggrieved with the state of unequal

caregiving in their family lives and that their husbands escaped the levels and kinds of physical and emotional stress and strain women themselves were under. Men did not perform and nor were they expected to perform unpaid domestic labour including love, care and solidarity work. Despite the expectation of breadwinner income - men were also able to depart from these gender norms, whilst women were not able to disassociate from carework and caring especially for children. Furthermore women were expected to earn money and make up the short-fall in household production and address secondary poverty an outcome of marriage inequalities and husbands' control over their wives' labour and income.

The feminisation of responsibility and material and affective hardships were also fuelled by the interaction between gender norms and the conflict-affected context characterised by underdevelopment and informalisation. Women's provisioning and carework was physically gruelling and emotionally laden, the burdens and benefits of which were distributed unevenly between women and men and between some women. These inequalities were exacerbated by women's structural context and their social locations within it. Nearly every participant described high levels of maternal exhaustion and being beset by anxiety and uncertainty to the extent that this aspect of their daily lives emerged as a major sub-theme in the study. Grossly inadequate material resources, food insecurity and inadequate living conditions emerged as major stressors on women who were already afflicted by anxiety over uncertainties about their children's long term futures. Maternal distress was also associated with low paid maternal employment and subsistence agricultural work and family circumstances such as having responsibility for multiple dependants particularly small children, and with little family or state support. These had further negative impacts, adding multiple stressors and obstacles to the participants' ability to mother and provide quality care to intimate others. Furthermore, mothers' encounters with and experiences of such adversaries depended on their personal access to resources and their geographical location such as whether they were raising families in rural or urban areas or areas affected by war and political conflict. That women had little choice beyond the informal sector drove them to work hard and intensify their economic inputs to meet family

consumption needs whilst also reinforcing their association with the domestic sphere, especially childcare. This meant that this feminine economic norm became further ingrained in practice. An aspect of 'corporeal altruism' for low-income urban and rural women was their lengthy working days and the hours they spent not only in menial and hard physical low paid work, but also in fulfilling the expectation of housekeeping and motherhood in circumstances characterised by squalid slum housing, and a lack of basic utilities and infrastructure. The demands on mothers' time and energy in earning an income, putting meals on the table looking after children, washing, ironing and cleaning in such straitened circumstances had major implications for women's health and physical and mental well-being (Chant 2007b; Brickell and Chant 2010) and the social construction of gendered poverty.

Mothers' voices brought attention to the unequal distribution of burdens and benefits of their work that were advantageous to men. Their narratives link this problem to multiple inequalities inhering the patriarchal institution of motherhood and women's conflict-affected marital relations. The evidence associates the pressure the economic norm underlying the traditional breadwinner model was under with conflict-affected informalisation and male unemployment, the gender division of power that favoured husbands who abused their patriarchal marital privilege, allowing them to rely on and control women's labour, refuse menial low paid work and subsistence activities whilst maintaining control over family income to fund resource depleting leisure and recreation. Sabina's narrative below captures this point.

'When my husband got his veteran payment of about \$1,300 from the government, it was not enough to meet our family needs. I didn't get any of it. About half he used to build our house. If I ever ask him for money to buy food or detergent he would roar at me saying 'its mine not yours'. So I am the one who has to find the money to support my children' (Sabina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 7, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

The findings thus point to the need to consider assumptions about and the cultural interpretations of motherhood, gendered power, care norms and norms about femininity and masculinity as these condition the social relationships and structural

context under which affective inequality takes place. These data suggest the profound consequences affective gender inequality had on other gender inequalities surrounding women's condition, income, power and subordinated status in the family and married life (Okin 1989 cited in Lynch et al 2009b), key structural forces fundamental for inequitable marital relations and women's risk to gender-based violence. Like gendered poverty and affective inequality, GBV emerged with remarkable frequency throughout every site of the study. Within the paradigmatic context of marriage the following chapter turns to this theme, focusing attention on how power processes might be feeding into the web of GBV, creating violent gender relations and providing a mechanism for its perpetration leading women to cope and respond in different ways.

## CHAPTER 7 FINDINGS

### Gender-Based Violence and Marriage

#### 7.0 Introduction

Based on the fieldwork, the findings chapters in this thesis analyse what women's every day life experiences can tell us about gender relations and how these shape women's subordination and produce gender inequality. Where the intention in chapter five was to describe the characteristics and ubiquitousness of GBV in women's lives and how women dealt with it to make themselves and their children safe, this chapter aims to come to grips with the forces underlying these patterns. The key concern throughout is to develop knowledge about the role and influence of gender relations in the social construction of gender-based violence (GBV).

To do this the chapter draws on a gender relational-intersectional approach, exploring the underlying determinants and the wider structural circumstances under which gender-based controlling behaviour, oppression and violence against women took place (Allen and Ní Raghallaigh 2013; Cavanagh). This involves linking multiple contexts – the broader socio-cultural context, women's personal, immediate context, interactional processes and individual outcomes – into a single process, the social construction of gender (Ferree 1990; Thompson 1993). For example of interest are women's conflict-affected context and localities, their family circumstances and the manner in which their interpersonal gender relations became violent and determined their responses (Heise 1998; Kabeer 2014; Manjoo 2011; True). Few qualitative studies of this nature have been conducted in Timor-Leste. By unfolding the complex stories shared by participants during the focus groups (FGs) and interviews, the analysis focuses on their experiences of GBV in the specific context of marriage and family life whilst also extending beyond the dominant focus on marital and intimate partner GBV to include a fuller discussion of violence perpetrated by women's extended family members including brothers, fathers, sisters-in-law and mothers-in law (Gangoli and Rew 2011; Solotaroff and Pande 2014). The chapter also maintains an analytical

distinction between 'mother' and 'wife', where the mother 'role' involves caring for and nurturing dependants, and the wife 'role' requires women to be dependent on and subordinate to the husband (Johnson 1988, p. 33). This distinction serves the chapter's interest in the meaning of marriage and its intersection with motherhood in terms of how the hegemonic gender norms underlying motherhood shaped violence, how the patriarchal conjugal contract was also a fundamental organiser of gender in women's mothering and how like marriage, the institution of motherhood was a 'bearer of gender' (Elson 1999). This helps to understand how the intersection between maternal cathexis and marital cathexis might have been patterning GBV.

Though interconnected, the most salient components of marital cathexis – meaning marriage norms shaping gender roles and behaviours – were (i) women's emotional attachments and dependency on marriage and husbands and (ii) the Timorese customary practice of *barlaque*. Meanwhile the two principles of inequality underlying the social construction of women's investment in marriage and husbands were the (i) imperativeness of heterosexual coupling also known as gendered logic of marriage and (ii) the primacy of hegemonic masculinity, both of which found strength in gender divisions of labour and power (Connell 1987). Comprising four sections, the chapter is structured around these key inequalities. Section 7.1 briefly reviews marriage patterns featuring in women's narratives that also suggest an interdependency between kinship<sup>15</sup> and marriage.<sup>16</sup> Following this, sections 7.2 and 7.3 are both concerned with the major principles of inequality that had significance for the gendered logic and organisation of patriarchal marriage. Specifically, section 7.2 pays attention to 'son preference', whilst section 7.3 is concerned with the cultural devaluation of daughters' to the natal family. Finally section 7.4 explores the role the second principle of inequality fundamental to marital cathexis played in the social construction of GBV. This relates to hegemonic masculinities and its intersection with ideologies concerning

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15 Kinship is a universal phenomena found in all societies. It refers to a network in which people are related to one another through consanguine (biological) and affinal (marriage) ties that give meaning to marriage and reproduction through the formation of descent lines and social relations. It is an analytical tool or symbolic experience that is culturally, economically and historically constituted.

16 Marriage in this study is a sexual union between two people.

the public-private divide and sexuality. For analytical purposes and drawing loosely on Heise, I address women's socio-cultural, immediate and situational contexts separately within each section (Heise 1998; 2011).

### **7.1 Gender, Marriage and Kin**

Alongside motherhood, marriage emerged in the data as a universally prescribed destiny and the dominant and expected social arrangement for adult Timorese women, representing for them an important source of security and respectability. At the time of the study an overwhelming majority of participants were married. This is consistent with other research documenting the centrality of marriage as the primary organising social institution in Timor-Leste. Marriage existed in plural forms including companionate and 'love' marriage, arranged marriage, polygamy, elopement, remarriage and informal unions. The data are not precise but convey that most participants' marriages were informal unions. Two women had sought a separation from their husbands. In terms of kinship systems a very small minority of women living in Dili followed a matrilineal pattern in which a married couple resides with the wife's family prior to establishing a home of their own. The vast majority of participants in mid-and senior life conveyed having left their natal homes to reside in their husband's after marriage, rearing their children in extended family settings. Many had gone on to establish separate, economically independent households. Therefore the dominant kinship structure and marriage system in the four study sites appears to be patrilineal. Whether following the nuclear or the traditional model of the extended family, many women conveyed feeling isolated or cut off from their familial network, especially first generation urban women who had re-located from the districts to live with their husbands in Dili. Echoing patterns in other South-east Asian communities (Devasahayam 2009) there are also data suggesting that the post-marital residence of young couples from patrilineal kinship communities is flexible allowing them to establish a home of their own or live with or near the wife's parents. This was most often determined by family circumstances and relative economic opportunities (Bhagowati 2014). In terms of householding – those who actually live together – many urban women were running large households that were simultaneously nuclear and

joint, often taking care of in-laws and as an extension of filial duties – natal kin who had migrated from rural areas for work or to attend university. Consistent with Moore (1994 cited in Brickell and Yeoh 2014) who recognises that the household is porous rather than a bounded site, this reflects the flexibility of who lives with whom inherent in the bilateral kinship system characterising much of South-east Asia, as well as the changing structure of the family as children grow up, grandparents die, and socio-economic changes occur (Jones 2009).

The significance of marriage and the theme of emotional attachment and non-economic dependency on marriage appeared to dominate women's lives, dictating roles, responsibilities and behaviours that was based on Timorese gendered logic, gave primacy to hegemonic masculinity and demanded a multiplicity of corresponding emphasised femininities. To foreground the manner in which this took place, I first turn to data relating the gendered logic of marriage that appeared to be upholding a complex nexus between gender, marriage and GBV. I posit that kinship played a critical role in the social construction and sanctity of marriage and ingrained gender inequalities underlying women's violent relationships and everyday lives. The interdependency between kinship and marriage apparent in women's voices resonates with the earlier work of Siskind (1973 cited in Moore 2013) and Rubin (1975 cited in Moore 2013) who interpret these as powerful determinants of the way in which ideas about gender are constructed. Collier and Rosaldo too afford much importance to these two highly politicised gender constructs, the analysis of which they consider a first step for understanding the cultural conceptions of gender. They argue that kinship and marriage provide the mechanism through which productive gender relationships, rights and obligations are structured on the one hand and 'ritualised statements' about perceived gender interests and competitive claims are established on the other Collier and Rosaldo (1981). This significance of kinship for the cultural construction of gender in everyday life is consonant with data found in this study and the anthropological literature (Fox 1980; Hicks 2004; Trindade 2009; 2015) discussing the manner in which in Timor-Leste, the family, community and *suku* all revolve around kinship, the reproduction of which relies heavily on the institution of marriage and the customary

marital practice of *barlaque*. To bring meaning to the social construction of gender and GBV I present data relating to the two major principles of inequality underlying kinship and that had significance for the organisation of patriarchal marriage. These were: (i) son preference and (ii) the cultural devaluation of daughters' to the natal family. The data relating to these are analysed in sections 7.2 and 7.3 respectively.

## **7.2 GBV, the Gendered Logic of Marriage and the Significance of Kinship: Son Preference**

A salient dimension of kinship fuelling the sanctity of patriarchal marriage and women's vulnerability to GBV was the preferential treatment of sons based on an expectation of them to yield better financial returns for the family than daughters who would be an economic drain on the family because they will join another household upon marriage. This gendered logic was exemplified in data illustrating the gender stratification and deep-seated perceptions of the relative value and roles of boys and girls/women and men. It relied on ideas about the natural superiority of male over female, the acceptance in Timorese society of the belief that when men are born they are considered superior to women, and that women are born to be the second sex and hence subordinate. These ideas featured throughout the study. Several participants identified this as patriarchy, describing it as ubiquitous, as having always existed in Timor-Leste and blamed women's suffering and feeling of powerlessness on the hierarchical relationship between women and men which some viewed as unchanging. For example:

'[...] when a child is born, if it is a boy it's considered the first child whereas the daughter will always be seen as the second child' (Rosa, 50s, EWR, Marobo).

'When I was born, patriarchy already existed. It has gone before me, it was always with us, for generations. Patriarchy in Timor-Leste exists in the family and in the places we work. It is everywhere in our communities, families and everyday lives. I do not know why this is so' (Eldina, middle-aged wife, mother and NGO worker, Usululi).

'In my opinion women suffer because our customs and ancestors live on: for the Timorese it is customary that men have more power than women.'

Men are always in the first place and women are in second, third and fourth' (Cedaliza, 30s, single mother of 3, Usululi).

There are data suggesting the presence of strong patrilineal and patrilocal marriage norms enforcing inheritance patterns favouring sons and male responsibility for the continuity of the patrilineage.

### **7.2.1 Gendered Inheritance**

In relation to the first patriarchal 'household strategy', Timorese inheritance practices were explained to me by one of my Timorese colleagues who found incomprehensible the notion of herself or daughters more generally inheriting family land and property given the expectations on them to permanently leave home to join other families on marriage. Her explanation resonated with that of many women participating in the study such as Eldina, a former refuge worker who explained that:

'Sons continue to inherit family property according to the patrilineal system. Daughters are entitled to nothing. This is because the son is to continue the name of the family for the next generation and will also farm the land. It's the man's family name, not the woman's, that children will continue. So that's why our ancestors believe that power and property must remain with sons – to continue the lineage. The daughter when she marries leaves her family and goes to her husband's family' (Eldina, Usululi).

The data suggest that the resilience of customary inheritance norms favouring men played a key role shaping women's experiences of GBV and what can happen to women during and after violent marriages. Their interaction with the patriarchal socio-cultural norms obliging wives to reside with the husbands' family bolstered husbands' power to do as they like in terms of marital and post-marital behaviours whilst constraining women's agentic capacity to respond to GBV. Fernanda's immediate situation below also reveals how a combination of complex kinship and marriage power dynamics, family honour and maternal altruism compelled her to accommodate husband authority at the end of her marriage.

Fernanda was a deserted housewife. She had never confronted her husband about his

adulterous or violent behaviour or when he transferred the family home to their eldest son without her consent or knowledge. This left her to shoulder the financial consequences of abandonment and rear a large family of young children alone without secure tenure of the marital home. The data suggest a number of forces compelling Fernanda to remain silent and comply with her husband. She did not convey an awareness of her legal rights with respect to husband support and inheritance. Given her gendered subjectivity and subordinated position, she might not have considered herself entitled to and also have feared retaliation for questioning her husband and male privileges including infidelity and customary inheritance of land and property. Disrupting the status quo and jeopardising family honour might have placed Fernanda in a precarious position given the myriad of social inequalities that existed inside and outside her marriage. Fernanda had fraught relations with her sisters-in law whose position yielded them significant power compared to Fernanda's subordinated married-in status. These women were unwilling to acknowledge the harmful effects of their brother's infidelity for which they blamed Fernanda. A particular concern for her was the official status and position one sister-in law held on the suco council which she depended on for material support to feed and send her children to school. She hitherto felt powerless and suffered maternal anxiety as her name had been omitted from the food distribution list which severely aggravated food insecurities and acute family poverty. Thus it is possible that Fernanda's observance of restrictive practices to not challenge her husband was such a crucial element in the fulfilment of her maternal roles and responsibilities, that she resisted breaking the social rules and remained silent, even if observing the rules produced for her other insecurities. Underlying Fernanda's stance were complex gender and social relations – gender difference between husband and wife and social relations which differentiates between those who are inside or outside a certain family or lineage. I argue that Fernanda like other women, was reacting to the social expectations of wives to protect the family honour, of mothering and the gender structure and broader context of disadvantage in ways that would not jeopardise her children's immediate welfare. She did exhibit resistance to her husband however by publicly displaying her suffering and dissatisfaction in the

FGD at which her sister-in law was present and also by disclosing her experiences to me. Ambivalent femininities characterised Fernanda's stance and response as, whilst she drew mostly on 'compliance' strategies following abandonment and breach of her inheritance rights, there was some evidence that she combined this with resistance.

### **7.2.2 Male responsibility for the continuity of the patrilineage**

Further maintaining kin through son preference was the second patriarchal 'household strategy' designed to maintain kin which was through grandchildren and the financial support and care provided by sons to parents in old age. Interacting with male power structures, the strength of this norm manifested in a number of ways. These included mothers' tolerance of GBV from young sons, the lengths mothers went to protect their bonds with married sons, grandmothers' efforts to gain informal custody over grandchildren, the emotional ties sons had with mothers that were sometimes stronger than with their wives and the tensions between daughters and mothers-in law that reinforced the subordination of wives and increased their vulnerability to GBV. The interaction between the norm resulting in son bias with male power structures shaped women's immediate and interpersonal context also pitted generations of women against one another (Kandiyoti 1988). These are major findings of the study and are analysed in detail in the sub-sections below. Following Heise, I elaborate on how gender norms intersecting with women's interpersonal relationships, family setting and impoverished circumstances fed into a web of coercive control of women and increased their vulnerability and constrained their responses to GBV.

#### *7.2.2.1 The Mother-Son Dyad*

A great many participants acknowledged that woman-on woman GBV was a serious issue in their communities with a number of participants describing that they had suffered at the hands of their own mothers-in law. The findings from the study provide concrete examples and practices of violent mothers-in law enforcing oppressive gender structures and standards by maintaining a vigilant hold on women in subordinate positions and exerting power and control over many aspects of their daughter-in-laws' lives. Whilst the data are limited and do not provide a nuanced picture of inter-

generational family relations, what they do point to are the strong inter-generational power asymmetries affecting women's marriages and vulnerability to multiple forms of GBV. Inequalities between generations of women intersecting with gender also constrained wives' responses to GBV. Commenting on specific African contexts, Okome has described how 'women are not an undifferentiated group, and there are degrees of hierarchy that are manifested in socially specific ways between individuals, men and women alike' (2003 cited by Moore 2015).

In Timor-Leste women's power is redefined by marriage. In patriarchal society, a wife who marries into a family assumes a subordinated position, a position that does not rest on gender but on 'outsider' status, more precisely on the intersectionality of lineage status, seniority and gender. Similar to other research contexts (Moore 2015), findings in this study show that power in the Timorese marital relationship was managed from inside as well as outside the marriage. Unlike the nuclear family model which is limited to fewer adult members, in in-law, extended and joint-family settings – not unusual for married life in Timor-Leste – there were members other than husbands affecting women's marriage relationships. Every participant living in a joint-family setting experienced marital and in-law GBV, the latter of which was also experienced by a few other women living in close proximity to their in-laws. All persuasively conveyed how the web of authority and collective control and abuse rendered them powerless when faced with constant harassment from mothers-in law acting together with their married sons and in some cases other family relatives who were at times fathers-in law but most frequently sisters-in law. Participants reported that their mothers-in law were generally aware of the GBV their sons subjected them to yet tolerated it and were unwilling to acknowledge the harmful effects of it on other women. Instead of supporting wives to stop the violence, mothers-and-sisters in law intensified it by condoning and legitimising it or were implicated in the violence themselves, directly assaulting the women.

In this study, the cultural norm was for joint virilocal families, an arrangement that senior Timorese women were invested in. Mothers-in law exerted considerable power

over women's family and marital relations. Participants typically depicted their mothers-in law as domineering, controlling and demanding and many told me how they deplored relations with them, frequently ranking these alongside other serious problems in their daily lives such as terrible living conditions and problems with 'violent and cheating husbands' (FG discussants, Harupai). Some mothers-in law participating in the study also considered themselves entitled to the control, authority and deference accorded to elders in general in traditional East Timorese culture. Household work and earning an income, women's marriages and intimate relationships with their husbands, family size and child custody were mentioned as the main domains where participants had the most interaction and conflict with their mothers-in law. The theme of women's family and marital relationships is discussed below.

Drawing on Kandiyoti's seminal paper (1988) on women's strategies and coping mechanisms in the face of different forms of patriarchy, I now present analysis of participants' accounts of the gendered politics of family life, their relationships with these older women, focusing on everyday ideas and processes of power in the domains of intimacy, paying attention also to women's descriptions of complying as well as resisting the patriarchal bargain and mother-in law authority (Shih and Pyke 2009).

All of the participants who reported experiencing mother-in law violence also experienced marital violence and mothers-in law were also said to be inextricably linked to violent gender marital relations. Mother-in law behaviour involved interfering in their relationships with their husbands and contributing to the breakdown of their marriages. Rew et al suggest that this type mother-son dynamic goes to the very heart of the patriarchal bargain, obstructing wives' ability to develop a strong and loving relationship with their husbands, bring forth an egalitarian role for themselves in family decision making and participate in the labour market, ultimately reinforcing norms concerning masculine economic independence and the control of women (Rew *et al* 2013). In this study mothers-in law controlled participants' family and married lives by regulating women's intimacy with their husbands, protecting their own relationships with their sons, building oppressive alliances with other family members, and intruding

into decisions pertaining to women's labour, financial autonomy, reproductive decision-making.

Participants depicted mothers-in law as self-serving, dominant and cruel. Mother-and daughter-in law relations came across as tense and fraught with conflict. They were complicated by the close connection mothers had with their sons and the practice of mothers-in law thwarting the development of intimacy between their sons and their wives. The following quote illustrates what was viewed as a fairly common scenario and practice of mothers-in law, amongst other female relatives, obstructing privacy and regulating wives' interactions and intimacy with their husbands (Rew *et al* 2013).

'It is because when we live with his family, like with our mother-in-law and sister-in-law, sometimes they do not look after their daughter-in-law and they discriminate against us. For example if the wife wants to talk to her husband, well the mother-in-law and sister-in-law will always block the way' (FG discussants, Harupai).

A significant finding in the study was the powerful effects the mother-son bond had on participants' marital relations and the role it played upholding the patriarchal bargain, supporting mothers-in law to protect their economic and other interests and ensure them the benefits accrued to them (Gangoli and Rew 2011). In Anarilha's case: 'My mother-in law and ex-husband are still one voice' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged urban mother of of 8, Usululi). In her narrative Anarilha cogently captured the close bond her ex-husband had with his mother, a point made by other participants experiencing the 'mother-in law' problem. This is evident in all of the cases I present below which depict the sheer lack of power wives had in their relationships with their husbands and mothers-in law. What also emerged from these findings was the ways in which everyday power dynamics present in the coercive mother-daughter-in law relationship fed into and were legitimised by a web of violence that included emotional and physical violence (Rew *et al* 2013).

Felicianas' narrative was dominated by accounts of a violent mother-in law who inflicted on her severe levels of cruelty and harassment, collaborating with her married

son and other family members. She described incidents where her mother-in law deliberately drew her son into the violence and where her husband also wilfully supported his mother and sister's violent behaviour. Feliciana described how violent situations would worsen when: [...] my husband arrived on the scene, he joined in with his family against me' or when '[...] my mother and sister-in law got involved and started shouting abuse at me. It was really bad and they all wanted to beat me up'. The powerful effects of the mother-son bond and the years of constant scheming, bullying, torment and severe violence led Feliciana to experience suicidal ideation and finally pushed her to attempt suicide.

'My situation was so terrible that I wanted to die. My mother-in law, my violent husband who was always gambling, they all made my life intolerable. It was like my mind was blinded by the situation. I wanted to kill myself' (Feliciana, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

Mothers-in law were also said to have instigated and fuelled the break-up of women's marriages and been instrumental in souring relations between participants and their extended family. For Julianna:

'The ways my mother-in law treated me were horrific. You cannot imagine how she got into so many parts of my life. She turned his entire family against me. None of them speak to me any more. It is terrible. She lives next door' (Julianna, housewife late 30s, mother of 6, businesswoman, Harupai).

The close connection Alcina's mother-in law had with her married son also acted as a mechanism of power, feeding into Alcina's experiences of husband and woman-on woman GBV which characterised her first marriage, the break-up of which she believed was instigated and fuelled by her mother-in law. Meanwhile, Avo Amelia, possibly Alcina's mother-in law, also conveyed to me the influence she had over her married son and the power she yielded that resulted in the break-up of his marriage. The quotes confirm these findings.

'I asked my son to separate from his second wife and he agreed to do so'

(Avo Amelia, elderly housewife, mother of 7 and petty trader, Usululi)

'So my mother-in-law spoke to my husband [...] That is why my first husband threatened me and also turned against me. He didn't like me any more because he was influenced by his mother-in-law's opinions' (Alcina, housewife, young mother of 4, Usululi).

Inter-generational power relations were also interwoven with ethnicity and class dynamics and also heredity. Some of the women experiencing problems with their mothers-in-law explained their situation as relating to power and status hierarchy and their poor family backgrounds. For example as a form of abuse Alcina's mother-in-law, aware of her impoverished background frequently insulted her about her family of origin. Anarilha also cited as one of the sources of tension her impoverished family background and origins in the mountains. She believed her husband and mother-in-law were violent towards her and treated her the way they did as: ' [...] I am not a beautiful woman. Because I am from the district...My mother is from Ainaro and I come from a very poor family compared to my mother-in-law. We are very poor' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged urban mother of 8, Usululi). In Feliciana's case, her parents-in-law invoked ethnic discrimination, as she explained: 'His mother and father rejected me. They said it was because I was Javanese...His father said that I was not a good woman, that I was like some sort of witch or a ghost' (Feliciana, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

Female in-laws, especially mothers-in law and sometimes sisters-in law were also found to sabotage wives' attempts to resolve marital disputes, resist the violence, challenge husbands and take direct actions against them. As well as intruding into women's intimate lives and playing dominant roles in the breakdown of their marriages, they also their power to obstruct women from seeking protection or prevented them outright from leaving violent relationships. When wives confronted marital GBV they met retaliation from female in-laws, indicating an intolerance amongst women for alternative femininities via female active resistance to violence, flying in the face as it were of traditional constructions of Timorese femininity. All of these factors acted in concert to undermine women to overcome GBV and increase

their vulnerability to re-victimisation. Feliciana's case presented below illustrates these points.

Feliciana was from Indonesia. She had married into a Timorese family and conducted several years of married life in a joint-family setting. She drew on a combination of resistance strategies to escape and end her husband's relentless beatings. Feliciana did not convey engaging the formal criminal justice system to convict her husband or end the marriage but she reported the violence and sought support from the suco council and Fokupres and on several occasions she fled the home for extended periods. She also attempted to take her own life. The data convey that she faced a number of barriers when seeking resolution and protection and when trying to stop the violence, not least the interaction of her gender with her in-married outsider subordinated status particularly as a foreign but also as an Indonesian person living in Timor-Leste during and after the war. In this and other similar cases, gendered relations of marital power extended beyond husband and wife to include a larger number of marital kin. Consequently inequalities between Feliciana and her husband were reinforced by the actions of several women acting outside the marriage, namely her mother-and-sisters-in law from whom she received no support and who were unwilling to acknowledge the harmful effects of the violence. Furthermore Feliciana conveyed a number of incidents where female in-laws collectively engaged in intimidating behaviour intended to prevent her from confronting her husband and seeking help and protection. Using physical force, they obstructed her from fleeing the violence and also forced her to return to the family home despite knowing about the brutal effects of the violence. When she called a family meeting with the suco council to address the violence in her marriage, Feliciana was reliant on the willingness of her husband and his family to cooperate and respond in a positive way, given the involvement and power of outsiders in the marriage arena. Instead of peaceful dialogue and engagement in the customary mediation process she was met with retaliation from her mother-and-sister in law. Using intimidation and threats of physical violence they sabotaged the mediation process as: '[...] they were angry that I brought my case to the xefi suco and xefi aldeia [...]'. Though she was aware she could make a formal complaint to the police and take a

case against her husband, Feliciana did not report doing so. In addition to the racialised context in Timor-Leste where income poverty was also a gendered phenomenon, underlying her reluctance to separate from her husband might have been fears of further retaliation from her mother-and-sister in law, not only in the form of violence but also child abduction. In this study, mothers-in-law were frequently depicted as having a special interest in retaining informal custody of their grandchildren, especially upon the end of their sons' marriage. The data suggest that fear of losing custody of her children was an important factor explaining why Feliciana remained in a violent marriage. Her narrative was dominated by descriptions of child snatching and fighting off repeated attempts at having her new born infants and children away from her by her mother-in law who on one occasion:

'[...] physically forced me and tried to take my baby away. I reacted telling her that this was my baby. I was the one that had carried this child. So then there was pulling and shoving between the two of us, the both of us trying to get the baby. I did not allow her' (Feliciana, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

#### 7.2.2.2 *Child Custody*

Bui argues that a woman's reluctance to take action against a violent husband can stem from a number of reasons (Bui 2004). Data in this study indicate that kinship and marriage norms and the presence of children interacting played a key role patterning women's responses to GBV victimisation in complex ways (Davies *et al* 2008). For instance it appeared that women stayed in violent marriages out of fear of losing informal custody of their children. This finding conveyed the strength of inter-generational power asymmetries between women which detained women living in joint-family settings in violent marriages. Threatening to take custody of children emerged as a powerful strategy used by mothers-in law to intimidate their sons' wives and exercise leverage around the gender division of unpaid labour. Fear of losing custody of her children to her husband and mother-in law was an important factor explaining why Feliciana remained in a violent marriage. Such was the outcome of the dissolution of Alcina's violent marriage, a young mother of 4 children also from Dili. She did not convey confronting her mother-in law or ex-husband's violent behaviour or

taking any customary or formal action against her husband. Throughout her narrative Alcina cogently described harsh mother-in-law violence that included threats to end her marriage and assume custody of her grandchildren all of which unfolded to become painful realities for her. She revealed the trauma she suffered at losing guardianship of her children the moment her ex-husband ended their marriage only to re-marry soon after a woman chosen by his mother. Evicted from the in-law family home and rejected by her natal family she was destitute. Years later her mother-in law continued to obstruct Alcina from seeing her son and two daughters, highlighting the seniority and control assumed by female in-law family members and the power they yield over other women even after desertion and dissolution of the marriage. Though Alcina did not convey the reasons, the data point to several underlying factors why she did not confront her ex-husband about his violent behaviour, seek support from the suco council or report the violence to the police. Notable in Alcina's narrative was the detrimental effect the strong mother-son bond had on her marriage. It is possible that this relationship impeded Alcina's capacity to engage in dialogue with either perpetrator. Aspects of Alcina's gendered subjectivity – as a subordinated wife – might have been further reinforced by the accusations and castigating remarks made by her mother-in law about both her natal lineage and integrity as a woman. Also it is plausible that her mother-in law's intimidating behaviour and threats to assume child custody terrorised Alcina into silence, compliance and protecting the marriage. Underlying this form of woman-to-woman GBV was the seniority and control assumed by her mother-in law and her position of power in the family. Along with a strong mother-son dyad this position enabled her to yield significant control over Alcina's relationship with her husband whose violence towards her she also fuelled on an on-going basis. Notable in this complex intractable dynamic was her husband's lack of support. Thus Alcina might have found discussing her maternal fears and marital tensions with her husband or instigating customary mediation with the suco council impossible. Also compelling her to 'comply' with her husband were her views of male GBVAW that attributed her husband's violence to his mother's influence. Finally it is plausible that besides child custody, also on Alcina's mind were issues concerning

housing. Unlikely to have considered herself entitled to the in-law family home post-separation it is possible she feared homelessness which would have had disastrous consequences for her ability to mother and ensure the welfare of her small children. That mother-in law GBV and women's fear of losing custody of their children could be an important factor explaining why women remained in a violent marriage indicates the powerful nexus between gender, kinship, marriage, motherhood and GBV.

### **7.2.3 Family Survival and the Vitality of *Emā Laran-Emā Liur* (Public-Private Divide)**

There are data suggesting gender ideologies relating to the public-private divide played an important role in maintaining kinship via son bias. For example there is evidence of the gender division of labour excluding sons from the drudgery of domestic work and long hours of childcare coverage expected from daughters. As Ivete from Harupai explained: 'My daughter is very active from early morning [...] On the other hand when my eldest son comes back from school, he eats and then goes for a nap' (Ivete, housewife in her 30's, mother of 7, Harupai). It was also maintained by male power as fathers were found to enforce norms that differentiated between masculine and feminine tasks and distributed the volume of unpaid work to girl children: 'My daughter is always the one helping me with the housework. My sons do nothing and its because their father won't allow it' (Silvina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 3 children, Tafara). Zelia, Maria and Ella were frustrated with the extent to which son preference existed in their families, describing how their brothers enjoyed far greater amounts of free time for education, recreation, unrestricted physical movement, greater access to family resources such as money for education, transport and greater discretion over their own income. When it came to parents investing in education, the data suggest that there was still a tendency to prioritise sons and whilst this existed across rural and urban areas it was more common amongst poor families. Discussed further below, Laura, a rural EWYR related this to the weight of social norms that required daughters to meet the family need for unpaid labour at home, limited expectations of girls beyond marriage in a context of entrenched intergenerational poverty that led to early marriage for daughters.

Participants also conveyed mothers-in law as having a special interest in enforcing the public-private divide and using GBV to do so. Kandiyoti suggests that by domesticating their daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law reinforce male privilege, striking a 'patriarchal bargain' as a way of protecting their own interests and furthering their own power (Kandiyoti 1988; Shih and Pyke 2009). In this study, the 'patriarchal bargain' was upheld by a division of labour between generations of women via coercive mother-daughter-in law relations and culturally and habitually embodied abusive practices. These relations and practices aimed to control the domestic labour of women – who married-in to their husbands' natal kin – and ensured that their work came under the management of other female family members including sisters-and-mothers-in law but particularly the more senior and older women. This arrangement privileges mothers-in-law with a site to maintain power and a presence and influence in their adult son's marital life. In assuming the role of household manager mothers-in-law both promoted the idea and expectation that daughters-in-law assume responsibility for household tasks and also influenced a more gender-polarised division of labour in a couple's marriage. When a daughter-in-law did not behave in a docile way, or implement her mother-in-law's directive by conforming to the traditional intergenerational division of labour she was seen to undermine the power of the mother-in law with serious consequences for her. Traditional constructions and actual domestic work arrangements between generations of women mirrored the traditional gender division of labour and were also said to rely on the cultural marriage practice of *barlaque* which was invoked by both generations of women participating in the study. Reflecting on the concept of an emotional economy of entitlement, obligation and gratitude (Hochschild 1989; Shih and Pyke 2009) I consider what participants' descriptions of these feelings can tell us about ideas and insidious processes of power, powerlessness and control in women's lives. For instance I interpret situations in which respondents described feeling coerced into doing housework, obliged to bear more children or feeling resentment at having to endure the presence of the mother-in law in their lives as indicative of powerlessness or less power. Constituting a culturally specific form of the 'patriarchal bargain', control over women's labour, and autonomy within marriages was maintained by the harsh

discipline and punitive treatment that mothers-in law meted out and that also extended to the use of emotional and physical woman-on-woman violence. Examples from the data illustrate some of these points.

'[...] at this time I worked like a slave in both the house and the kiosk. My sister-in law didn't behave in a very friendly way, undermining me. They treated me like a slave and then lied to me to intentionally mess up my own plans to improve my situation [...] they thought I was nothing, treated me in an unfair way. They did whatever they wanted to me' (Emilia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, waged worker, Usululi).

'Fataluku culture says that the men cannot do women's jobs. If they do then the husband's sister will get angry with the wife. And when the sister-in law gets angry then there is big trouble' (FG discussants, Marobo).

'I started to suffer first because of my mother-in law. When my child was still small or even when I would have just had a new baby she would make me wash all the laundry, cook food for the pig, do everything around the house. I suffered because of my mother-in law until the day she passed away' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai).

The next extract from the narrative of a mother-in law provides an example of the sense of entitlement that arose from female authority and the role these women played enforcing traditional constructions of gender roles and practices. This involved married sons working in the public domain fulfilling the role of 'breadwinner' and co-residing daughters-in-law working inside the home focusing on the family and dominating reproductive tasks. In the extract below we see how, through varying degrees of domestic servitude, mothers-in law played a major role fortifying the gender division of labour in the household, obstructing women's ability to participate in the labour market. Playing the role of 'patriarchy's female deputy' (Stacey 1983 cited in Shih and Pyke 2009) they reinforced the notion that domestic labour is the ideal form of wifely duty and that the traditional gender division of labour was a form of gender equality, to be controlled and enforced by mothers-in law themselves. Angela explained:

'I divide up the chores between husband and wife. Between my sons, daughters and daughters-in-law. I put my system in place, not theirs and I control and regulate them. Why? Because I see that in this village when

men go out and work hard, and do hard physical labour like building houses, women do nothing. They just sleep and don't prepare a thing. And what happens to these women? Violence happens from man to woman. So that is why I see that there are no controls in place in the household to regulate things between wife and husband. If other families would only do what I am doing right now I think things would work out for them. Things would be fine because things would be equal between women and men' (Angela, 60s, Usululi).

Meanwhile, the following account provides insights into Anarilha's experiences of household work arrangements and domestic servitude under the management of her mother-in-law, Angela. Maintained by coercive mother-daughter-in law relations and culturally and habitually embodied abusive practices, the intergenerational division of labour present in Anarilha's married life fed into a horrific web of violence perpetrated by her husband and his mother.

'For ten years I lived with my husband and his mother. During that time my husband did not consider me his wife. He thought I was an animal, a slave. My mother-in-law also treated me like an animal and a servant. I just always went about my chores quietly [...] I suffered two miscarriages. One in 1992, because of so many rapes at the time and also the heavy workload [...]. I could not rest up during the pregnancy or even when I was experiencing the miscarriage' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged mother of 8, Usululi).

Though the data are limited, participants were eager to represent mothers-in law as abusers or associate them with psychological and physical violence. Mother-to-daughter-in law violence was very clearly depicted as extreme, severe and wrong. However, it should not be assumed that participants remained silent about the violence on grounds that few women experiencing husband GBV and no woman experiencing mother-in law GBV reported their experiences the authorities. They reported it to me, the researcher, who they possibly identified as the safest means of exposing the violence in their lives. This in itself was an act of resistance and a refusal to maintain the shroud of silence that existed around husband and mother-in law violence in Timor-Leste.

So far this section has illustrated the relational and intersectional character of the

social construction of GBV that was shaped by the interaction of gender ideology, marital norms and power relations. These were fundamental to household strategies designed to maintain kin and operating within women's interpersonal relationships and family settings. To bring further meaning the relationality and intersectionality of GBV, the next two sub-sections explore the complex nexus between kin, marriage and GBV beyond women's immediate environment, focusing on its salience at the level of the 'community and institutions and systems' context.

#### **7.2.4 Family Survival, Honour and Gendered Shame**

Despite the high rates of gendered violence found in all four study sites, just two women told me they left a violent relationship and separated from their husbands with only a minority stating that they had engaged the criminal justice system or sought support from their suku council and specialised services such as the local refuge. All of these women were living in Dili. The findings suggest that motherhood and the cultural significance of having children and for women to bear children in conflict-affected Catholic Timor-Leste made women vulnerable to GBV. For example Agrafina faced harsh psychological violence perpetrated by her husband including involvement in extra-marital sexual relationships. As part of the web of violence, he constantly evoked the normative prescription in Timor-Leste of having children – preferably sons that was also an expectation of a fulfilled marriage. Furthermore Agrafina was made to feel ashamed and bear the brunt for the couple's failure to establish pregnancy even when the problem could not be traced to any reproductive malfunctioning on her part. This itself is GBV.

The data convey that gendered shame and ideas about family honour exerted a particularly powerful influence on women's responses to GBV. They also suggest that the manner in which 'Timorese' 'Catholic' society revolved around the family kept women in violent relationships. The actual presence of children in women's lives appeared to influence women's vulnerability to GBV victimisation (Davies *et al* 2008). The data convey that the powerful intersection of gender with maternal ideology

expecting women to be caring, other-centred and altruistic played a crucial role in the social construction of SGBV (Davies *et al* 2008). Underlying Anarilha's vulnerability, responses and continued victimisation was a mixture of feelings of shame and personal humiliation in relation to her children finding out about the violence and fears about its affects on their emotional welfare. Anarilha, was a separated, middle-aged mother of 8, avoided exposing her children to physical violence her ex-husband continued to perpetrate against her. She suffered deep maternal anxiety, one source of which was the emotional damage, public humiliation and shame GBV could cause her children who attended Mass in the community, a practice which Anarilha associated with respectability. To avert exposing them to the physical beatings she was forced to quietly comply with her ex-husband's sexual demands which she defined as marital rape.

Instead of support from formal and informal networks, all participants who had separated from violent husbands described suffering stigma and emotional abuse inflicted by natal families, neighbours and their wider community. It is unsurprising then that women still in violent marriages appeared particularly concerned with trying to avoid marriage breakdown and losing husbands, even if they were violent. Their narratives demonstrate the powerful effects religion, culture, internalised oppression and power differences had on them, where they accepted whatever situation they found themselves in order to keep their husbands, maintain their marriages and protect their families. Women also conveyed working hard to stop the violence in their lives, managing complex dilemmas associated with it. This required a range of 'resistance strategies' such as maintaining privacy, protecting the integrity of the family and marital relationship through silence, tolerance, normalisation and minimising GBV. Victim blaming, a potent way of silencing women, was also consistently identified in participants' responses to GBV. This resonates with research conducted in other parts of Asia where the importance of family honour and cohesion is strong and where women carry great influence in determining the good name of the family and maintaining family status and reputation (Gill 2004). Because of deep-rooted culture and values, women experiencing victimisation therefore often feel shame and a need

to maintain silence to preserve family honour (Cavanagh 2003; Gill 2004). Following Bradby this study views honour and shame as too central to be glossed over since they are 'the glue that binds the victim to obligatory silence, a product of the 'natural law' of human moral obligation' (Bradby 1999 cited in Gill 2004). It understands honour as status, precedence and reputation (Vandello and Cohen 2002 cited in Gills 2004) and honour codes as highly gendered, as norms for men emphasise toughness whilst for women the honour code dictates modesty, shame and avoidance of behaviours that might threaten the reputation of the family. Ideals of family loyalty and feminine sacrifice feature prominently in cultures where honour is important (Gill 2004). Meanwhile shame, the counterpart to honour, is a social emotion, a painful feeling about oneself as a person. It 'refers, most simply, to the loss of honour' and needs to be considered as a social project beyond the personal and the individual (Feldman 2010). Data in this study suggest that relations of honour and shame framed women's choices and responses to GBV. Particularly in rural study sites where GBV was described as widespread yet vastly under-reported to the police, women appeared to be under tremendous pressure to protect the integrity of the family and marital relationship and thus remain in violent relationships, despite the threat of or actual harm (Gill 2004). In one focus group family integrity and privacy dominated the majority of discussants' rationale for silencing debate even if some were eager to raise the issue in greater detail. Women seemed adamant not to present their family in a negative way, preferring to safeguard the reputation of their marital relationship and their community. Across urban and rural sites, in individual interviews too, shame was discernible in women's body language and the way they communicated their experiences of violence to me via whispered tones. Feeling disgraced and humiliated by their husbands' adulterous and violent behaviour, urban women like Catarina, Fatima, Fernanda and Filomena could barely utter accounts of their experiences, seeking my assurances that their testimonies remain anonymous. Out of a combination of ignominy and fear of reprisals other women too conveyed a concern for protecting family and personal privacy. This helps to explain why most participants describing victimisation never reported the violence to the authorities and kept it to themselves

and from friends and family. For example Filomena's experiences of marital violence took place behind a façade of respectability. Throughout her interview she repeatedly sought reassurances from me that her story remain confidential. Her narrative was dominated by a combination of painful feelings in relation to the personal disgrace and humiliation at her husband's extra-marital affairs. She also had fears about bringing public shame on the family that risked further physical violence, abandonment and poverty which discouraged her from ever reporting the beatings to the authorities. Filomena seemed hopeless. She saw no escape from her violent marriage and did her best to maintain her own dignity and prevent further abuse by protecting her husband's reputation. Also she had her children's material and emotional well-being to think about, issues which she felt did not concern her violent husband. Meanwhile the level of strain Catarina was under to manage GBV by maintaining privacy around it was palpable during the interview.

This young mother was rearing a family of eight small children in overcrowded living conditions in close proximity to neighbours whose calumny she feared would bring disgrace upon the family and trigger further abuse. Throughout her narrative Catarina downplayed the brutality of the violence her husband inflicted upon her whilst also conveying attempts to hide it from her neighbours, relations with whom were already made tense by overcrowding and fraught negotiations over access to a communal water pump. She alluded to feelings of humiliation and shame and seemed resigned that she might never escape her violent marriage. The most she could do was maintain her own dignity and prevent further abuse by not bringing attention to her husband's violent behaviour and protecting his reputation. Furthermore Catarina distanced herself from her natal family who advised her to leave her husband, choosing instead to preserve family cohesion and the integrity of her marital family particularly now as she had so many children to care for.

The data convey that ideas about family honour exerted a particularly powerful influence on the avenues open to elite urban women experiencing GBV. Eldina the former front-line service worker in a Dili-based refuge explained that in Timor-Leste,

elite women were very often rendered silent about their experiences of GBV by their obligation to sacrifice themselves for family honour and for the good of the marital relationship (Al-Khayyat 1991 cited in Gills 2004). She explained that, whilst having the money and knowledge to access information and legal support services, urban elite women frequently remained trapped in violent marriages owing to their fear of exposure that might threaten respectability and bring shame on their husbands – who were often of high professional standing – and on the status and reputation of their in-law and natal families.

### **7.2.5 Family Survival, Honour and State-Led Responses to GBV**

To bring deeper meaning to the social construction of GBV and further explain such patterns as why some women did not report violence to the authorities or leave violent husbands, this section focuses on other characteristics of women's localities, specifically the interaction between marriage, motherhood and family norms at the level of 'community, institutions, and systems' (Solotaroff and Pande).

Fundamental to how women responded to GBV also was the manner in which GBV laws and policies were implemented (Solotaroff and Pande). For example the findings indicate that underlying women's silence and reluctance to report the violence was a fear of further victimisation, of having their experiences minimised and of not being believed or taken seriously. There is evidence to suggest that patriarchal socio-cultural marital and family norms structuring social practice were constantly interwoven in the institutional environment and patterned GBV in highly complex ways (Heise 1998) including the manner in which customary leaders, the PNTL and *suku* council officials especially EWRs responded to GBV.

According to the narratives, *suku* council understandings, definitions and attitudes towards GBV bore little meaning and relevance to the experiences reported by participants, signalling that this institution and its key officials elected to promote gender equality appeared as an obstacle to women engendering safety and discouraged women from taking action against violent husbands. Elsa, an EWR,

explained that standard responses were based not on women's subjective experiences but rather council officials' personal understandings of GBV who followed an intervention model, concentrating on individual couples, violent incidents, reconciliation and family unity:

'[...] When a family experiences domestic violence, we explain to the husbands that marriage is not about wives serving them [...] It is up to us as we know exactly what domestic violence (emphasis my own) actually is and which couples are fighting with each other. [...] To share the information, we don't organise community meetings. We just go from house to house to speak to couples that we know are fighting in the hope that they will stop' (Elsa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5 and EWR, Tafara).

Most references to the *suku* council approaches to GBV focused on maintaining the honour, integrity and privacy of the family and community, whilst minimising and normalising marital GBV itself. Approaches were reported to be based on commonsense distinctions between 'serious' forms' and 'normal or routine violence' and between GBV that occurred in women's homes and that took place in public. According to Emilia and many other women, the type of GBV typically reported to the formal justice system was severe physical violence. Their narratives conveyed that seeking support from the police was only permissible or legitimate in situations of 'violéncia grave', when acute bodily harm, such as broken bones, severe bleeding, and open lacerations had occurred. This minimised '*violéncia baibain*' (normal or routine violence) suggesting that less overt physical harm was not damaging to women, was not a crime and should thus be tolerated. EWRs in both rural study sites also confirmed that only in extraordinary circumstances, such as 'serious' cases involving '*violéncia grave*' would the *suku* council consider it necessary to refer a woman's case to the police. As Rosalina explained:

'When a woman discloses, I always explain that unless I have actually witnessed the violence myself, then I won't support her by calling the police on her behalf. And at that, how I respond also depends on whether the violence is really serious. If the woman is bleeding, then I will refer the case to the police but otherwise we usually try to solve the problem using the traditional way with the *lia nain* or the *xefi suku* and *xefi aldeia*' (Rosalina, married, young mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

Normalisation can be explained by local understandings of GBV as family violence and thus a private matter to be dealt exclusively by the couple and male family members. During a discussion related to male alcoholism, GBV and family poverty, Rosa, an elected woman representative (EWR), expressed concern that violence against women was not taken seriously by male community leaders who she believed viewed the effects of men's violence and heavy drinking on women and their families as not a socioeconomic problem or a crime but a 'family' problem beyond the remit of the state. (Rosa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, EWR, Marobo). Even though they were aware that a law existed in Timor-Leste making GBV a public crime, excluding Rosa most EWRs depicted it as a household matter and normal part of everyday married life to be dealt with in private by husband and wife. However GBV taking place in public was deemed unacceptable by one particular suku council and warranting attention from law enforcement agencies. Eliminating or resolving conflict between 'couples fighting in public' was considered a priority. As Elsa from Tafara explained:

'The result is that they don't dare to fight in public again. I don't really know whether domestic violence continues in their homes but I don't see it happening in public anymore' (Elsa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5 and EWR, Tafara).

Underlying leaders' intolerance for 'public' GBV in Tafara were personal concerns that it reflected badly on their ability to fulfil their institutional mandate to promote peace and maintain social order in the community. They feared 'fights' between married couples witnessed in public would damage their reputation, credibility and the trust people in the community had in them as elected representatives. By contrast, violence which took place in women's homes was far less of a concern for the suku council. Tolerance was justified on the basis that as a private matter, it would eventually be resolved by the 'fighting couple'.

'If domestic violence happens inside the home, well maybe that is OK because they'll forgive each other in time. But if it takes place outside the house, where neighbours and other people can see, then we feel very ashamed and feel useless as no-one in the community will trust us anymore' (Elsa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5 and EWR, Tafara).

In some study sites there was a propensity for EWRs and other council officials to repudiate the very existence of GBV in their *suku*, contradict women's testimonies and deny their subjective experiences. In individual interviews in an urban site a number of participants expressed dismay at the manner in which EWRs dismissed women's disclosures of GBV in a focus group organised by this study. In Tafara there was also a tendency to maintain the long standing shroud of silence around the prevalence or even existence of GBV. Elsa normalised and downplayed GBV throughout her narrative to the extent that she denied the need for the council to implement policies and practices intended to protect women from GBV. After all, the integrity of the family, council and community was at stake. As she explained:

'[...] In reality domestic violence has reduced in our community so we never have to give the telephone numbers of the PNTL to women. Anyway the police here have mouths like crocodiles' (Elsa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5 and EWR, Tafara).

In a key informant interview, the *xefi* of *suku* Tafara expressed the view that GBV was not a problem in his constituency. It simply did not exist, contrary to evidence conveyed by the vast majority of discussants in a FG from the same *suku*, all of whom remained too fearful to discuss their experiences of violence with me in any detail. It is possible that such attitudes and actions deterred women from taking any formal action and led to an under enforcement of laws and policies related to gender and violence.

The study found further evidence of blatant disregard for existing laws and mechanisms to enforce them, a key systemic risk factor for women (Solotaroff and Pande 2014). Over and over it was explained to me that women are generally discouraged from seeking support from law enforcement agencies and instead advised and expected by both the *suku* council and their families to reconcile with violent husbands. Meanwhile, where 'fighting couples' are unable to reconcile their differences, the woman's family intervenes to mediate a conciliatory outcome or refer the case to the *suku* council when agreement cannot be reached. In this instance,

'normally what happens is that the *xefi aldeia* obliges the couple to sign a letter obliging them not to fight again. If domestic violence recurs, then,

irrespective of the injuries, the council refers the case to the police' (Rosalina, married, young mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

There is evidence to show that patriarchal norms were sanctioned by the family and social institutional systems when women attempted to end the violence (Boonzaier and de la Rey 2003). Though accounts describing customary mechanisms to address marital disputes and GBV varied from site to site, apparent in all was the dominance of men and the absence of a role for women and an opportunity for them to participate and maintain control over processes, decisions and outcomes concerning their violent relationships. Usually involving the participation of the woman's father and male members of the *suku* council, specifically the *lia n'ain* and the *xefi aldeia* or *xefi suku* interventions responding to women's disclosures were also said to prioritise the family over gender justice. As explained by Elsa:

'Women in this *suku* never go to the police if they experience domestic violence, even though they all know the PNTL emergency number. Normally, the way it works here is that the case is dealt with by the *suku* council who decides if and when the case needs to be referred to the police. If the violence takes place in public, then the *xefi aldeia* brings the woman to us, the elected women representatives, and we mediate between husband and wife. The *xefi suku* also provides advice and counselling. We never inform the police' (Elsa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5 and EWR, Tafara).

Aware that outcomes disempowered women and exposed them to re-victimisation, a number of participants were dissatisfied that customary mechanisms addressing GBV were dominated by men and by institutional collusion with the family. Emilia, an employee of a *suku* council, was adamant that outcomes reflected an acceptance of male violence against women. She argued that the traditional practice of compensating the abused woman's natal family was not woman-centred, did not guarantee women justice and could be sabotaged by men who accepted male violence towards their wives. She cited the example of her colleague – the *xefi suku* who was the father of an abused woman who refused to accept financial compensation from his son-in law. He also did not refer the case to the police. Although the data are limited, it is possible that underlying his decisions were efforts to maintain his own public standing and the

honour of his family and views that considered GBV both acceptable and a private matter, rather than a public crime. These accounts reveal the unequal social relations underlying the lack of opportunity for women disclosing victimisation to exercise their own agency in their attempt to deal with the violence.

This kind of dismissal and denial of GBV found particular strength in the requirement not to disturb the patriarchal status quo including unequal social relations found to engender formal institutions themselves. Further evidence of men's violence against women being tolerated and kept quiet by the suku council was provided by a number of participants in key positions who, when problematising council commitment and competency in addressing GBV, remarked on the absence of substantive matters concerning GBV on the agenda of monthly meetings or programmes of action. Amongst others Carmeneza, an elected woman youth representative (EWYR) explained how she was flatly refused the opportunity to raise the issue of SGBV on behalf of young unmarried women or lead a discussion intended to address the hardships faced by abandoned mothers living in her *suku*. She was blocked by the *xefi suku* on the grounds that her involvement in discussions concerning such a sensitive matter was inappropriate and thus nonpermissible, given her status as an unmarried young woman herself. Carmeneza conveyed that, were such issues as SGBV and unplanned teenage pregnancy ever to be dealt with by the *suku* council it would be exclusively by its more well established members – elderly men – even if Carmeneza herself a council official was closely connected to her constituency, acutely aware of the problems they faced and confident that she could advocate on their behalf. In this case the subordinate position of the EWYR was based not only on Carmeneza's gender and age but also her 'newness' as a non-traditional institutional actor. Rather than address GBV the position served to silence this very serious problem in the community.

The study discovered that fear of institutional collusion with the family served to silence abused women. It found two cases where women did not take action out of fear of retaliation from council representatives who were also members of their husbands' family. One case provided by Anarilha is presented below.

Despite serving a prison sentence for GBV, Anarilha's ex-husband continued to subject her to rape and physical violence long after his release. She decided not to report him to the police again, engage the traditional justice system or seek support from the *suku* council. Her decision was based on the failure of law enforcement agencies to protect her and a fear of retaliation from her ex-husband and his mother. In her narrative Anarilha conveyed the strong bond between the two, seen in the tolerance his mother had for her son's adulterous and violent behaviour throughout her marriage. Instead of intervening or protecting Anarilha, the more senior woman was also implicated in the violence, intensifying it, condoning and legitimising it. She also subjected Anarilha to GBV herself with intimidation and severe physical beatings escalating after her son's release. She also did not convey an intention to report her mother-in law to the police or how to seek protection from her. Anarilha told me she was too terrified of both to report her ex-husband to the authorities. She was rendered even more powerless by the fact that her ex-mother-in law held the position of elected woman representative on the *suku* council and was a well known public figure and a veteran woman of elite standing in the community. Given the power inequalities underlying Anarilha's subordinated status – vis-a-vis elite institutional actors and as a daughter-in law – it is plausible that alongside retaliation, she also feared not being believed or supported by members of the *suku* council. Anarilha's lack of power and the lack of social support were important factors underlying her circumstances. She neither trusted the effectiveness of the council, the police or the court system in preventing and protecting her from her husband.

Evidence of state collusion with GBV and disregard for existing laws and mechanisms to enforce them was also found in the responses of the police. Rather than a formal source of help, this component within the criminal justice system appeared to have created impediments to women seeking protection (Menjivar and Salcido 2002 cited in Hayes 2013). Participants who had reported GBV to the police were in a minority and an even smaller number told me they had attempted to use the court system to seek redress. All continued to be at risk of GBV re-victimisation. Anarilha, the only participant to have voluntarily left a violent marriage did not experience a clean break

from the violence as she continued to face severe physical and sexual abuse inflicted by her ex-husband. Based on her experience working in a Dili-based refuge, Eldina, stated that for many women, leaving violent husbands was not synonymous with the cessation of the abuse as they continued to be at risk of some form of harassment or continued physical and psychological violence by their ex-partners. Reports conveyed the intervention of the PNTL as mostly ineffective, as they did not provide women with proper assistance. Echoing research elsewhere (Bui 2001) the problematic and inadequate approach of the police to women's experiences of GBV included lack of response and failure to arrest violent husbands and failure to believe women's stories. In the example below, police seemed to deem women unworthy of protection services, deny that the violence was actually occurring and were thus colluding with male violence.

Inacia was a separated housewife and mother of 4 children from Harupai. She and her family were in dire need of immediate protection as she had witnessed her husband conduct sexual relations with his adult daughter. He also inflicted on Inacia harsh physical beatings. She was refused mediation and any other kind of support by the *xefi suku*. Initially the police refused to register her case, turning her away on two occasions. On the first, officers accused her of petty jealousy and lying. They advised her to 'cool off' and to return home to her husband who continued to inflict horrific violence. The second time the police told her they had 'more important' cases to deal with such as the attempted assassination on the then President of Timor-Leste, Ramos Horta. It is possible that the *xefi suku* and the police officers might have considered GBV as a private matter rather than a public crime and believed in husbands' right to chastise their wives.

Echoing the accounts of other women who had sought protection from the police, Lourenca too described how the police failed to provide her with information, consult her about her safety needs or initiate a criminal justice process to protect her from further violence. Like other participants reporting marital GBV to the police, her husband was held for 72 hours and then released without any forewarning or

consulting with her regarding the safety of herself and her children.

'The only action the police took was to put him in jail for 3 days. They then released him without any warning, any explanation about what to expect or any follow up. [...] I waited for police to contact me, ask me what I wanted, but they never did. My husband just appeared home. Just like that! I was not happy with the way the police dealt with my case' (Lourenca, housewife, 30s, mother of 5, Harupai).

Meanwhile Rosalina an EWR explained that in her rural constituency women were reluctant to engage the police or the court system based on fear of reprisal, should the criminal justice system fail to provide adequate protection. This might also have been one of the reasons why EWRs were so reluctant to refer abused women to the PNTL. These accounts suggest that PNTL responses to GBV were dominated by an incident-based approach that did not prioritise women's safety and failed to capture the complexity and social structural forces perpetuating GBV such as the ongoing nature of power and control underlying violent marital relations. As Rosalina explained:

'The problem with calling the police is that when the man is released [...] he beats his wife even more because he is upset that the wife called the police for protection [...] This is why wives are afraid to call the police when domestic violence occurs' (Rosalina, married, young mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

Resonating with Bui, as well as fear of possible repercussions and a lack of trust and social and formal support, the data suggest that women's reluctance to take action against violent husbands stemmed from a lack of knowledge and unfamiliarity with the criminal justice system (Bui 2001). This was evident in data depicting an absence of relevant information and support from the *suku* council and law enforcement agencies. In all four sites, the study did not find women to be informed or fully aware of their rights, entitlements or processes with respect to formal mechanisms intended to support them seek redress and protection. Ever before seeking refuge in a safe house or becoming familiar with law enforcement, Feliciano unaware of the criminal justice system endured years of gendered violence. As she explained:

'I never went to the police. I just kept silent. I don't know why. I just

continued to stay in the house. It never entered my head to go to the police. But when the violence got very bad it was to Fokupres that I first went to for help. They that told me about the police and that I could take a case against my husband' (Feliciana, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

Referring to the obstacles that women face when attempting to prevent, end or escape GBV, Eldina opined that the same resources available to middle-class East Timorese women were typically not available to poor women, and so middle class women she felt were sometimes better able to resist violent husbands as they were able to connect with more services and sources of information. Based on her experience working in a local refuge in Dili, she highlighted that accessing information about rights and acquiring relevant knowledge was especially difficult for women disadvantaged by their personal situation including economic background, low levels of education and illiteracy. Rural data indicate that older women and Fataluku speaking women living in rural areas who did not speak Tetum tended to lack knowledge about the criminal justice system and that this was largely attributed to limited advocacy support, women's lack of time, childcare and transport and to husband control that often acted together to constrain women's access to networking and sources of information. This point is well captured by Rosalina in her narrative below:

'Just like husbands prevent women from getting involved in business or taking out a loan from the NGO, they also won't allow their wives participate in any public meetings. That's why we think women's participation is so low especially the very women who experience domestic violence. Women are too busy with all their jobs and anyway their husbands won't let them go because they are suspicious' (Rosalina, married, young mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

The lack of information and awareness constraining women's agentic capacity to respond to GBV can be explained by the absence of *suku* council initiatives and grassroots women-centred community development approaches to end gender inequality in all four villages (personal observation). Though there is some evidence to show that events disseminating information about GBV had taken place in Marobo and Tafara, public outreach and coverage to remote areas remained poor. These were

generally organised by district and national level Timorese NGOs operating with limited resources to support women's participation such as childcare and transport (personal communication October 2012). Meanwhile there were no reports of public outreach disseminating GBV information having taken place in the urban *sukus* of Usululi and Harupai. Instead and though accounts varied from *suku* to *suku*, rather than implementing community-based approaches aimed at prevention and providing practical information to support help-seeking behaviour, standard approaches followed by *suku* councils tended to lean towards an intervention incident-based model, concentrating on individual couples, reconciliation and family unity.

Women's agentic capacity was further constrained by poor physical infrastructure characteristic of women's conflict-affected localities – and women's poverty and lack of personal assets, placing severe restrictions on rural women's ability and means to establish contact with and travel to the nearest hospital, police station or safe-house to report the violence and seek refuge and protection. In Tafara for example, the data suggest that the sheer lack of public transport and wives' lack of ownership or access family transport limited their ability to access markets to sell agricultural produce or report abuse to the nearest police station. Eldina specified that even when aware of the criminal justice processes, women experiencing GBV from economically deprived backgrounds still found it far more difficult to escape and report violence as they did not have enough money to pay for necessary costs such as legal fees and transport to refuges, police stations and the courts. That women generally had limited access to cash was a major finding in the study, not just the result of marriage inequalities and occupational segregation but also the lack of state-led initiatives addressing family poverty and women's economic disadvantage and disempowerment. These were issues raised over and over by participants as major factors contributing to gendered poverty and inequality.

To conclude this section, the data presented reveal several common patterns among participants in terms of their responses to GBV. First, disclosing the violence to others, either to authorities, myself or to those participating in the research process, was

'anathema' to many (Cavanagh 2003). Feelings of shame and fear dominated most of narratives related to GBV and participants frequently found it difficult to articulate their experiences. In many cases, having uttered that GBV existed in their lives was about all women could do, as they appeared to want to forget about the violence, 'move on' and avoid releasing further emotional victimisation. As Gill points out, to 'tell' or name the violence is to put self above the family, a violation of the social hierarchy. In Asian cultural traditions by making public something that is felt ought to remain private invites shame and dishonour on the family. In this study, maintaining privacy by remaining silent appeared to be an important strategy employed by women for 'managing' the violence as this protected the integrity of their family and marital relationship. However whilst honour and shame served as a protective strategy, they also posed as a barrier towards reporting gendered violence to the authorities, a move that might have helped end GBV in participants' lives. I posit that as women might have had less access to and trust in the justice system, they relied on the former as a mechanism for their protection.

Second, there was a tendency for some of the women to normalise GBV, present their violent relationships in a positive light, and/or convey hope that they could change their husbands' behaviour. These responses are derived from cultural expectations of women as primary caretakers of relationships and responsible for their success or failure (Hochschild 1983 cited in Cavanagh 2003). The combination of maternal altruism and the feminisation of obligation and duty to ensure family cohesion and marital integrity was a major finding in the study where the vast majority of women experiencing victimisation were doing their up-most to perform their roles as mothers and meet the needs of their children, make their marriages work and maintain family unity. Husbands' violence could reflect badly on women and be seen as women's failure to protect the family and sustain the marriage (Cavanagh 2003).

Third and resonating with Solotaroff and Pande ineffective and poor implementation of laws, policies and mechanisms that focused on the sanctity of the family rather than gender justice go some way towards explaining why women were reluctant to take

action against a violent husband and compelled to remain in violent marriages. There is evidence to show that in every study site *suku* councils and the PNTL tolerated, legitimised and colluded in GBV. This tolerance relied on the strength and resilience of socio-cultural norms relating to the sanctity of family and on traditional constructions of femininity such as acceptance, sufferance and endurance. Reinforcing the subordination of women and ignoring the influence of marriage inequalities, customary and formal interventions were characterised as dominated by men, lacking in support for women, whether attempting to come to terms with the violence, prevent further violence to make themselves and their families safe or end violent relationships by separating from husbands.

### **7.3 GBV, the Gendered Logic of Marriage and the Significance of Kinship: Daughters'**

#### **Lack of Value to the Family**

The other major principle of inequality underlying the dominant kinship system appearing to fuel women's marital attachments and vulnerability to GBV was the cultural devaluation of daughters in the natal family. Like son preference, the data suggest that this salient dimension of the gender-kinship-marriage- GBV nexus still prevailed in Timor-Leste for social, cultural and economic reasons. Women's narratives are replete with evidence suggesting that teenage and adult women internalised oppression and sense of differential worth and that this was partly influenced by the inferior status afforded to women and girls in the natal family. This served to accentuate the powerful effects of cultural norms underlying women's intangible ties and investment in the ideals of marriage that is often depicted as resulting in a forced dependence on the role of the wife as the basis for the respected position in society (Marsden 1978).

Many women described their natal family as a site and system of private patriarchy where men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby 1990) and where different forms of GBV were used to maintain female subordination. For these participants GBV was a routine feature of growing up and included excessive gender-based parental-controls, physical violence, verbal insults, humiliation and emotional denigration and strenuous work which extended to domestic servitude favouring male family members. The data suggests links between girls and adolescent women's experiences of GBV and their cultural devaluation and subordination in the household and relative status in the natal family hierarchy. Broadly, this nexus was underpinned by the interaction between two dominant gendered ideologies critical for maintaining kinship and marital cathexis. First was the public and private divide prescribing appropriate roles, responsibilities and behaviours to women and men. The second was related to the ideology of sexuality and concerns about women's virtue, pre-marital chastity and virginity, values which are considered fundamental to a girl's personal and family honour in Catholic Timor-Leste.

### 7.3.1 Kinship and the Vitality of *Emā Laran-Emā Liur*

In relation to the first, gender ideologies interacting with norms upholding how daughters should behave encouraged multiple forms of female altruism and service to the family. For example in Zelia's opinion '[...] women tend to be more conservative, helping out with the family but the men, they don't really care. I don't agree with this situation' (Zelia, 20's Tafara). Notable in the study was the weight of responsibility and important role female children and adolescents played in supporting family survival and collective wellbeing. There was evidence that women internalised these 'caring' expectations with some expressing mixed feelings of obligation, pride and self worth. Female affective and economic altruism engendering care was often accompanied by deference and obedience, and other norms of emphasised femininity such as modesty, reliability, respectability and honour. Ella traced her deference to her mother-in law and emotional commitment and service to her marital family back to her childhood, a period when she was proud to support her parents by selling vegetables and running the household, roles which she placed high value on and also identified as love and care work the performance of which was not expected of her brothers. Ella felt duty-bound and indebted to her parents for bringing her up. Since her brothers would take care of them in their old age, she felt obliged to contribute financially whilst still husband and child-free. Expecting to permanently leave the home to join another family on marriage, she considered herself as a 'short-term member' of the family. Thus Ella choose not to continue her studies as she viewed this as a waste of resources and income better spent on the family rather than herself.

Gender norms expecting female affective and corporeal altruism translated into commonly accepted gender roles and divisions of labour that defined sociocultural stereotypes, standards and patterns of behaviour for daughters such as the 'dutiful daughter'. Reflecting on her childhood, Marciana who was 19 presented herself as a caring and 'dutiful granddaughter' when, as a small child she ' [...] would go to school on an empty stomach and give my grandfather the food my grandmother gave me' (Marciana, 19 years, high school student, Harupai). She also described herself as being obedient, selfless and always fulfilling her domestic chores. She did not question

parental control over most aspects of her life although this may have been out of fear of retribution in the form of harsh punishment from parents who were aggressive and violent. As she explained: 'Whatever they ask me to do, I just do it. I never say anything. [...]. Whenever I do something wrong, my mother gets angry, roars and shouts abuse at me' (Marciana, 19 years, high school student, Harupai).

Every young participant living with her natal family was responsible for and juggled large amounts of housework with their studies on a daily basis. This helped households run smoothly but also trained and equipped daughters with skills needed to comply with the traditional gender division of unpaid labour as a wife and mother. In her narrative Ivete expressed gratitude towards her daughter who said she: '[...] makes sure my other children get fed. She already knows how to feed the small ones [...] She knows everything' (Ivete, housewife in her 30's, mother of 7, Harupai). Norms upholding women's service to the natal family also translated into situations of domestic servitude and the channelling, control over and exploitation of women's unpaid labour via GBV. Zelia and Veronica felt because they were more burdened with the bulk of care and housework, they suffered time poverty that limited their mobility and participation in education, vocational training and productive activities outside the home. Veronica described being assigned full responsibility for housework and also endured verbal abuse from family members when she could not complete her chores resulting in her having to discontinue her studies also an outcome of family poverty and her parents' prioritisation of her brothers' education. Meanwhile she got no help from her 'lazy' brothers who believed housework was 'girls' work' (Veronica, Marobo). Meanwhile Cesaltina a university student was expected to volunteer the bulk of her time to running her aunt's household and devote herself to taking care of her brothers. As well as facing inordinate amounts of housework which interfered with her studies she also endured brother-on-sister GBV, triggered when she was perceived to have transgressed norms underpinning gender roles, divisions of labour and acceptable forms of femininity that were key to sustaining the wider patriarchal regime governing the family arrangement. Where possible some young women used their agency to reject discriminatory practices detailed above. Cesaltina, Veronica, Zelia and Celeste all

problematized dominant gender ideologies and age and gender hierarchies that resulted in female subordination and unequal value placed on girls in the home. Even though Carmeneza saw nothing unequal about the division of labour between herself and her brothers, these four women were far less accepting of such practices. For example Veronica felt strongly about the '[...] need to change our situation in the household. Jobs and responsibilities must be shared [...]' (Veronica, Marobo) whilst Zelia asserted that: 'I think its better that everyone has equal responsibility in the home. The differences between us is that we as women help our family but the men just get drunk, go to cockfights. [...]'(Zelia, 20's Tafara). She also wanted other changes, like ' [...] if men are able to get an education, then so should women [...]' . Further she felt that even though 'women do have some freedom we are restricted by customary laws. I am concerned and sad about this situation. I want men and women to have the same rights' (Zelia, 20's Tafara).

Unwilling to tolerate the inordinate amount of housework and level of the control over her physical mobility and social interactions, Cesaltina left her aunt's home, and moved in with her brothers, her only remaining option, where faced similar levels of subjugation and discrimination that escalated into GBV. Celeste too was dissatisfied with the prevailing gender norms in her family and the limitations they placed on her ability to make decisions. Despite her fear of further violence she challenged the 'paternal dominance' of her father and brothers and refused to accept her subordinate status. She explained that over the years she had encouraged dialogue and exchange of ideas between herself and her father that resulted in a greater role for her in household decision making. She stated that feeling listened to increased her self-esteem. Notable was the role Celeste's agency played in transforming the prevailing patriarchal order. The findings suggest that a further key factor enabling transformation was her father's openness to dialogue and to egalitarian gender norms and alternative expressions of his daughter's gender identity. Celeste's own education and work in a youth-based NGO that spread a discourse of girls and adolescent women's rights might also have played an important role increasing her awareness of her potential agency and the fact that young women do not have to accept patriarchal authority.

Interestingly Celeste also drew on her agency to negotiate egalitarian intimate partner relations, determined as she was to ground her relationship with her boyfriend who she intended to marry on equality, love and companionship and carve out her transition to marriage on her own terms.

### **7.3.2 Kinship and Female Sexuality**

The second ideology critical for maintaining kinship and marital alliances and that was highly implicated in women's experiences of GBV related to female sexuality. This mainly concerns women's virtue, pre-marital chastity and virginity, values which are considered fundamental to a girl's personal and family honour and marriage prospects in Catholic Timor-Leste. In patrilocal and patrilineal familial contexts and where marriage is one of the key social institutions that defines status in society such as Timor-Leste, the guarding of such values often translate into the social control of daughters' sexuality and physical movements, serving to ensure their recruitment to other households via marriage, and also the reproduction of the household with the nexus of the community's social life. In this study control over women's freedom was enabled by a gendered relation of 'paternalistic dominance' enforced by coercion and different forms of GBV. The study found several examples of fathers and brothers controlling aspects of women's lives including their education pathways, physical mobility and interactions in the public domain. Now married and in her mid 30s, Emilia's natal family life had been dominated by men that enabled excessive father-control of her physical movements and limitations on her participation in public life enforced by harsh forms of physical father-to-daughter GBV. Such discriminatory practices however were not a thing of the past. Unlike unmarried sons, the tendency for unmarried daughters not to be permitted to travel to larger towns unaccompanied by male family members was said to prevail in rural areas and also in Dili, though to a lesser extent. According to Zelia from Tafara: 'Men have more freedom than women. Usually parents do not allow their daughters to travel outside the community or beyond suku Lospalos. Personally I think this is because of adat' (Zelia, 20's Tafara). Meanwhile Marciana, a high school student, described being controlled by her physically violent father who dictated her educational pathway and limited her social

interactions. She also had to contend with her mother's constant intrusions, monitoring and questions as well as suspicions and accusations of 'unchaste' behaviour with male friends. She wished that her mother would trust her and stop the verbal abuse.

Unlike her brothers, Cesaltina too endured excessive controls over her physical mobility in the public domain and had to tolerate constant monitoring of her movements, interactions with male students and suspicions of 'unchaste' behaviour. At the time of her interview she was living with her brothers who forced her to perform inordinate amounts of housework, monitored her phone calls, curtailed her interactions with university friends and generally restricted when and where she went and who she met and spoke to. They also inflicted on her psychological and physical forms of brother-on-sister GBV. Throughout her narrative, Cesaltina described and justified her brothers' violent and controlling behaviour. Underlying her responses was the cultural myth that women were in need of male protection. She frequently invoked the notion that views men as strong and active and women as vulnerable and passive and in need of male guardianship even if this required them to control many aspects of her personal life. For example:

'When my friends call me, my brothers force me to tell them who it is and then they make me hang up [...] So they won't allow me to hang out with them. They come and collect me from campus and then bring me straight home. This is both controlling and protecting' (Cesaltina, unmarried, university student in her 20s, Usululi).

In her narrative Cesaltina re-named her brothers' controlling and violent behaviour towards her, drawing on the 'dual identity' strategy that created a split between the 'controlling/bad brothers' and the 'protecting/good brothers'. Her strategy of presenting her brothers as 'controlling/bad brothers' enabled her to acknowledge the violence to me. But by presenting her brothers also as 'protecting/good brothers', she avoided depicting her brothers as abusive and constructing herself as a victim. She further minimised the violence by re-naming and 'down-grading' it from physical to psychological, initially telling me that her brothers 'beat her...', and later describing the

abuse as exclusively verbal and emotional and extending to coercive control over her movements and social interactions, a further attempt to minimise the violence. It is interesting that gendered discourses constructing hegemonic masculinity including narratives of male power and protection dominated Cesaltina's story. Initially she acknowledged her brothers' behaviour as abusive and drew on instrumental discourses, identifying it as an intentional and a functional means to exert control and authority over her (Dobash & Dobash 1998). In other words Cesaltina clearly acknowledged her brothers' behaviour as an expression of hegemonic masculinity and male authority. However she immediately went on to invoke other cultural discourses of masculinities as a way of rationalising the control, viewing it simply as a fulfilment of men's gendered roles and responsibilities that included the protection of women, as any brother would do in the absence of parents normally charged with protecting daughters.

'[...] I need to do everything in the house like washing floors because I am the only woman. And the other kinds of discrimination in my life [...] well my brothers kick me. They beat me because I am a young woman and they want to protect me as we live far from my father and mother' (Cesaltina, unmarried, university student in her 20s, Usululi).

Here Cesaltina drew on a parent-child metaphor to justify her brothers' abuse, describing how they took over the role of a parent and performed their 'protective' male role. There are several other reports in the study of the parent-child metaphor being invoked to justify parental control over daughters' physical mobility in urban and rural areas. Ussher *et al.* have argued that cultural representations of women as childlike have been used to exclude women from full participation in the public sphere (2000 cited in Boonzaier 2008). In Cesaltina's narrative, brother-on-sister protective behaviour manifested in coercive control. Authority is depicted as functional and serving her best interests – her personal security, living as she did in the capital city as an unmarried young adult woman without adequate guardianship, whether in the form of parents or a husband. Her narrative suggests a relation of 'paternalistic dominance' described as the voluntary acceptance of control and subordinated status in exchange for protection (Sultana 2011). Meanwhile the trigger for the brother-on-sister gender-

based emotional and physical violence, just like mother-in law and marital GBV, was Cesaltina's transgression of gender norms that resulted in the lack of enforcement of the gender division of labour that was a key element within the wider gender regime governing the family arrangement.

The data suggest that when norms related to pre-marital female sexuality were perceived to be transgressed by women, a certain stigma arose and was attached to them, labelling women as sexually active and thereby undermining marriageability and the prospect of *barlaque*. It was conveyed that women suspected of engaging in premarital sexual relations often faced social ostracism. Meanwhile couples once suspected of engaging in sex were considered married. This social recognition of marriage status serves to legitimate the sex act. The social stigma helps explain the informal and flexible use of marriage terminology – such as the ‘mini-marriages’ – at community level. It also helps explain the second main trajectory into marriage for young women, that of elopement, described by participants and communicated to me by Timorese friends during the field work. The study showed that the nature of this transition held several implications for women's vulnerability to GBV. There is evidence of social isolation, insecurity and stigma associated with pre-marital sex extending to forms of GBV. Women who had become mothers as teenagers, who had eloped and were later abandoned by their 'husbands' faced punitive treatment by parents, the wider community and teachers resulting in them leaving school early. In her narrative Carmeneza one of the urban EWYRs highlighted the torment and parental abuse unmarried teenage mothers in her constituency experienced citing stigma and shame they brought on their families. Single mothers Fatima from Harupai and Ermininia from Tafara testified enduring psychological GBV in the form of verbal insults when they returned to live with natal families who felt they had brought dishonour on them and diminished family status and reputability. Now 20 years old, Ermininia had her education cut short as soon as she became pregnant as a teenager. Soon after her twins were born she was abandoned by their father who she considered her 'husband' at the time. Her family never received *barlaque*. The data suggest, underlying her commitment to 'marriage' might have been her immediate economic and social

vulnerability given her natal family impoverished background and her fear of social isolation as the 'illegitimacy' of her sexual relations outside formal marriage would have damaged her reputation. Her elopement or informal 'marriage' may thus have represented a way for her to gain social as well as economic protection. Ermininia described her experience as not unusual in her community. Post-abandonment she moved back to live with her natal family where she experienced severe material poverty, social isolation and punitive treatment meted out by her mother but not her father. It is possible her mother, the principle guardian of her daughter's pre-marital chastity, may have perceived Ermininia to have lacked deference and transgressed cultural and social norms of femininity and sexuality that severely limited her barlaque and marriage prospects. Finally and in a context of severe family poverty aggravated by lack of social protection or any form of state support, her mother now had 3 additional mouths to feed. Ermininia's narrative and that of other participants accentuates the expected association between sexual début and marriage in Timorese society, and highlights women's vulnerability to abuses within these inequitable sexual gender relations. The data also signal the extent to which women are held responsible for their sexual reputations, regardless of the circumstances, underscoring the propensity to blame women for perceived sexual transgressions through the use of GBV against them.

Though the evidence is limited, it would seem that female altruism, virtue, pre-marital chastity and virginity, values which are considered fundamental to a girl's personal and family honour in Catholic Timor-Leste were guarded by older women and by men, young and old. In some cases the existence of the social control of young women's sexuality was undeniable, taking various forms including the perpetration of gendered coercion, aggression and violence. It is therefore possible that patriarchal marital norms that place high value on female virginity at marriage translated into strict-parental control over young women as a means of preventing norm transgression particularly as intimate relationships before marriage become more common in Timor-Leste and women increasingly encounter opportunities to engage in sexual relations. However control over young women could also be interpreted as a reactionary form of

paternal and maternal dominance in exchange for protection against SGBVAW, where childhood, adolescence and early adulthood were shown by the data to be high risk periods for rape, molestation and sexual harassment. For example in urban study sites, discussants in a FG reported rape of girls and teenage women by older married men to be a very serious problem in their community. Mothers constantly feared for the personal safety of daughters on the streets of Dili which were described as spaces occupied by aggressive male sexual predators. Hence the restrictions imposed on daughters' physical mobility.

### **7.3.3 Kinship and Family Poverty**

Young women's subordination and GBV victimisation also resulted from the interaction between economic norms and norms about marriage in a context of family poverty and wider gendered economic opportunities favouring men. This was said to lead parents to invest less in daughters' education given the expectation that sons would yield better financial returns for the family and daughters would be an economic drain on the family because they will join another household upon marriage. There was a sense from the data that motherhood, marriage and relationships with men had been viewed by women as a way out of poverty, a more reliable route to material security for a young woman and her natal family. Some participants experiencing marital GBV had transitioned at a young age to marriage that was arranged. Now in the mid-stage of a polygamous violent marriage Olympia was forced by her parents as an adolescent woman to marry a man at least ten years her senior. The data suggest that early arranged marriage of daughters still exists in Timor-Leste. Eldina who worked with female survivors of GBV believed early and arranged marriage had the propensity to increase women's vulnerability to GBV.

'Even if the daughter is intelligent, if the family is poor, her father and mother will just marry her off to some man in order to get some money. I have seen this happen and I see that it causes inequality for women. That's how she ends up unable to continue her education' (Eldina, Usululi).

Even though some urban women felt early and arranged marriage was no longer a widely accepted norm and practice, findings also suggest that change was not even

across all socio-economic strata and geographic areas of the country. Elisa from a rural aldeia noted that in her community it was not uncommon for adolescent girls to still be subject to marriage at an early age, arranged by parents, leaving them little choice in their timing or marriage partner. Young women from extremely poor families were said to come under pressure to enter relationships for financial security with older men for whom natal families Elisa felt had little regard for their character or propensity for GBV. This in effect turned adolescent rural women into commodities that pass from being owned by fathers to being owned by husbands. The data suggest that local conditions interacting with marital norms and cultural practices of barlaque and breadwinning masculinities influence the decisions impoverished families make regarding the early marriage of adolescent daughters. Husbands, as both breadwinners and the bearers of barlaque, are thought to offer women and natal families the prospect of financial security. As Elisa explained:

'When a woman is forced by her family to marry a rich man, or a man with lots of buffaloes, it affects their relationship during the marriage, like domestic violence happens [...] I think this situation still takes place here in my village, poor families forcing their daughters to marry [...] though the men are already old' (Elisa, housewife, mother of 6, community volunteer Tafara).

The data so far suggest that Timorese kinship and family norms are strong, clearly favour men and find support in gendered ideology, socialisation, rules and sanctions, keeping male-female power differences in place. Critical for maintaining kinship and creating the institutional foundation for the highly gendered family norms were prevailing beliefs about the public private divide and women's sexuality placing adolescent women in less powerful positions and increasing their vulnerability to GBV. Son preference interacting with marital norms and practices were considered by many participants harmful to young women's capability development. They felt they led parents to undervalue daughters and perceive them as an economic drain on the family because they will join another household upon marriage, and to withdraw them from school in favour of early marriages as a conduit for gaining wealth. The fact that husbands were older and better employed than their wives was thought to enable

them to exert more power and control often resulting in GBV. Although limited, the data suggest that the existence of a sub-culture of norms, attitudes and practices which implicitly accommodate cross-generational sexual relationships and promote early marriage among adolescent girls increases their vulnerability to GBV.

These findings underscored how gender ideologies and marriage norms interacting with social and economic interests in women's natal kin reinforced unmarried daughters' subordinated status and increased their vulnerability to GBV. These also shaped the intersectional dimensions of marginalisation for women's transition to 'marriage' and risk of victimisation. There is evidence to suggest that discrimination and violence permeating adolescent women's lives also increased their risk to GBV later on in married life, as young women's transition and commitment to 'marriage' was sometimes conveyed in the study in terms of a response to paternal patriarchy and parental control and violence against daughters. Consonant with Solotaroff and Pande's assertion that multiple life-stage forms of violence can occur any time from childhood and adulthood (2014, p. 107), there is widespread evidence in this study of women tolerating GBV both as married women and daughters. It was explained to me that marriage and husbands are attractive to young women not only as economic safeguards but also as protection mechanisms and escape routes out of the harsh, restrictive and sometimes violent environment to which they were subjected in the natal family. According to Eldina this creates situations in which women become emotionally attached and dependent on their dating partners who often are aware of and take advantage of their vulnerability and disempowered status. The findings thus suggest that pre-marital dating relationships were sites of inequitable gender relations enabling the subordination of women, shaping their identities as submissive and dependent dating partners.

Carmeneza and Cesaltina's narratives suggest that young women enter intimate dating relationships having internalised their subjugated status based on the cultural devaluation of daughters' to the natal family and ideas that their sexuality is not their own and can be controlled by men. For example both described the bind teenage and

young adult women in dating relationships were said to find themselves in when faced with intimidation, threats of abandonment and coerced sex. 'If women refuse, men will reject them [...] that is why young women are scarred and just give their virginity and have sex with their boyfriends' (Carmeneza, 20s, EWYR, university student, Harupai). Cesaltina added that:

'In the districts [...] I have a friend who has finished senior high school but her boyfriend does not allow her to continue her studies in Dili and says that he will find another woman [...] I can see that all the women just accept men's decisions even if they don't want to and these decisions are not good for them' (Cesaltina, 20s, university student, Harupai).

It is possible that the subordinated status afforded to women in the natal family and transitional processes to married life 'preconditioned' power dynamics within their marriages and framed their exposure to forms of GBV. Echoing Jackson's (2012) assertion that: 'Emotional attachment confers power', Eldina added that women's vulnerabilities in the natal family increases the bargaining strength of male partners not only in the transition into but also during marriage, deepening the gendered disadvantages for women. She provided sophisticated insights, explaining that, though not always the case, female vulnerability and subjugation were replicated in marriage by women's socialisation, acceptance and internalisation of their subjugated position and by patriarchal power relations that prevent women from meaningful decision making, a core component of women's empowerment within intimate partnerships (Kabeer 1999). According to Connell (2005; 2009), acceptance of an ideology leads to the formation of hegemony. As I will demonstrate in the remainder of the chapter this interaction exposed women to marital inequality, conflict, and GBV, as well as marital breakdown and dissolution which Eldina concluded often left women vulnerable to gendered violence.

These findings indicate that marital cathexis is a complex multidimensional concept that kept women dependent on men and entrapped in a system of GBV. Listening to women's narratives, a clear interdependence was evident between women's interpersonal relationships and their own actions and attitudes that were influenced by

social norms that sanction women's emotional reliance on men and legitimise the coercive and violent actions of husbands. Some women dared not challenge violent and cheating husbands out of fear of abandonment and social insecurity as they believed husbands afforded them protection and social status. Agrafina connected her sense of powerlessness in her marriage to emotional rather than economic dependency. She described her marriage as embroiled in a web of coercive control that included husband infidelity that extended to various other forms of psychological GBV. Agrafina's husband screamed and shouted abuse at her, called her hurtful names, humiliated her on grounds of her physical disability and blamed her for not bearing him a child. He was unfaithful to her, came and went for extended periods and regularly threatened to leave her. Though Agrafina had plans to engender dialogue with her husband about his abuse and extra-marital affairs, she was deterred from doing so by his threats of abandonment and her fear that her actions would end her marriage which she was heavily attached to and invested in. Agrafina feared being alone and not having a man in her life. She also believed having a man living in the house would protect her from re-victimisation of GBV perpetrated by aggressive young men from the community.

'I'm just really afraid that if I ever asked my husband why he is so abusive he will divorce me. This really frightens me. I'm afraid to talk to him in case he leaves me. I know that my husband plays with another woman but I cannot care because I am too afraid' (Agrafina, middle-aged urban housewife, mother of 4, businesswoman, Usululi).

Fatima, Filomena, Alcina, Armanda all legitimised their husbands' violent behaviour depicting it as a departure from the norm, allowing them to acknowledge the violence on the one hand but also the non-violent and sometimes loving characteristics of their husbands that helped them to rationalise, minimise and normalise the violence on the other. Whilst these views might have served to help the women cope or come to terms with the violence, such responses relied on their acceptance of traditional social norms that subordinated women and on women's emotional attachments to men that perpetuated gendered power dynamics (Panchanadeswaran et al 2007) and fed into the web of violence. Meanwhile, irrespective of her natal family concerns about her

welfare, Alina, downplayed and minimised her husband's violence as a way of justifying her decision not to leave him. In her narrative she talked about not only her obligations as a wife but also conveyed feelings of attachment to her husband and staying married.

To conclude the findings so far highlight the salience, relationality and intersectionality of kinship and family that were fundamental to the gendered logic of marriage, a major principle of inequality underlying marital cathexis, women's attachments to husbands and their vulnerability to GBV. I now turn to the primacy of hegemonic masculinity, the other principle of inequality that also maintained patriarchal marriage and supported and was supported by GBV.

#### **7.4 GBV, Marital Cathexis and Hegemonic Masculinities**

Intersecting with the wider socio-economic-historical context and constantly evoked and interwoven in women's day-to-day married life were two major ideologies fundamental to hegemonic masculinity, one relating to the public-private dichotomy and the other to sexuality and the male sexual drive discourse. Turning first to the public-private divide and its interaction with women's localities at different levels of the social ecology, both ideologies fed unequal power relations inherent in women's violent marriages.

##### **7.4.1 GBV, Hegemonic Masculinities and the Vitality of *Emu Laran-Emu Liur***

Male power and the primacy of hegemonic masculinity found strength in the 'public'/'private' dichotomy, one of two gendered ideologies critical for maintaining kinship, family and marriage norms and fundamental to conjugal roles, responsibilities and behaviours expected of wives and husbands. According to this ideology, the 'domestic'/'public' opposition is derived from the 'naturalness' of woman's role of mother and rearer of children with 'public'-'private' categories of social life standing in a hierarchical relationship to one another, according different 'rights' to the gendered individuals within those separate spheres. Throughout the narratives gender norms that husband and wife should be unequal and that women be assigned roles in the private sphere and to subsistence and unpaid reproductive functions recurred as

salient components of marital cathexis and important mechanisms for male coercive control and GBV.

#### **7.4.1.1 GBV, Affective Inequalities and Family Poverty**

Alongside family setting, other aspects of women's immediate circumstances appearing to shape their vulnerability and entrapment in GBV was the daily grind and impoverishing circumstances in which women safeguarded family survival. An overwhelming majority of participants saw family poverty as the dominant cause of gendered violence taking place in their own and the lives of women in their communities. When interacting with hegemonic masculinity and the ideology of intensive motherhood, there were specific ways in which multiple dimensions of poverty increased women's vulnerability to GBV. Some studies have shown that poor women living in urban, high-density housing are especially at risk of high rates of GBV (Nurturer 2009). In this study the difficulties of conducting married life and rearing families in inadequate housing dominated the majority of urban narratives, some of which suggested that women's vulnerability to GBV was patterned by these aspects of their immediate environment. For example harsh living conditions characterised by squalor, overcrowding on account of inadequate space for the high numbers of extended household members limited privacy for married couples and their inability to control their own lives. Whilst the findings in this study do not confirm a significant association between household structure and GBV, a number of the women experiencing victimisation, especially those living in Dili conducted married life within extended family settings in overcrowded conditions. Many of the women who were living in very poor quality housing with three or more families to one dwelling had reported being beaten by their husbands. These women were forcibly evicted from their ancestral lands in the districts during the conflict by the Indonesian army in the late 1970s. They also faced displacement in 1999 and again in 2006 during the political crisis and lived in a constant state of insecure tenure. In rural areas inadequate and dilapidated housing was reported to consistently trigger GBV as explained by a FG discussant: 'Our house is destroyed. And when I bring this up with my husband he turns angry and just beats me (FG discussant, Marobo).

Women experiencing victimisation explained that poverty and the heavy burdens of work inside and outside the home induced maternal exhaustion, psychological strain, stress and anger and unleashed or magnified conflicts between women and their husbands, exposing them to violent situations. The contrast between men being presented as 'lazy' husbands and absent fathers and women being depicted as overworked and under-valued featured throughout the study and it was very common for participants to state that: 'Men do not want to work whilst the women have to work' (FG discussants, Marobo) suggesting that, whether they liked it or not, women had to face the daily grind of poverty, endure the difficulties of caring and providing for their children and bear the brunt of multiple deprivations.

'Domestic violence happens when there is no money to buy cigarettes, coffee, traditional wine and things to fix the broken house. The husbands get very frustrated and angry and take it out on their wives and beat them' (FG discussant, Marobo).

'Here in Marobo there are some families that are very poor. They have no money to buy clothes and school books. The situation is very bad. It is worse for the women because their husbands beat them because of this poverty. The husbands get angry when they ask their wives for money and they cannot give it to them' (FG discussant, Marobo).

Consonant with Nurturer who asserts that women's food and income insecurity often results in higher levels of GBV against them (Nurturer 2009), in this study the interaction between women's maternal role as food providers, family poverty and women's own lack of access and control over resources made them vulnerable to victimisation. In Dili, according to Ella, to put food on the table, women abandoned by husbands and heading up poor families alone were said to be forced into prostitution which put them at risk of gendered violence. Women in all four study sites also reported being blamed by their husbands especially for food shortages with husbands' surges of anger frequently escalating into physical violence. Many of the abused women recalled being put down, yelled at or physically beaten in situations where there was not enough food to feed families or inadequate money to meet other basic needs. It would appear from the narratives that where income and food poverty and

women's inability to meet their reproductive obligations were the underlying factors making women's gender relations violent, food itself was the trigger. GBV was especially related to food insecurity in rural areas though the data do not specify what times of the year or which seasons the violence may intensify.

'When there is no food husbands beat their wives' (FG discussants, Marobo).

'[...] the big thing that causes domestic violence is money. Around here, you know, with my neighbours, domestic is currently taking place within these families because they have no food or money and have many children. And so there is a lot of shouting and fighting that leads to domestic violence' (Celeste, single, early twenties, NGO worker, Usululi).

'Domestic violence happens in families in [...] because sometimes the food is ready late, when the woman can only put corn on the table because we have no money to buy rice. Husbands hit their wives because the children who are complaining about the corn are driving them crazy' (FG discussants, Marobo).

Discourses of gender roles based on 'public'/'private' dichotomy, gendered care and family poverty were said to be frequently drawn on to justify husbands' use of violence against wives, suggesting the view that violence was an appropriate means of disciplining women for transgressing gender norms and behaving in ways that countered the 'natural' association between 'woman' and unpaid domestic work and care. This might have also reinforced women's tolerance of GBV. For example coercive control was said to escalate into disputes and violent reactions from husbands when wives 'failed' to care for or send children to school, complete their domestic obligations and, satisfy certain housekeeping standards that were often made impossible to meet by family poverty such as lack of food and basic utilities such as piped water.

'Domestic violence happens when the husband blames his wife when the children drop out of school because the families cannot pay the school fees' (FG discussant, Marobo).

'Husband gets angry with me when the food is not ready or when our children did not get any food and they go to bed hungry. My husband angrily asks me: 'what are you doing? Why are you not cooking for the

family'? (FG discussant, Tafara).

'Besides the food he also gets violent when I don't have his laundry ready. If I challenge him he responds by punching or beating me. Its just that our living conditions are so bad it is hard to get anything done' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai).

As well as abused women themselves, elected women representatives such as Angela were found to justify husbands' violence against wives, drawing on gender ideology relating to the public-private dichotomy and discourses of female gender roles and marital norms (Boonzaier and de la Rey 2003). In line with the gender division of labour and constructions of 'emphasised femininity' (Connell 1987) Angela was adamant that a Timorese wife's task is to provide and serve her husband and tend to his needs. Insisting that wives were responsible and to blame for husband's violent attacks on them, she was of the view that 'lazy' wives who do not fulfil their duties and obligations or who answer back their husbands bring the beatings on themselves. Thus in special circumstances where wives transgress female gender norms underlying roles and behaviours it was to be expected that husbands resort to physical violence to enforce the prevailing gender order. According to Angela, GBV against wives was an acceptable part of married life and would always exist so long as the public-private dichotomy upheld by the traditional gender division of labour was not adequately enforced. In her household she described enforcing a rigid gender regime amongst her sons and daughters-in-law which she believed represented a form of 'gender equality' arguing that 'if other families would only do the same right now, then things would work out OK. Things would be fine because there would be equality between women and men' (Angela, EWR, Usululi). In the following account, she drew on gender norms underlying the gender division of unpaid labour and discourses of feminine constructions of the 'good woman/wife' to rationalise and legitimise husband's violence against their wives.

'The woman, she is obliged to prepare food for the family, but this doesn't always happen. And why? Its because women just sit around in front of the street and do nothing except spread rumours about other women's lives. If

a woman just sits around doing nothing, not even preparing food for the family, then the husband will of course get angry and then what happens – violence – and he goes off, gets drunk, has affairs and gets into trouble' (Angela, EWR, Usululi).

There are data linking gendered care regimes, affective inequalities and GBV to *barlaque*. Throughout the study participants provided different explanations about gendered roles and responsibilities in the home. For instance Ella linked her sense of obligation and responsibility back to socialisation during childhood, whilst Balbina – constantly under pressure to live up to expectations of being a 'good wife' - felt duty-bound to the private sphere and domestic work as a woman and wife, stating that: 'As a woman these are the things I have to do in the house [...] I just stay in my house and do my job as a wife and a woman' (Balbina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, Usululi). Women also linked wives' domestic responsibilities to gendered obligations deriving from local culture, marriage norms and *barlaque*. Their narratives underscored how women's natal families, husbands and mothers-in law had a special interest in maintaining this customary practice. This finding dominated rural women's narratives by far with many reiterating that it was typical for husbands to draw on *lisan* and *barlaque* to validate their power, enforce the gender division of unpaid domestic and care work and other inequalities underlying marital relations. For example:

'Men use culture to keep women under their slippers' (FG discussants, Marobo).

'The majority of women here really want to participate in community activities but cannot because their husbands expect them to cook for them. Generally women have no choice and have to obey their husbands because of *barlaque*' (Elisa, housewife, mother of 6, volunteer teacher, Tafara).

'If you ask us why women in this aldeia are in this situation it is because of our custom and specifically *barlaque* which is still very strong in Lospalos. For example women have a big responsibility towards their husbands once the *barlaque* is handed over. According to *barlaque*, women have to serve their husbands and his family and look after the children and do all the housework' (FG discussants, Tono).

Marital conflict, a consistent marker of GBV in the study was reported to frequently evolve around disputes concerning *barlaque*. Urban and rural participants described

being beaten by husbands who were said to invoke this marriage custom to coerce their wives into domestic servitude. Many women asserted that *barlaque* was being used in ways that was damaging to women's lives, reinforcing their inferior status within their marriages and also natal and in-law family relations.

'And sometimes culture creates problems for women [...] the disadvantage of *barlaque* for women is domestic violence. Women have no rights as soon as their husbands pay the *barlaque*. Husbands and their families get full control over wives' (FG discussant, Usululi).

GBV against daughters-in law including domestic servitude, psychological and verbal abuse and physical violence too was linked to *barlaque* with reports such as the following appearing across study sites:

'Once *barlaque* has been handed over, awful things can be said and done to women if they do not follow orders. *Barlaque* provides our extended families with lots of control over us and lets them say and do horrible things to us if we do not obey them. If *barlaque* is paid, then the woman has no choice but to do whatever is expected of her from his family' (Marcelina, housewife, 30s, mother 4, Harupai).

Avo Amelia, a mother-in law participating in the study, justified her right to evict her 'disobedient' daughter-in-law from the family home and influence her son to end his marriage on the grounds that her daughter-in-law not alone insulted her and failed to pay her due respect and deference she believed she was entitled to. She also refused to come under her management and cooperate with domestic work arrangements Avo Amelia had in place. Hence she was unable to accrue the labour-related benefits she had expected from *barlaque*. She was frustrated as would any mother-in-law especially as she herself had funded this and other *barlaque* by selling off all of her pigs. Avo Amelia was already disgruntled with her daughter-in-law for causing her income and assets to be depleted, threatening her economic circumstances, and coming between herself and her son. As she explained:

'Actually before I had so many pigs, really a lot of big pigs and then I had to sell them all. I also had to sell my vegetables and the money I got I used to pay-off the *barlaque*. And now I don't have any money left and I don't have

any pigs either. Well, after I paid the *barlaque* I got frustrated as when this new daughter-in-law moved in she didn't want to do a bit in the house [...] And then one day, she insulted me and I would not accept this. So I threw her out of the house. This son of mine has five children. And when I asked him to get rid of his wife, I told him I only wanted her gone, but not their children' (Avo Amelia, elderly housewife, mother of 7 and petty trader, Usululi).

Whilst Avo Amelia did not succeed in reaping her labour-related benefits, she maintained the close relationship she had with her son and secured informal guardianship of her grandchildren after the break-up of his marriage to a 'disobedient' wife who was not in a powerful enough position to resist Avo Amelia's authority as she did not have the support of her husband to save her marriage and negotiate her right to remain in the house. Here the classical patriarchal regime pitted two generations of women against each other, the nexus of which was *barlaque*, which commanded female domestic labour, servitude and children and reinforced the double subordination of women via the depletion of women's assets to fund a cultural practice and marriage norm that a number of participants believed to be oppressive for women. Among those were Rosa a rural elected women representative and those living in very remote rural area all of whom wanted to see change in cultural practises damaging to women if gender equality was to ever come about.

'In relation to our culture, in Lospalos in particular, women have to respect their husbands and do whatever their husbands tell them to do. I think this situation is no longer acceptable. We have to change the culture. We have to reduce the price of *barlaque* and find a way where women and men are equal' (Rosa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

A number of women were keen to use their role as mothers to challenge gender and discriminatory norms and practices upholding women's subordination and GBV. For example Elisa, Jesuina and Joia, all mothers were critical of prevailing marriage norms in the natal family, particularly the practice of *barlaque* and early marriage of daughters. Elisa felt strongly that marriage had taken the form of economic activity with *barlaque* contributing to this as it was seen as an important source of income in the context of natal family poverty. Aware of the consequences of marital inequalities

for women, Jesuina and Joia, feared for their daughters' well being and the quality of their lives as wives. Jesuina a successful business woman whose husband also earned a steady wage, asserted that:

'I'm not really interested in getting *barlaque* when my daughter marries. What I care most about is her well-being. I'm afraid that if a family paid out a lot, she would be the one to suffer. The most important thing is for my daughter to have a good life, a good house and a good husband [...]' (Jesuina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, business woman, Tafara).

Disagreeing with the supposed natural superiority of males over females and women's subjugation at birth, Joia too felt that oppressive aspects of Timorese lisan needed to modernise and change in accordance with the Timorese Constitution so that in practice women would enjoy the same rights and equal power as men. Joia thus wanted to see specific changes to customary practice that would afford women – as mothers and wives – a greater role and agency in in the private domain representing their daughters' best interests during *barlaque* negotiations: 'Timorese women should be able to offer their opinions about things they consider important like their daughters' future' (Joia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, from Harupai).

#### **7.4.1.2 GBV, Marriage Inequalities and Women's Poverty**

Husband dominance interacting with female poverty appeared to shape women's experiences of GBV. Specific evidence linking the public-private dichotomy with unequal and violent marital relations related to husbands' dominance and manipulation of the private domain via male decision-making authority. Exploiting and driving women's individual poverty and vulnerabilities, this extended to control over family resources, ranging from land and property including the marital home, to food sources such as cultivated crops, furniture items such as kitchen supplies and family transport. In this study 'access' is understood as being able to use certain resources while 'control' is being able to make decisions about the resource (Grenfell *et al* 2015). There are many accounts of participants having neither. For instance in rural areas FG discussants reported that pregnant women in remote aldeias had been denied access to family transport (motorbike) controlled largely by husbands who refused to drive

them to the district hospital for ante-natal check-ups. Husbands were said to become violent towards their wives when challenged or asked to provide the transport (FG discussants, Tafara).

'During pregnancy women often ask their husbands to bring them to the hospital for their appointments. But the men do not want to do this. And because of this, women get angry and express their frustrations. This is an example of when husbands beat their wives. Actually this problem of husbands beating their pregnant wives is a serious problem in the neighbouring villages too' (FG discussants, Tafara).

One farmer from Tafara reported being unable to control or sell the agricultural produce she harvested to generate income to support family needs as her husband, who dominated all decision making in the household believed that 'food was for eating and not selling'. Meanwhile the violent husband of Sidonia, a subsistence farmer from Marobo obstructed her from engaging in a public dispute and resolving a conflict with neighbours over grazing animals. He also prevented her from accepting financial compensation for damages to family property which the woman relied on to grow crops for domestic consumption. Coercive control extended beyond the immediate to involve more all-encompassing abusive behaviour as Sidonia's husband also prevented her from using basic kitchen utilities essential to carrying out household tasks.

'When the animals destroyed the garden and the owner offered to pay us, my husband would not allow me to accept the money. My husband is the one who makes the decisions. We don't have enough food to eat. [...] Sometimes it is really hard to work because we only have one light bulb. When I cook I cannot see. My husband allows us to have just one light bulb' (Sidonia, middle aged housewife, mother of 3, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Urban women such as Fernanda reported severe levels of gendered coercive control, rendering her access and control over household assets limited. As already mentioned she described how once he abandoned her, her husband secured a bank loan and re-mortgaged the family home without her knowledge or consent (Fernanda, Harupai). There are data suggesting that compelling women to stay in violent marriages was their fear of homelessness and increased individual and family poverty that, as mothers,

women were unwilling to risk for their children. This supports Erturk's assertion that poor women are especially at risk of violence as without adequate independent income they have difficulty accessing alternative housing. Victims of GBV are also routinely denied access to housing due to discrimination on the part of landlords and others (Erturk 2009). Data for this study conveyed that, restricting women's ability to manage and/or escape violent marriages was the intersection between motherhood and gendered care relations with customary marriage practices, lack of enforcement of property rights, insecure housing and complex conflict-related land and property issues. An overwhelming majority of participants had no secure access to housing. Most reared their families and lived either in houses owned by husbands, in shared dwellings with unclear tenure or in shelter erected on disputed property. It is likely that women's lack of personal income and savings generated by their paid work, home ownership, housing shortage and a complex array of land and property disputes hindered women's options to escape the violence and move into private-rented accommodation. Abused women might also have been deterred from leaving due to discrimination by landlords against separated women and single mothers which was reported by a number of Dili participants. For example Cedaliza, who was in her 30s and a single mother of 3 children now living in Usululi constantly struggled to avoid homelessness on account of financial difficulties paying rent and discrimination on the part of landlords.

Natal families were a critical source of support for women and their children who had been victimised by GBV. For example, after the end of their marriages, a number of deserted housewives facing extreme poverty and with no assets of their own relied on their own kin for food, shelter and childcare. However this support mechanism did not ensure women personal safety or long term security. Further it was not always a viable or safe option for women as some continued to face GBV perpetrated by natal family members. In Dili, when abandoned by her husband, Fatima and her children were left with little alternative but to return to her nearby neighbourhood to live with her mother, siblings and extended family members who minded her children whilst she sold vegetables on a nearby street stall. She continued to face GBV perpetrated by a

violent brother. Though Fatima did not expand, it is possible she felt trapped as she had no other accommodation. options to rear her young family. The income she generated was so basic and irregular she was barely able to buy food and other basic necessities. Meanwhile rural women Erminia from Tafara and Olandina from Marobo both abandoned by their husbands also had to move back to live with their natal kin. Erminia said she faced constant insults and humiliation enacted by her mother on account of her marital and maternal status. Erminia and Olandina were from very poor family backgrounds, were landless and illiterate as neither had not completed secondary school education. With no support from either the state or the fathers of their children, they relied entirely on their natal kin for their food, housing needs and childcare which freed up their time to work as a seasonal labourers on nearby farms. These women stated that they lived in constant fear of homelessness and anxiety owing to their lack of home ownership and overcrowding, dilapidated housing conditions and tense family relations that often escalated into re-victimisation. Lack of home ownership combined with the sheer lack of shelter alternatives, income and employment opportunities in rural areas as well as limited support from the suco council left Erminia and Olandina feeling hopeless and anxious. Whilst they felt their respective xefi aldeia had done all they could to address their housing needs, they had no support from their elected women representatives. It is possible that similar circumstances deterred other rural women from leaving violent husbands and the marital family home.

That women might have been tolerating and suffering violence in order to avoid homelessness and putting their children at risk of deeper levels of poverty was something conveyed in both urban and rural sites. However the threat of homelessness appeared to severely constrain the agentic capacity of women with many children and those living far from natal family or without informal support networks. For example the study shows that natal kin was not always a viable support mechanism for first generation urban women trapped in violent marriages, most of whom had been compelled to re-locate to Dili either by customary marital practices or by the Indonesian military at the height of the conflict. Refuge with natal kin were not

options for Fernanda and Caterina and their children when needing to escape violent husbands. As Fernanda explained: 'Now all my family have passed away and there is no-one who can help me' (Fernanda, middle-aged abandoned housewife, mother of 7, Harupai). Catarina did not have the financial means to take her children to her parents in the mountains. Her case below illustrates the complexity most women faced when attempting to come to terms with and prevent further violence to make themselves and their children safe or end violent relationships by separating from husbands.

Now a young mother of 8 living in Usululi Caterina came from a poor rural family. She moved to Dili when she married her husband 20 years her senior. She experienced marital GBV daily. She reared her family with her husband lived in an overcrowded dwelling on land that was under dispute by former residents displaced by the political violence in 1999. Catarina generated her own cash income from informal petty trading. It was barely enough to feed their children as it was irregular, extremely low and frequently depleted by her husband's heavy drinking. She viewed the lack of jobs for women in her village, her own basic level of education and heavy domestic workload and childcare responsibilities as the primary factors restricting her earning capacity. It is possible that such circumstances placed enormous constraints on Catarina's ability to seek support to address on-going gendered violence. She seemed hopeless and powerless as she felt she had no way out of her violent marriage. Previously she had dropped the charges she brought against her husband for severe beatings. She refrained from using the criminal justice system again as she doubted her ability to rear such a large young family alone, even if her mostly unemployed husband was financially irresponsible and unreliable. She found it difficult to contemplate leaving her current accommodation. with her children as she had no alternative in Dili. She could not avail of her natal kin as a support mechanism as they lived in a rural village far away. She did not have time, money or childcare support to travel the distance. Even if severe family poverty was exacerbated by her husband's drinking, violent and irresponsible behaviour, Catarina still found the prospect of rearing her children alone more daunting. She had resigned herself to enduring a violent marriage whilst safeguarding and rearing her children as best she could. In sum a combination of

Catarina's individual poverty, and immediate hardships and normative influences – social expectations and practical demands and constraints of motherhood, aggravated by a disabling socioeconomic environment subjected her to a violent marriage and deterred her from taking sustained action against her husband.

#### **7.4.1.3 GBV, 'Thwarted' Masculinities and the Conflict-Affected Informal Economy**

That GBV was not only accepted but also evoked and supported as a mechanism for disciplining women and maintaining the chain of command implies that GBV is tied to approval of the public-private divide and to inequality between husband and wife. This echoes with Stark (2007) who argues that coercive control provides men with the means to ensure women engage in a particular action and enforce deprivation and exploitation of women in the home to their benefit. Evidence of this was provided by accounts of husbands restricting wives' participation in the public domain, preventing them from visiting friends and participating in training and income generation including taking out loans to start a business. Still in a violent relationship at the time of the interview Filomena explained how:

'I come from far away. I moved to Dili when I married. I have no-one here. I have no-where to go. I have no choice but to stay here now. Listen and follow. My family are good people but they do not like me because of my husband [...] I have a sister living in the other side of town but my husband won't let me visit her' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai).

In Marobo, where GBV was reported to be high and husbands 'verbally abuse women and also use the machete to cut their wives' (FGD), Natalia and Rosalina both explained that:

'Some of the husbands do not want to support their wives to earn money which women need so they can pay back their loan every week. In addition [...] there are also husbands who won't allow their wives to get money from the NGO at all' (Natalia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, businesswoman, Marobo).

Accounts of husband dominance and strict controls preventing women from participating in community based activities and microcredit programmes were

confined to rural areas but this could be because no such initiatives were reported to exist in the urban sites. Yet, it was not just in rural areas that women are prevented by husbands from participating in economic activities. A number of urban women I interviewed told me that they were compelled by their husbands to stop working and discussants in a FG were united when they explained that: '[...] the reasons why women suffer inequality is because men don't give women the opportunity to find work' (FG discussants, Harupai). Indeed links were found between women's entrapment in GBV and their financial dependence on husbands, a direct consequence of their individual poverty and inability to earn and maintain control over their own income. For example a number of non-earning housewives trapped in marriages made reference to the fact that they and other women were rendered powerless by marriage inequalities and economic dependence on husbands that exposed them to endless violence. Financial inequality – a direct result of the public-private dichotomy – caused marital power differences in favour of husbands seen in the case of Filomena, an urban housewife and mother of 8 whose violent husband forbid her from generating a personal income and retained his own to fund leisure activities and an extra-marital relationship driving the family into deep poverty. She feared severe consequences of attempting to go against him. As she explained: 'If he doesn't allow me to go out and work, then I cannot and if I did we would start fighting when I'd return home' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai). With no source of independent income, economic dependence limited her household bargaining power, enabled and reinforced husband dominance and gendered violence which all interacted in her life in a vicious circle. The web of violence that included brutal physical violence and systematic husband control that prevented her from generating an income also intersected with Filomena's lack of time and work opportunities in her community for women – all of which maintained and deepened her economic dependence on her breadwinning husband, constantly rendering her more vulnerable to victimisation and entrapment. This resonates with findings in the literature that draw attention to the fact that women who rely financially on their spouses often lack the power to negotiate marital tensions and challenge harmful behaviour such as

infidelity or leave violent relationships (Ni Rathallaigh et al 2015). The findings suggest that the financial consequences of norms governing the gender division of labour and power influenced participants' ability to escape violent relationships.

Similar to Boonzaier's study in South Africa there are findings indicating that husbands might have resented women's participation in the public sphere, particularly their productive role and reacted to it by attempting to maintain a hold on dominant forms of masculinity through the perpetuation of violence (Boonzaier 2005), as, whilst driven by poverty-induced maternal altruism, women's economic role represented norm transgression and challenged breadwinning masculinities by offering greater economic opportunities for women. For example there were many examples of breadwinning wives experiencing GBV victimisation perpetrated by husbands and mothers-in law. Alcina, who had worked as a waitress enabling her to make financial contributions to her family was constantly beaten by her husband and mentally tormented by her mother-in-law throughout her marriage and eventually forced her to resign from her job. Meanwhile an elderly participant conveyed how she threatened and humiliated her daughter-in law who worked hard to feed her children. She drew on discourses of gender roles based on the gender division of labour to justify the violence. A number of other narratives too revealed how marital tensions were said to escalate into violent reactions from husbands when earning wives 'failed' to care for children, complete their domestic obligations, satisfy certain housekeeping standards.

'I come back from work late and this makes him angry. I cannot obey a controlling husband and a demanding boss at the same time. The whole thing is an awful problem. I have such a difficult time trying to manage everything [...] There are problems like the laundry that causes tensions between myself and my husband. Like me, he goes out to work... but when I get back I need to do all the jobs myself. Problems start when there's a load of laundry and I cannot get through everything on my own. He gets angry and the abuse starts if everything is not washed on time' (Emilia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, waged worker, Usululi).

'Its the same for me. At times my husband gets angry with me when I go out to work. He gets angry because I cannot get home until the afternoon and start cooking for the family' (FG discussant, Tafara).

As well as women's productive role, there are findings indicating that husbands might have been reacting to a lack of or a reduction in male incomes challenging breadwinning masculinities and leading to tensions between wives and husbands, resulting in husbands' use of violence and grip on dominant forms of masculinity (Erturk 2009). Anarilha and Agrafina were amongst several urban women generating their own income who reported being beaten and emotionally abused by husbands who earned less or were unemployed and possibly felt their power was undermined in the household. Their cases described below illustrate how a combination of unequal social structures made them highly vulnerable to GBV. These included the gendered logic of marriage and motherhood and the primacy of hegemonic masculinity that interacted with conflict-affected context of male unemployment compelling women to work hard. That they were either prevented outright from generating an income or made highly vulnerable to GBV by working for pay, further illustrates the strong resistance to female financial autonomy found throughout the study. As explained by Anarilha:

'Before I had a job but then he accused me of selling my body to other men because he didn't have a job and he used to say that I was like a prostitute. He beat me all the time when I used to go to work [...] In the end I had to give up my job' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged mother of 8, Usululi).

Likewise rather than changes in intra-household power relations and the gender division of unpaid labour, Agrafina's financial autonomy generated violent responses from her husband who was unfaithful and refused to support the family. This was a theme that emerged frequently in the urban narratives.

Agrafina was a middle-aged urban housewife, foster-mother of 4 and businesswoman. At the time of her interview she had been the main breadwinner in the family running her own tailoring business. She was also in receipt of a disability allowance from the state, was attending computer classes to enhance her business and was receiving training support from an international NGO. She was very pro-active, constantly seeking out new opportunities to fulfil her dream to be a successful business woman, empower herself and help her support her family. Even though he earned his own

income Agrafina's husband was financially dependent on her as he often asked her for money. She acknowledged having greater financial power compared to him. Her married life was characterised by normalised infidelity and years of psychological violence which she described as severe and very painful. Her husband frequently put her down, hurled abuse at her and used demeaning language, insulted her about her physical disability and blamed her for not being able to 'give him a child, a son'. He refused to contribute financially to the family and was absent from the home for long periods. He frequently threatened abandonment. Agrafina told me she lived in constant fear that he would divorce her to the extent that it restricted her interactions with him and she was afraid to talk to him about anything.

In a rural focus group participants experiencing GBV cited women-only microcredit schemes as a source of GBV in their community where the exclusion of unemployed men led to male resentment towards their wives and disputes about participation and loan repayments. In this case it is possible that an improvement in women's income generating capacity increased rather than ended GBV by threatening to further erode traditional male entitlement and patriarchal norms privileging marginalised rural men. Natalia asserted that in her suku there was a tendency for husbands to react violently towards their wives when attempting for the first time to set up their own business. In her opinion GBV and men's power in the family combined with their aversion to women assuming non-traditional roles remained a major obstacle to women's economic empowerment. Resonating with Heise and Garcia-Moreno, these data show GBV occurring at the point where women were beginning to assume non-traditional female roles or gain greater access to socio-economic opportunities which may be viewed as a threat to husbands and lead to increased male violence (Heise and Garcia-Moreno 2002 cited in Erturk 2009).

It is therefore possible that men's violence and exploitation of women's paid labour was in protest to a combination of women's productive roles and men's own economic disempowerment which sat at odds with hegemonic notions of Timorese men as the head of household and financial provider. This economic disparity between husbands

and wives in favour of the wife might have contributed towards women's higher risk of GBV, as they transgress gendered norms of household resource allocation, particularly in culturally conservative settings (Koenig et al. 2003 cited in Miedema *et al* 2016). This resonates with Solotaroff and Pande's assertion that the relationship between women's employment and vulnerability to GBV is crucially affected by their husbands' employment situation (Solotaroff and Pande 2014). GBV against women working for pay, the exploitation of their labour and appropriation of wives' income found throughout the study is illustrative of how mechanisms of 'private patriarchy' were still very resilient, operating to limit wives' access to resource-related power and restrict their actual control over family finances, despite the economic norm of women's engagement in the labour market (Chowdury 2009, cited in Miedema *et al* 2016). The findings suggest that hegemonic notions of Timorese men as the head of household, their perceived entitlement to family resources and wives' labour merged to reinforce husband dominance and wives' subordinated status in the marriage that fed into a web of violence. This is well captured by Eldina, the front-line service provider to women experiencing GBV who had this to say about earning wives' vulnerability to GBV:

'When a woman earns a wage here in Timor, this may symbolise female power in the family which may provoke the husband who thinks he is the head of the family. To show his own power he reacts violently, punching and kicking his wife. Yes this happens unfortunately' (Eldina, married, former refugee worker, Usululi).

There are further data resonating with Kabeer's conclusion that husbands unable to live up to the masculine ideal often resort to GBV – including marital infidelity – to deal with their frustrations and enforce husband dominance (Kabeer 2007). Marital disputes escalating into GBV in this study were often associated with financial matters and tensions arising out of unequal access to family income and male forms of expenditure of ostensibly 'shared' resources. It is possible that husbands' violence and expenditure behaviour was driven by thwarted breadwinning masculinities a direct result of male economic disempowerment characteristic of the conflict-affected informal economy context. In Timor-Leste, masculine identities are constructed as breadwinner identities, privileging husbands with control over income, resources and

dominance in the household. In the four study sites however men – often in poor mental and physical health – faced chronic unemployment owing to lack of economic opportunities and the conflict-affected informalisation of the Timorese economy. The narratives conveyed that disillusioned and stressed husbands unable to find decent paid work enabling them to contribute financially towards their families responded to hardships by taking it out on their wives in a number of ways. This ranged from financial discretion and poverty-aggravating forms of expenditure, marital infidelities, violent beatings and emotionally abusive behaviour. These were aspects of the construct of marriage and gendered power – husband dominance and marriage inequality interacting with the conflict-affected context – that appeared over and over particularly in the two urban sites. For example husbands' autocratic financial behaviour and a refusal to share their own earnings with their wives featured with remarkable frequency throughout the study, representing a clear manifestation of the primacy of hegemonic masculinity. There was a tendency for husbands withholding income to also use multiple forms of GBV to maintain this financial privilege and control over their wives. There were several reports describing women having requested husbands to share their money, the outcomes of which resulted in extreme physical violence. Husbands' frustrations and difficulties fulfilling breadwinning masculinities in the conflict-affected context also manifested in the form of appropriation of wives' earnings, drinking away their own and women's income and marital infidelity in an attempt to enforce male authority within the family (Kabeer 2007). There are many reports of economically disempowered husbands stealing their wives' earnings and demanding money from them, often resorting to intimidation and violence, including death threats. Women conveyed being powerless and living in constant terror in these situations as they were subjected to violence if they challenged their husbands or did not meet their demands. In her narrative below Cedaliza, a single mother explained why she felt better off than her married friends who had to contend with alcoholic violent husbands as well as feeding and sending to school many school-going children in severely deprived circumstances:

'Some women have many children to feed, like seven or eight, and have to

come up with the money for food and school fees. But their husbands just go around demanding money for food and cigarettes. If their wives cannot come up with the money, then the violence starts' (Cedaliza, 30s, single mother of 3, Usululi).

Many women reporting GBV victimisation to me appeared to be deeply frustrated at what they perceived to be careless attitudes of 'lazy' drunk husbands who squandered women's hard-earned cash. These women linked income poverty, hungry children, school drop-outs and their own exhaustion to husbands' refusal or being unable to adapt to the changing economic environment in their communities and deliberately opting for unemployment rather than low status or subsistence work. Participants reported that male egoism along with harsh conditions was driving them to work hard, constantly compelling them take more initiative, even though economic opportunities for women were very limited in their community and they also continued to shoulder the bulk of unpaid care work. It is possible that maternal exhaustion, frustration, anxieties and depleting levels of female affective and economic altruism might have given rise to tense gender relations that escalated into violent responses from emasculated husbands. The quotes below capture important points made by women who felt that it was not just when jobs were scarce that they and their families suffered.

'Some husbands do not want to help their wives to find money [...] sometimes they do nothing in the home. They do not look after the children. They do not want to feed the animals. And this leads to domestic violence' (Natalia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, businesswoman, Marobo).

'We suffer and get angry with each other. This happens especially when we do not have enough money for school fees. Our children have stopped going to school as the men do not want to find the money to support the family' (FG discussants, Marobo).

'In the morning I try to prepare breakfast but there is no rice and so I cook yam, cassava and banana and this is the problem as my children do not want to eat it. This causes tensions in the family and that is why myself and my husband end up angry with each other, because my husband does not want to work so as to find the money to provide food for the family' (FG discussant, Tafara).

'Men do not work. That is why women are the ones having to do everything, from farming to housework, rearing children and taking care of husbands. That is why women – after a long days working in the fields – end up frustrated with husbands nagging them to cook for them. In the end the husbands use women's frustration and refusal to cook for them as an excuse to beat them' (FG discussant, Tafara).

'I am a very poor woman and I have a husband [...] who is mostly unemployed. No jobs. And when he does work he just gets \$1 or \$2 a day [...] We always have problems in the evenings [...] and I say to him 'hey you are a man, and you go from morning until evening and all you can manage is this, \$1? You know that I am hungry and I didn't eat since early morning'. So our life is very very hard' (Avo Amelia, elderly housewife, mother of 7 and petty trader, Usululi).

Despite the dominant gender ideology of the male breadwinner role, many wives were compelled to contribute financially to the family with some serving as the primary or even sole earner, whilst husbands – often depicted as refusing to contribute towards the family – relied on their wives' incomes that they often stole – perhaps as much a response to their resentment towards women's productive role and their own disempowered role. Women's income was typically used to fund their risk-taking behaviour and alcohol and gambling addictions described as 'recreational activities', representing a further manifestation of the primacy of hegemonic masculinity upholding inequalities in women's marriages that were strongly associated with women's vulnerability to GBV victimisation (Kabeer 2007). It is also possible that the nature of husbands' leisure time and 'recreational activities' might also have been further responses to conflict-affected thwarted masculinities, an insight provided by many wives. For example in one rural FG participants were adamant that underlying their husbands' violence, homosocial resource-depleting behaviour, lack of responsibility and disillusionment was male anxieties and other demoralising effects economic disempowerment had on men as husbands and fathers (Munoz *et al* 2013).

'Husbands want to escape from the household and hang around with their friends because they are stressed and want to forget about all the family problems. They feel bad because there is no money in the house to pay for school fees' (FG discussants, Tafara).

The negative consequences of the types and extent of husbands' recreational activities on women's secondary poverty have already been raised in chapter six. This type of husband behaviour led to fear in participants' homes, fuelled marital conflict and GBV. Specific evidence show that gambling at cockfights and playing cards provided the triggers for violent responses from husbands when refused money to fund recreational activities, when family income was simply unavailable or when husbands were challenged by their wives for spending their much-needed hard-earned cash. Participants' narratives indicate this as yet another normalised aspect of marriage inequality that women felt powerless to challenge given the web of coercive husband control and gendered violence that was deeply woven into their everyday lives. The following narratives capture these points.

'Domestic violence happens when the husband loses from gambling, and asks his wife for more money. That's when the fighting starts' (FG discussants, Marobo).

'I can tell you that here in Marobo some husbands rather than helping their wives pay back the loans or supporting their families, they steal the money from women and use it for '*manu futu*', yes, for cockfighting, *joga karta* – gambling, playing cards and getting drunk. The consequence from these activities is domestic violence' (Natalia, middle-aged housewife, mother of 6, businesswoman, Marobo).

In rural areas in particular, in addition to the concerns raised by participants, a number of local leaders and NGO workers were very alert and worried about the extent of cockfighting and the regularity of men's gambling in their own communities and across Lautem district. During key informant interviews they testified to the prevalence of patterns associated with other risky behaviours such as aggression, gendered violence and heavy drinking and the attendant social costs, namely severe family poverty and GBV against women and children. A number of *xefi aldeia* in Marobo said they felt hopeless about findings ways to address it.

The problem of husbands' heavy drinking also dominated the findings and was strongly linked to male economic disempowerment and GBV. Drunkenness amongst men and especially participants' violent husbands was common across all four study sites. FG

discussants explained that:

'Here in Marobo men just hang around drinking traditional wine, get drunk and when they go home they beat their wives' (FG discussants, Marobo).

The husband of Sabina drank heavily and frequently beat her, roared abuse at her and also threatened to kill her. He was in receipt of a veterans allowance which he used to fund his drinking habits that drove his family into further poverty. His wife explained how:

'My husband never experiences the hardships that I suffer when there is no rice in the family. He never cares. I am the one who is under pressure. My husband is insensitive. I always tell him about the problems [...] but he just gets drunk and begins to fight with me. I am the one who is responsible for this family. My husband is drunk every day' (Sabina, middle-aged housewife, mother of 7, subsistence farmer, Marobo).

Speaking about her concerns for her neighbour, Alina explained how the woman's husband: '[...] comes home drunk every night and the money that the Social and Caritas gave her he just steals it again and again and goes outside to buy drink and get drunk' (Alina, married, middle-aged mother of 2, businesswoman, Usululi).

The beatings inflicted by Catarina's unemployed alcoholic husband were on a daily basis and resulted in her being hospitalised. Armanda's husband when drunk roared insults at her physical appearance whilst Anarilha's husband, when drunk 'always forces me to have sex'. Other participants explained that their husbands typically turned to alcohol when confronted with family hardships such as food and money shortages. They blamed heavy drinking for husbands' lack of care for the family, leaving women to shoulder most of the material and emotional consequences associated with family poverty.

These findings resonate with Kabeer who highlights that men's alcohol abuse is an aspect of interpersonal relations that is consistently associated with higher levels of GBV (Kabeer 2007). Research has shown that in societies marked by high unemployment and strong calls for a return to the traditional model of the family

reliant on the public-private dichotomy, husbands who find it difficult to cope with the uncompromising pressures to assume primary breadwinning status often suffer from intense demoralisation expressed as drunkenness (Ashwin and Lytkina 2004; Kay 2005; Kabeer 2007 p. 21). Similar to other participants' accounts, Anarilha who was married to a very violent man highlighted the reality behind the dominant male breadwinner assumption:

'People often assume that my husband is at work when is not in the house but in fact he is not working. He is with his friends drinking. He drinks a lot'  
(Anarilha, separated, middle-aged mother of 8, Usululi).

Global studies report that husband's alcohol abuse increases the risk of intimate partner GBV (Heise 2011; Jewkes *et al* 2002; Sitaker 2007). Jewkes *et al* (2002) suggest that the reasons why men may be drunk when psychologically abusing and beating their wives are complex. Whilst some studies explain the role of alcohol in IPV as a loss of inhibition and impaired inability to respond to social cues, so that any interaction might trigger violence, social anthropological studies suggest that the relationship is dependent upon the cultural context (McDonald 1994 cited in Jewkes *et al* 2002). In this study, though male alcohol consumption was found to be positively associated with physical, sexual and psychological GBV, it was not clear whether it was marital conflict over the husbands' drinking or drinking per se that triggered the violence. Husbands' heavy drinking was also mentioned frequently in the context of poverty and GBV together. Much discussion arose across FGs about the prevalence of male alcoholism in their communities, its consequences on men's health, ability to work and provide for their families and the detrimental effects loss of earnings and the squandering of family income had on the welfare and survival of husbands' families. Sabina again explained how: 'My husband is drunk everyday. He sells wine and keeps the money for himself. He never feeds the family. He just gets drunk and then becomes violent towards me'.

So far the findings suggest that GBV was reflective of 'thwarted masculinities' inherent in husbands' reactions to their economic disempowerment and to wives' attempts to

take on a productive role to fulfil maternal obligations beyond the domestic sphere, also driven by the informal and impoverished nature of the conflict-affected Timorese economy. They thus underscore the strength of gender ideology maintaining male power and the public-private divide, enabling husbands to exert control over women's ability to command an independent income and enforce a gender norm. Integral to the conjugal contract this norm viewed women's active participation in public as impermissible and agricultural activities as destined for subsistence and not economic exchange. It therefore supported wives' economic dependence on husbands and trapped them in violent marriages.

#### **7.4.1.4 GBV, Ambivalent Femininities and the Gendered Vitality of *Ema Laran-Ema Liur***

Consonant with seminal feminist critiques of marriage (Jackson 1996; 2012; Moore 1998; 2012; Whitehead 1981), the data in the study depict marriage as an institution that regulated the sexual subordination of women and many other forms of inequality between genders such as exploitative burdens of household work shouldered by women. Eager to break the traditional silence expected of women regarding the profound injustice and oppression they suffered within the family and as a result of marriage ties, many participants sought to expose the strength of patriarchy in marriage and also questioned the primacy of hegemonic masculinity – a major principle of inequality governing marital cathexis and women's experiences and responses to GBV. According to their narratives, the marriage norm relating to husband dominance in women's lives was strong. Husband dominance in the family was enabled by male decision making authority, a privilege bestowed to men by the public-private binary and the gender division of labour which is frequently mentioned in feminist scholarship as increasing the likelihood of male coercion and as a determinant of GBV (Heise 1998). In each study site men were said to benefit and enforce the public-private divide and control the private domain as heads of women's families. This afforded them decision-making authority particularly in the area of finances and family resources, as overall this is the prerogative of males across Timorese society. It was common to hear the following statements:

'Men insist that they are the head of the family so that is why women have to respect them' (FG participants Marobo).

'Men always think that they have the most power in the family and full rights over their wives, children and everything else in the house. The majority of men think they are entitled to have all the power' (FG participants Usululi).

Connell and Messerschmidt argue that hegemonic masculinity is not violent per se (2005 p. 834). In this study it was rather the 'head of house' ideal that acted to legitimise the violence as it was used to maintain husbands' dominant position. This was evident in narratives characterising women's households as headed by husbands who dominated almost every aspect of their marriages, using violence to do so. Violence was therefore gendered as it supported and was supported by the masculinity norm that to be a man is to dominate and be in charge. This perhaps indicates the fragility of masculine identity in GBV underscoring the belief that a man must dominate and control the household least he resign from his man-role and hand it over to his wife. This resonates with feminist perspectives that GBV can 'bolster a threatened or unstable sense of masculine identity' (Anderson 2005, p.862). Throughout the study husbands were depicted as deploying direct and indirect dominance over their wives. This existed on a continuum of ongoing psychological and physical violence that relied on an unequal gender order that afforded husbands greater possibilities than their wives to earn income, control resources including labour, dominate decisions and set out and enforce sexual and other marital conventions according to dominant asymmetric gender ideologies and their own desires and preferences.

A specific manifestation of hegemonic masculinities appearing to trap women in violent marriages, silence women's voices was the actual power husbands yielded exercised through an unwillingness to discuss marital issues. Some participants felt that husbands' frequent absence from the family home and constant threats and use of GBV ambushed and severely compromised their agency and freedom to talk about marriage inequalities and address gendered violence. For example it is possible to see the question of men's financial behaviour as both a mechanism to divest themselves of

masculinist forms of caregiving responsibilities and an expression of male power in marital relations. However, the way in which this was raised during the study suggests that women – even if they identified such marriage inequalities as a major reason for their lack of means to make ends meet, put food on the table and send children to school – expected this from their husbands yet felt utterly powerless to challenge them when expectations from husbands were not met. There was also a sense that women lived in constant fear of violent husbands who withheld income, many of whom came and went, conducted extra-marital sexual relations and had started other families. Amongst others, this was strongly conveyed in the narrative of Filomena whose husband's violent and intimidating behaviour entrapped her in economic deprivation and intruded into nearly every aspect of her life that she could not escape. Participants such as Agrafina, Anarilha, Feliciana and Filomena who attempted or hoped to reason or engage in dialogue with husbands were very much reliant on husbands' openness and availability to respond and in a positive way. Agrafina had been waiting for some time to avail of the 'right moment' to approach her mostly-absent husband. Meanwhile when Feliciana reported the violence to the xefi suku her husband refused to engage in the customary mediation process by failing to attend the scheduled meeting. She was also met with violence when she confronted her husband. For example:

'I found out that my husband was cheating on me. I caught him with a prostitute in Fatuhada at 3 in the morning. I went there, kicked the door open and saw it for myself. Then my husband came up from behind me and with the help of landlord they both caught me by my hair dragged me out and threw me into his car. Then we went home' (Feliciana, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

Other women too encountered re-victimisation when they challenged their husbands or attempted to leave violent relationships.

'Then one month after the miscarriage my husband started to rape me again. We had many problems and then my father-in-law died. I decided to separate from my husband. There was so much pressure on me. He beat me when I talked about separation' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged urban mother of 8, Usululi).

A number of women stated that rather than confront their abusers, they responded by remaining calm out of fear of further physical abuse, intimidation and threats of abandonment. Armanda did not confront her husband out of fear of verbal abuse that was easily triggered when her husband was drunk. 'I don't want to make him angry all the time even if he says words that hurt my heart. So I just stay calm because when he is drunk he will say all of those horrible things to me' (Armanda, housewife, 50s, mother of 7, Usululi). Fear of retaliation also determined women's ability to confront unwanted sex which was shown to be heavily influenced by the unequal power women held in the relationship vis-a-vis their husbands or dating partners (Panchanadeswaran *et al* 2007). Echoing Holland & Ramazangolu, women's submission to non-consensual sex was driven by intimidation, threats and actual use of physical force and violence (1992). Fear of physical violence and a concern that her children might witness this was a major concern for Anarilha, to the extent that she conceded to unwanted sex with her husband. There were also numerous reports of adolescent and very young women in dating relationships feeling pressured into non-consensual sexual relations by domineering boyfriends who threatened them with infidelity or abandonment.

In Marobo and Tafara, the two rural study sites, wives were described by elected woman representatives (EWR) as too terrified of violent husbands to take any action, whether confronting husbands, finding out useful information and speaking out about the violence to others or reporting violence to customary or law enforcement authorities. Wives were rendered powerless by the control domineering husbands exerted over their day to day activities, their paid and unpaid labour, physical movements and social interactions, as well as family resources from private transport and cash income to agricultural produce. This web of control placed restrictions on women, severely limiting access to practical information about reporting procedures and GBV support services in the district. That fear silenced rural women from speaking about GBV emerged over and over in the focus groups and individual narratives. As explained by Rosa an EWR:

'I think that, we as women, have to speak up. We can't continue to be shy

or quiet and follow men. When violence happens, we have to speak out and discuss it with our husbands. But generally women stay quite. One of the reasons why women won't come to the community meetings where we talk about domestic violence is because they're too afraid of their husbands' (Rosa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

Alongside fear, women's silence was reinforced by the terms and conditions of marriage and cultural beliefs about women's subordinated status and behaviour expecting wives to remain docile, obedient and accepting of their status and the violence and to be always ready to reconcile. Similar to the narratives below, it was not unusual for women to refer to male power, the disempowering terms of female gender identity and the conjugal contract for women when explaining their tolerance of the harsh and violent character of their marriages. Filomena drew on the feminine trait of endurance and forbearance as did Agrafina who waited patiently for years for the 'right moment' to bring up tensions that caused marital conflict and husband abuse.

'Women must obey their husbands. This is a consequence of marriage. She agreed to it when she married. She has no rights in marriage. Her husband has all the power' (FG discussants, Usululi).

'I just leave it. The violence comes in slaps. When he's very stressed he slaps me. I cry. I am not afraid. I am not happy. Then things go back to normal' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife and mother of 8, Harupai).

'Actually I've been planning now for a long time to talk to my husband about this problem that I cannot conceive a child. But so far I have had no time to bring it up with him' (Agrafina, middle-aged urban housewife, mother of 4, businesswoman, Usululi).

The following participants, one a woman who had experienced gendered violence and the other an elected woman representative, linked women's silence and reluctance to confront husbands to oppressive aspects of Timorese culture that assign women a subordinated position in their marriage and promote dominant constructions of femininity that expect wives to be passive, obedient and accepting towards violent husbands. According to Catarina: 'No matter what our husbands do or say, wives cannot answer or fight back' (Catarina, housewife, young mother of 8, petty trader, Usululi). Meanwhile Rosa an EWR from a rural area told me:

'I'm worried about some women, because they are too patient, even when their husbands are violent towards them. They just stay quite and obey their husbands, doing whatever they are told to do. That's because in our culture women have to obey their husbands' (Rosa, middle-aged housewife, mother of 5, EWR, Marobo).

These quotes embody a broad ideological reach, demonstrating the interaction of gendered power and authority with cultural norms assigning women inferior status and gender identity in the arena of marriage. Many other narratives too suggest that what might have been underlying women's silence and their apparent accommodation of gendered power and violence was a belief that it was inappropriate and thus nonpermissible for wives to confront their husbands or play a role in formally addressing the violence, or were not entitled to negotiate the financial consequences of separation or inherit the marital home. According to Kandiyoti this type of stance can be attributed to the differentiation between husbands and wives and the subordinated position afforded to wives arising from the public-private divide prescribing gender roles that may also shape the more unconscious aspects of women's gendered subjectivity (Kandiyoti 1988). Questioning their husbands' behaviour would have been tantamount to women questioning dominant constructions of femininity, gendered practices and positions of authority in the marriage arena and lisan.

#### **7.4.2 GBV, Hegemonic Masculinities and Sexuality**

Male power and the primacy of hegemonic masculinity also found strength in sexuality, the other gender ideology critical for maintaining marriage norms, roles and responsibilities and behaviours expected of wives and husbands. Interacting with particularly the socio-historical dimension of women's localities and 'community' level of social ecology, this ideology fed unequal power relations inherent in women's violent marriages. According to the data participants' husbands were depicted as dominating and controlling many aspects of women's lives including women's sexuality which, citing Fanon, Sen (2011) posits is rooted in the psychological make-up of oppressed manhood leading to the transformation of woman into a sexual object. Similar to other post-conflict environments characterised by high levels of SGBV

(Freedman 2012; 2016), this may be aggravated by Timor-Leste's oppressive history of colonialism and violent conflict, Specific examples of the interaction between conflict-affected heterosexual norms, roles and behaviours and cultural beliefs about men's higher status and head of household were found in urban narratives reporting marital rape and the expectation for wives to satisfy the sexual needs of husbands (FG discussants Usululi). These men would have grown up during the conflict and possibly witnessed generalised and gendered violence during the war. Furthermore urban participants experiencing GBV victimisation – many of whom appeared to be in informal marital unions – made very frequent reference to marital strain and partial or outright wife desertion, husbands having multiple sexual partners, spending their time and family income on sex, starting new relationships and on families with other women whilst coming and going as dependants themselves. These data are consistent with the scholarship concluding that typically non-formal unions, polygamy and infidelity are said to increase women's vulnerability to GBV victimisation (Kabeer 2007, 2014). For example husbands who perpetrate GBV against their wives are found to be more likely to have multiple sexual partners (Dunkle *et al* 2004 cited in Ní Rathallaigh *et al* 2015). In a number of studies in SubSaharan Africa (Dunkle *et al* 2004 cited in Ní Rathallaigh *et al* 2015), women reported an increase in marital GBV if they challenge or question their partner on his fidelity. In this study it was common for urban women's marriages to be characterised by the propensity for husbands to conduct extra-marital relationships, including casual sexual relationships and formal and informal extra marital relationships. Some husbands were said to pay for sex with sex workers. Male marital infidelity emerged as ubiquitous and normalised in urban sites. Olympia, a rural housewife and sole participant in a polygamous marriage also reported GBV victimisation. Being absent and having extramarital relationships tended to increase tension, animosity and GBV in women's family and married life. This was explained by FG discussants who stated that: 'another reason behind domestic violence is when men cheat on their wives. And when the wife asks him if he is cheating [...] he punches her because he doesn't want to give her a response' (FG discussants, Usululi). It triggered extremely violent responses from the husbands of Anarilha and Felician

when they expressed suspicions of infidelity:

'I asked him, 'why do you sleep with other women? You can sleep with me'. And he would just beat me badly, kick me' (Anarilha, separated, middle-aged mother of 8, Usululi).

'My husband suspected I was looking for the prostitute's number in his phone. So he became violent. He kicked me into the chest. I fell to the ground and he continued to kick me. Then he pulled out a knife and cut me just here on my neck' (Feliciano, middle-aged housewife, mother of 4, petty trader, Harupai).

Meanwhile Agrafina faced verbal insults, emotional degradation and intimidating tactics such as angry outbursts when she questioned her husband's prolonged absences. She resigned herself to silence as she feared repercussions such as further emotional violence and threats of spousal abandonment. In the following quote she seemed powerless and hopeless to do anything about it.

'I'm just frightened that if I ever asked my husband why is he is so abusive he will divorce me. I'm so afraid about this. I'm afraid to talk to him in case he leaves me. I know that my husband plays with another woman but I cannot care because I am too scared' (Agrafina, middle-aged urban housewife, mother of 4, businesswoman, Usululi).

There was a sense from the data that participants were reluctant and found it difficult to challenge husbands' sexual dominance that resulted in SGBV and infidelity. Women's reluctance to challenge cheating husbands was partly attributed to women's fear that lack of cooperation in accommodating husbands' extra-marital sexual unions might be a cause for further violence and/or desertion, thus rendering women powerless. It is also plausible that underlying women's reluctance to confront 'cheating husbands' were conventional norms of heterosexual relations interacting with dominant constructions of masculinity that produce and often require male dominance and female subordination. As has been found in other research (Ní Rathallaigh *et al* 2015), in this study the unequal status of women in their marriages meant that they had little control of sexual relations with their partners. For example when discussing sexual violence, several women conveyed feeling powerless and being 'under total control of the husband' and expected to satisfy their sexual needs. Likewise the manner in which

infidelity was discussed in the study too suggest that women were expected to accept their husbands' extra-marital affairs on the basis that it was not only common but there was an expectation for men to conduct sexual relations outside of their marriages. Boonzaier and de la Rey argue that marital infidelity is often justified by the 'male sexual drive' discourse which relies on the 'commonsense' notion that biology and forces beyond men's control drive men's sexuality (Boonzaier and de la Rey 2004). In this study most women reporting husband infidelity were of the opinion that forces beyond their husbands' control such as black magic and other women led them astray or drove them to it. Husbands were thus depicted as being not responsible because they innocently fell victim to external harmful forces. For example underlying Filomena's stance not to blame or challenge her husband for his abusive behaviour were norms of hypermasculinity and emphasised femininity with the former relying on the male sexual drive discourse and the latter on female subordination by blaming other women for her suffering.

'My husband, he really cares about me and my children. But maybe its because of that woman [...] I don't know, does she use the black magic or what but he is under her spell. So sometimes when he comes back home he is good to me and then other times he is not. My suffering started when my husband started to have an affair with another woman' (Filomena, middle-aged housewife, mother of 8, Harupai).

It is possible that the social norm justifying the 'male sexual drive' discourse, the cultural expectation of remaining married and the stigma associated with marital breakdown, tied with concern about post-separation poverty, meant that women such as Filomena expected and accepted husband dominance in sexual relations and husband infidelity. Her case below demonstrates the multiple effects the structuring of unequal social relations had on her personal and financial autonomy and agentic capacity to manage and respond to gendered violence whilst also fulfil her obligations and duties as mother and wife.

Reluctant to speak to friends, seek help or report her violent husband to the authorities, Filomena kept the violence private so as to protect her children from the

shame and disgrace she experienced. She explained that: 'I do not want other people to know about our problem. It is not good for my children'. Filomena was compelled to comply with her husband's violence, given the wider socio-economic context where income and housing poverty was a gendered phenomenon. She lacked any access to and control over cash income, the availability of which was controlled and kept to a minimum by her husband who restricted her physical mobility and prevented her from ever earning an independent income. Dominating her narrative was not just material poverty but also the combined effects of marital and maternal altruism. Filomena was a middle-aged housewife and mother of 8 children. She did not dare confront her husband or answer him back when he roared abuse at her, a stance which may be viewed as a form of compliance in accordance with traditional constructions of femininity. Neither did she challenge him when he beat her or openly conducted an extra-marital affair. She did not convey reporting her violent husband to law enforcement authorities or engaging in customary marital dispute mechanisms. She told no-one about the abuse except myself, the researcher. The data suggest underlying Filomena's 'passive acceptance' of the violence and decision not to separate from her husband was a myriad of power inequalities in her marriage. Not least was her husband's extra-marital affairs, the manner in which he came and went from the marital home, his discretionary presence and lack of availability to discuss matters of concern to Filomena. It is also plausible that Filomena did not believe herself entitled to challenge her husband's adulterous and violent behaviour, initiate or have a role to play in the resolution of their marital disputes or inherit the marital home should she decide to end the marriage to escape the violence. This can be explained by her subordinated position in the marriage given the differentiation between husbands and wives arising from prescribed gender roles interacting with social norms that may shape the more unconscious aspects of women's gendered subjectivity (Kandiyoti 1988). Furthermore questioning her subordinate status and her husband's behaviour and demanding rights to the marital home would have been tantamount to Filomena questioning traditional gender identities and femininities such as acceptance, certain hypermasculine privileges – husband dominance, infidelity and use of force to control

wives – as well as the customary Timorese practice of male inheritance of land and property. Hitherto deeply shamed and humiliated by her husband's adulterous behaviour Filomena was also disinclined to attract public attention to what was a private matter between husband and wife. Disrupting the status quo might have placed Filomena in a precarious position resulting in further disgrace and loss of respectability as well as further husband violence. The severity of the beatings her husband regularly inflicted on her and the constant threats of violence were all part of a tightly knit web of coercive control – a kind of ecology of power and control – that terrorised her and rendered her powerless and silent. As well as the physical and financial restrictions imposed on her, she also lacked time given her role as a mother, the traditional gender division of labour and domestic obligations in her household. It is possible that this situation reinforced her powerlessness, rendering Filomena unable to access information, services or report the violence to relevant authorities or to envisage providing for her children alone post-separation.

Filomena did not identify gendered processes as sources of pain or oppression. She relieved her husband of responsibility for the extra-marital affair, placing the blame on the 'other woman'. However rather than outright compliance with gender-conforming practices, her stance to not challenge her husband could be seen as passive resistance or a bargain with patriarchy (Kandiyoti 1988), given the levels of constraints she faced, not least the threat of violence, public disgrace and her own income poverty. Echoing England (2010 cited in Moore 2015) I argue that what Filomena was doing was not accepting her husband's violence but reacting to the gender structure and broader context of disadvantage in ways that would not jeopardise her children's immediate welfare or her position as a mother and 'respectable' woman in the community. Furthermore, though she did not confront her husband, she demonstrated her resistance by telling me and asking me to make public her experiences. I argue that ambivalent femininities characterise Filomena's stance and response. Forced to draw on 'compliance' strategies, she combined these with some degree of resistance (Moore 2015) and maternal altruism, careful as she was to keep the peace, divert violence and continue raising her children as best she could.

In sum, and similar to Boonzaier's study in South Africa, the findings suggest that what husbands might have been reacting to was their own economic disempowerment in the public domain which they perceived as a direct threat to their superior status in the private domain. It is possible that husbands were attempting to maintain a hold on dominant forms of marriage, masculinity and head of household status through the perpetuation of violence (Boonzaier 2005). Cultural beliefs about marriage and men's head of household status also interacted with male sexual drive discourses and heterosexual norms, roles and behaviours expecting men to dominate sexual and marital relations. This is consonant with studies attributing high prevalence of SGBV to the dominant patriarchal thinking that privileges male sexuality while suppressing and/or controlling female sexuality. Together these findings suggest that GBV supported and was supported by two dominant interconnected gendered ideologies critical for maintaining marriage and women's emotional and economic dependency on it. These were constantly evoked and interwoven in women's daily life to uphold principal marriage norms. One related to sexuality and the other to the public-private dichotomy, both of which gave primacy to hegemonic masculinities and relied on unequal relations of power. Corroborating Davies and True (2015) who link men's sense of entitlement to sexual services in the aftermath of conflict to pervasive GBV and gendered experiences during war, the social construction of GBV was reinforced by women's localities and the wider conflict-affected context. Also a legacy of the conflict was the significance of the informalisation of the Timorese economy - that appeared to be 'thwarting' breadwinning masculinities and driving male disempowerment in the public domain.

### **7.5 Conclusion**

Alongside motherhood, and resonating with Siskind (1978) and Rubin (1975), kinship and marriage featured as powerful determinants of the way in which ideas about gender are constructed. In particular, the institution of marriage emerged in women's narratives as a key instrument for the subordination of women (Pateman 1988, Moore 1988, Jackson 2003) linking into wider patriarchal cultural forms which inhibited women's agency and well-being and increased their risk to GBV victimisation. Marriage

was also depicted as the dominant construct shaping women's experiences of GBV. This is consistent with Merry who for Fiji, asserts that: '[g]ender violence is embedded in enduring patterns of kinship and marriage' (2009 cited in Chambard 2014).

GBV is perhaps the most compelling manifestation of unequal power in intimate and other interpersonal familial relationships (Rew *et al* 2013). It is a deliberate expression of authority and a means of exerting coercive control over women. That women's subordinated subject position – as wives – constituted the basis of their experiences of GBV was a major finding in this study. Grasping a holistic and nuanced meaning of this required digging deep to discover the relationship between gendered violence and the continuum of everyday practices of power and control in women's lives. A structural analysis of marriage and a gender relational-intersectional perspective exploring the mingling of the interactional and the structural with the symbolic (Thompson and Walker 1989; West and Zimmerman 1987) was crucial for this endeavour and for visibilising the conditions under which the social construction of GBV took place in women's marriages.

To come to grips with the gendered meaning of violence in marriage, the chapter unravelled the role this powerful gender construct played in its social construction, elaborating on how hegemonic gender norms structuring social practice were constantly evoked, created, sustained and interwoven in everyday kinship, conjugal, maternal and familial relations, fed into a web of coercive control of women and increased their vulnerability to and entrapment in GBV. The analysis points to an interdependency between gender norms inherent in marital cathexis and other powerful norms in the arenas of kinship, family and motherhood that worked out asymmetrically with unequal effects for women, creating sites for women's subordination and GBV. That gender was fluid and also transcended every aspect of women's maternal life suggests a nexus between gender, marriage, motherhood and violence. This complex nexus was underpinned by the interaction between two dominant gendered ideologies critical for maintaining marriage and kinship. The first was the public-private divide and appropriate behaviours ascribed to women and men.

The second related to the ideology of sexuality.

Dominating women's vulnerability and responses to GBV victimisation was the interaction of social, cultural and economic norms with power inequalities shaping women's interpersonal relationships and social support mechanisms critical to women attempting to live a life free from violence. Consistent with Connell's theory of gender and power (Connell 1987) the analysis thus suggests a strong interdependency between marital cathexis, the structure of power and the exploitation of wives' paid and unpaid labour. It identified power relations as having a clear link with violence, whether in terms of the threat of violence, acts of violence and responses to it. Discerning how power processes might have been feeding into the web of GBV, creating violent gender relations and providing a mechanism for its perpetration, the findings identified power as having multiple interdependent forms and sources at the individual and societal level. The study thus acknowledges the multiple dimensions of gendered power, from women's control over money to cultural beliefs about men's rights and privileges in interpersonal relationships. In this study power differentials between women and men and between women were a fundamental element of the structure of gender in women's everyday married lives (Connell 1987). Unequal power relations in women's interpersonal relationships were found to influence their vulnerability and responses to GBV, where patriarchy, through coercive control (Stark 2007), allowed violent men and women maintain power and control in women's lives. Coercive control is a term used within the literature to describe the limiting of a woman's freedom (Stark 2007). Power differentials were evident both in the authority and coercion exerted by perpetrators and the powerlessness of abused women that placed restrictions on their agentic capacity when attempting to manage violent relationships. Paying attention to women's accounts of power and powerlessness and the daily occurrence and practices of coercive control in their familial, marital and intergenerational relations, the analysis identified two particular dimensions, one being the dominance of 'husband' power and the other, 'mother-in-law' power.

GBV arose out of unequal power relations between women and men that privileged

men and resulted in domination and discrimination against women by men. According to the data, the heterosexual marriage relationship was male-dominated and this and women's subordination was tempered by the interdependence of social norms, social structures of labour and power relations and emotional attachment in the arena of marital relationships. The findings highlighted the privileging of hegemonic masculinity and the presence of unequal power relations in women's married lives that favoured husbands. These interacted with personal and structural level forces as well as asymmetrical gender ideologies about sexuality and the public-private divide. Husbands' domineering practices constituted a web of coercive control and a continuum of gender violence that were inextricably woven into women's everyday lives, entrapping them in violent relationships. This web of violence was strong because it was not only imposed externally by a clearly identifiable source of power – patriarchy – but also reproduced internally by women's subordination and powerlessness as wives. Another underlying force giving rise to women's victimisation of GBV were inequalities between women. The study also found this web of control to be exceptionally strong, not only because it was reproduced internally by subordinated women's lack of power, but also because it was imposed externally not by one but two identifiable sources of power – male and female power.

Overall these findings attribute the social construction of GBV and women's experiences – including the widespread tendency for them to accommodate or feel compelled to adapt to GBV – to unequal power relations acting from inside and outside the marriage arena. This suggests the need to consider assumptions about the cultural interpretations of gendered power and marital norms as these condition the social relationships and structural context under which GBV and women's responses to it take place.

## CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION

### Marriage, Motherhood and the Relational, Inter-subjective, Intersectional Realities of Gender

#### **8.0 Introduction**

This concluding chapter critically discusses the contributions the present study of gender makes in terms of easing some of the tensions troubling gender mainstreaming. The chapter is divided into three sections. Following this introduction, section one unfolds the chapters of the thesis, briefly returning to the study's rationale and research questions, the empirical context and the methodological and analytical approach. It also discusses the main patterns that emerged in the findings. These concern the structural inequities of mis-recognition, mal-redistribution and lack of reward for paid and unpaid work underpinning women's experiences of gendered poverty. These three basic structural inequities contribute towards the social construction of GBV, the most compelling manifestation of gender power inequalities in marital and other interpersonal relations (Rew *et al* 2013).

Section two focuses on the contributions of the research. Synthesising participants' depictions of everyday life, it brings meaning to *the* overarching contribution - that women are 'individuals-in-relation' (England 2005 cited in Lynch 2010). From this insight I establish three central points through which I draw out the major theoretical, methodological and policy implications that help to fill existing knowledge gaps in the field. The first of these points convey the relationality of gender in terms of women's *inter-subjective* realities. Second is the significance to women's lives of *masculinities* and the third point concerns *intersectionality* and the complex nexus between relations of love, care and solidarity with other domains of social life, namely the economic, political and cultural (Esquivel 2014; Lynch 2010). The discussion in this section brings meaning to the continuum of gender, poverty and violence, by problematising specific

issues relating to the paradox through the lens of marriage and motherhood – the two most salient constructs appearing to turn women's households into a bearer of gender, serve patriarchal interests and engender women's relational vulnerabilities.

The third section concludes the chapter, briefly summarising the patterns and contributions in terms of understanding the multidimensionality, intractability and fluidity inhering the social construction of gender and the implications this has for *transformative* gender mainstreaming scholarship, policy and praxis. Viewing gender in this heterodox way recognises and deconstructs the links between *affective* gender inequality and GBV. This implies making care visible in development paradigms as the foundation of relational well-being - of living well together and in peace.

## **8.1. Revisiting the Aims, Approach, Context and Findings of the Study**

### **8.1.1 Exploring the Gender Mainstreaming Conundrum**

The first four chapters of the thesis established the study aims, objectives, context, theoretical and conceptual frameworks and methodology. Chapter one set out the structure of the thesis and the research questions and rationale for this type of enquiry which was to undertake a theoretical and empirical critique of gender in a conflict-affected context based on women's subjective experiences of everyday life. Justifying the selection of Timor-Leste as the case-study country, chapter two established the empirical context providing relevant information in terms of the contemporary modern democratic governance landscape in Timor-Leste and state-led development frameworks and the public policy context. It also described the gender relations inhering within indigenous socio-cultural and political structures and the multiple dimensions of gendered poverty, GBV and the status of women in the post-independent liberal state. It concluded with a brief overview of state-led gender mainstreaming, the dominant approach addressing gender inequality during the country's first decade of independence (2002-2012). Chapter three had two functions, the first of which was to bring to the fore the conundrum troubling gender mainstreaming by reviewing the relevant critical gender mainstreaming scholarship. The other purpose was to establish the framework designed to respond to the feminist call to bring substantive meaning to the concept of gender that is intelligible to local contexts and in doing so enhance gender mainstreaming's potential to transform gender relations and end gender inequalities (Grabska 2011; Subrahmanian 2004). It thus set out a structuralist perspective and main theories used to analyse the relationality, inter-subjectivity intersectionality of gender, understand the dual nexus of gender-poverty-violence and of marriage and motherhood and break open the abstractions of the history, culture and post-independence context of Timor-Leste. Chapter 4 described the research paradigm and methods used to gather and interpret the data that drew on constructivist, Southern perspectives and solidarity-based feminist standpoint methodology.

### 8.1.2 Findings

Chapters five, six and seven presented and analysed the data collected during the fieldwork that alerted us to an intractable and complex gender-poverty-violence nexus pervading women's lives. Chapter five described women's experiences – as mothers and wives - of everyday family and married life that was dominated by pervasive and multiple forms of gendered poverty and GBV. Chapter six analysed women's accounts to explain the gender-poverty nexus from the perspective of motherhood whilst chapter seven focused on GBV and marriage. Drawing on Heise's framework and Connell's theory of gender and power, the data in these chapters indicate that the prevailing gender norms underlying marriage and motherhood are relational, intersectional and structured within women's prevailing socio-cultural-historical-economic context. As a heterogeneous group, women were made poor and vulnerable to gendered exploitation and violence by multiple axes of diversity including their marital status, rural versus urban residence, household composition, stage in the life course such as age and relative dependency of children, and access to resources from beyond the household (Chant 2007b). In relation to parenting and marital status, these emerged as distinctive elements shaping women's inter-subjective realities. The study provides consistent evidence of the severe hardships faced by women rearing children in the absence of fathers and support from them. It links these hardships to gender disparities in rights, entitlements and capabilities, the informalisation of paid labour and the erosion of kin-based support networks through conflict. As in many parts of the global South, these women did not appear to be compensated for earnings shortfalls through 'transfer payments' from external third parties such as the state, or 'absent fathers'. Echoing Bibars in relation to non-contributory poverty alleviation programmes in Egypt, lone mothers in this study were not provided with an institutional alternative to the male provider (Bibar 2001 cited in Chant 2007b). However and following Chant's critique of the femininisation of poverty orthodoxy (2008), these data do not depict female heads as the poorest of the poor or worse off as compared to married women rearing families with co-resident husbands or husbands who 'came and went'. Indeed some women clearly indicated feeling better

off without men even when their own earnings were low or prone to fluctuation (Chant 2007b). Distinguishing between gender and poverty, Jackson memorably reminds us that the subordination of women is not caused by poverty, but rather oppressive gender ideologies, roles, identities and opportunities, making women an important category in their own right (Jackson 1996). Citing freedom from male diktat, resource depleting behaviours and GBV, a number of women heading their own families indicated feeling better able to cope with hardships. Meanwhile the vast majority of married women in the study seemed just as vulnerable to affective, corporeal and economic hardships and exploitation but for different reasons such as their position of subjugation, dependence and domination by husbands and mothers-in law that made them vulnerable to exploitation and GBV. Overall and supporting Sen's (1990) 'cooperative conflict' model of intra-household bargaining and resource distribution, there is consistent evidence questioning the extent to which wives benefited even nominally from having co-resident husbands.

Moving on to the 3 salient patterns emerging from the data, the first is that the onus for dealing with poverty in the 4 study sites was highly feminised in that, Timorese women shouldered the bulk of unpaid domestic work and care of their families whose survival was also often dependent on their economic efforts. Related to this women had to deal with the lack of money, hunger, poor housing, stress, fatigue and voicelessness. They also lived with constant threats and acts of GBV. Striking a chord with Chant's feminisation of poverty critique, foremost among my conclusions is that women's subjective experiences of gendered poverty are not 'just about lack of income' (Fukuda-Parr 1999 cited in Chant 2008). Illustrating more holistic understandings of poverty found in the GAD literature and research such as in The Gambia, the Philippines and Costa Rica (Chant 2008; 2009b), it extends far beyond the severe monetary deprivations and poor living conditions at household level to include the mounting responsibilities and obligations women bore in family survival, their lack of decision-making power and ability to *command* and *allocate* resources and as well as women's vulnerability to marital conflict, coercion and GBV. Reflecting ingrained gender inequalities in intra-household dynamics and burdens of dealing with poverty,

the conflict-affected gender-poverty-violence nexus in this research appeared to be not only multidimensional but also intractable which the study attributes to its complexity.

These findings also substantiate Whitehead's (2003 p. 8) observation that: 'men and women are often poor for different reasons, experience poverty differently, and have different capacities to withstand and/or escape poverty'. Timorese women bore the main and in many cases sole responsibility for ensuring the welfare and survival of families and for the day-to-day running of households including those headed by men. This took place in situations of severe material hardship. Consonant with research conducted by the UNDP of developing and developed economies (Rodenberg 2004 cited in Chant 2008) women working outside the home continued to perform the bulk of unpaid tasks comprising domestic care and love labour for families whose members often included husbands and sons but also fathers, brothers and male in-laws. In joint-family settings it was daughters-in law who shouldered the bulk of domestic work. Men on the other hand found it difficult fulfilling the role of the family breadwinner, but were also barely undertaking domestic work or playing a part in the care of their children. Exceptions to this were extremely rare arising only when women were physically unable, not present or unavailable to undertake domestic work owing to childbirth or paid work commitments. These data testify to Pearson's description of the 'impressive resistance of men to an equal involvement in domestic work' (2000 p. 225 cited in Kabeer 2007), and other research on the Global South (Chant 2010; Kabeer 2007), noting the rigidity of this pattern irrespective of husbands' employment status. Gender disparities in domestic and financial responsibilities and workloads also resonate with a substantial body of research conducted in areas affected by conflict (Chant 2007a; Chant 2007b; Chant 2010; Cornwall *et al* 2007; Esquivel 2014; Kabeer 2007; Sepúlveda 2013). A related dimension of women's subjective experience of gendered poverty were their burdens of emotional and physical exhaustion, anxiety, deprivation and affective relationships. Adding an even stronger *affective* dimension to inequalities in gendered care were the profound levels of marital dissatisfaction and low morale and sadness women felt as wives and mothers. Worn out and distressed, women were frustrated at being exposed to forms of poverty that affected and

concerned their husbands far less. This unequal distribution of affective burdens and poverty is the first element underlying the gender-poverty-violence nexus.

The second pattern detected in the findings is that women seemed to have had little choice but to deal with poverty on a daily basis. In any study site did participants convey feeling entitled to, having a say in or being able to negotiate the distribution of family responsibilities and the burdens of poverty. Yet many expressed dissatisfaction to me about having to perform large, heavy reproductive and productive workloads with negligible support from husbands. By participating in the study, they sought recognition for their relentless hard work and went to great lengths to visibilise and make their hardships and suffering known. Still no matter how heavy the weight of responsibility or lop-sided the inputs and burdens, women rarely reported having ever deviated from the feminine norm of deference, neglected or complained openly about their duties or encouraged husbands to share with them their workloads and some level of responsibility. This infers that the idea of '*mudança*' (Tetum: *change*) or re-distribution lay outside the realm of possibility for the vast majority of women, whether in relation to an increase in men's inputs into reproductive work and household incomes or reductions in husbands' discretionary expenditure. This pattern seemed to be driven by culturally-condoned expectations of female *altruism*. It also supports Kabeer's assertion that:

'Gender often operates through the unquestioned acceptance of power. Thus women who, for example, internalise their lesser claim on household resources, or accept violence at the hands of their husbands, do so because to behave otherwise is considered outside the realm of possibility' (Kabeer 2005, p.14).

Meanwhile power inequalities dominating women's households and marriages provided men with certain privileges that enabled them to escape the daily grind and hardships dealing with family poverty. Women in all four sites reported husbands as absolving themselves from core family responsibilities by being absent for long periods, indulging in resource depleting recreational activities, appropriating wives' earnings and/or withholding their own earnings and being too drunk or ill to work leaving wives

to rear their children and shoulder the burden of primary and secondary poverty. Thus the second aspect of the gender-poverty-violence nexus would appear to be the persistent and compulsory character of the unequal distribution of burdens of care and poverty, in that women seemed to have had no alternative other than to assume the full weight of responsibility and bear the brunt of coping with primary *and* secondary poverty brought on by husbands becoming ill or being unable or unwilling to work (Sweetman 2005).

Third and related to this was the unequal distribution of corresponding benefits. Notwithstanding a few exceptions, Timorese women typically did not convey reaping any benefits for their hard work and personal income. In her seminal work Fraser argues that transformation of structural inequities of mal-distribution and mis-recognition requires parity of participation and 'representation' of one's own situation on one's own terms, based on the idea of 'subjective' knowledge (Fraser *et al* 2004, p.8). In this study, the femininisation of affective and economic responsibility, inputs and altruisms implied the femininisation of exploitation and subordination. There were very few reports of women feeling empowered or gaining ground in terms of minimising childcare and domestic workloads, acquiring greater personal autonomy, exercising a voice or negotiating and decision-making power, key components of marriage equality. The findings suggest that patriarchal marriage and its control over women's mothering led to the exploitation of maternal strength, altruism and compulsory hard work and at having to deal with the lack of money, hunger and poor housing. Furthermore, it would appear that these aspects of women's inter-subjective realities contributed towards and evolved into GBV. Meanwhile irrespective of the level of inputs and participation in the day to day running of the household, men as husbands and fathers maintained their position of dominance and authority enabling them to free-ride and control women's time, labour and family resources and indulge in individualistic and resource-depleting activities. The women's accounts of men's propensity to spend their own and their wives' money on themselves echoes with Chant (2010a), Ferree (1990), Jackson (2012) and others who argue that family resources are not shared among all members equally. Such manifestations of marital

inequality led to deep levels of secondary poverty, constructed affective and economic burdens and compounded women's emotional and material deprivation and exploitation. Exposed to extreme domestic gender inequality and servitude in circumstances of severe poverty, women were left feeling voiceless, powerless, demoralised and vulnerable to further exploitation. The women's accounts in this research clearly illustrate what Kabeer terms 'relational vulnerability' (2014, p.2). Summing up this third element of the gender-poverty-violence nexus, it is not only material poverty and the persistence of gender differentiated burdens and vulnerabilities that defined women's subjective experiences of gender and poverty but also the strong links these elements had to GBV.

The following section synthesises key contributions gleaned from these insights and patterns and discusses their implications in terms of de-constructing the complexities underlying the gender-poverty-violence nexus and what this means for understanding gender.

## **8.2 Contributions of the Research**

### **8.2.1 The Relational, Inter-subjective, Intersectional Realities of Gender**

The overarching contribution emerging from the research is that, to address gender concerns adequately, women must be seen as '*individuals-in-relation*', implying that, as 'relational agents', women and their affective realities, everyday situations, 'choices', preferences and practices are driven by their relationality (Chant 2008; Kabeer 2014; Lynch *et al* 2009a). Resonating with Kittay (1990) the study substantiates Lynch's salient argument that: 'Humans are relational beings and their relationality is intricately bound to their dependencies and interdependencies' (2010 p. 7). From this major insight, three central contributions can be gleaned, the first of which conveys the relationality of gender in terms of women's *inter-subjective* realities and the distinctions and interrelatedness between women's simultaneous family roles and female identities as women, mothers and wives. Synthesising participants' depictions of motherhood as an institution under patriarchy and oppressive to women (Rich

1976), the study illuminates a striking insight, that 'women are strong as mothers but made weak by being wives' (Johnson 1988), p.269). This sheds light on the manner in which the social construction and operationalisation of gender norms structured women's inter-subjectivities. It also illustrates how these disciplined and were disciplined through the gender-poverty-violence nexus. The current study tries to explicate this complex nexus by substantiating this mutually constitutive relationship. It lays out a major contribution of the study which is the significance of *patriarchal marriage and motherhood* as key inter-related constructs existing within a complex network of the contextually manifested Timorese femininities-in-patriarchy. It substantiates the need to transform the gender constructs of marriage and motherhood - key aspects of women's inter-subjectivities - to be seen as integral to transformative gender mainstreaming (Jackson 1996).

Moving on from this is the significance to women's lives of *masculinities* and men's beliefs, complex roles and identities as fathers and husbands. This second implication of the relationality of gender construct intimates that the varieties of Timorese masculinities affecting men's conjugal and paternal roles are in need of attention and paramount to a transformative paradigm that shakes off a chronic preoccupation with women and assists gender mainstreaming make the painful and protracted ontological leap from WID to GAD (White 1997). Substantiating the global and Timor-Leste feminist scholarship, women's narratives testify to discriminating behaviour of gender norms that became relaxed during the conflict only to have contracted in the post-Independence period - as is typical when war ends - as, amid the re-vitalisation of *lisan* and pressures for society to return to some semblance of 'normality', women have been expected to return to the 'natural' order and 'their 'traditional' roles that requires them to embrace and specialise in the domestic sphere (Enloe 2004; Pankhurst 2012; Kent and Kinsella 2014). Related to this has been the emergence of a certain kind of 'militarised' or 'hyper' masculinity (Enloe 2004) also described as an 'aggressive and frequently misogynist masculinity' that typically relies on a view that women's proper place is in the domestic rather than public sphere and that women are to be passive, subservient, submissive and obedient towards their husbands and in-laws. In this study

such female norms appear to have limited women's agency including self-efficacy and ability to act and control resources to make decisions in the family (Boudet *et al* 2013). This reinforces problematic binaries that re-construct the male breadwinner-female carer model (Fraser 1994) whilst also maintaining views of 'men as combatants and political actors' and women as 'naturally' peaceful home-makers and carers requiring male protection (Charlesworth 2008; Kent and Kinsella 2014). Such gender binaries appeared fundamental to participants' inter-subjective, affective, material and violent realities. This substantiates reports regarding their familiarity to Timorese society post-independence which continues to be deeply gendered and hierarchical (Niner 2013; Sarmiento 2012) and dominated by cosmology, patriarchy and the Timorese gendered concept of duality within which kinship, marriage and the family are essential inter-related features (Narciso 2010). It raises questions as to how can such inequalities underpinning dualities fundamental to Timorese society and ways of living be transformed?

The third implication of the relationality of gender construct concerns *intersectionality* and the complex nexus between relations of love, care and solidarity with other domains of social life, namely the economic, political and cultural (Esquivel 2014; Eyben and Fontana 2011; Lynch 2010). This insight is gleaned not least from the presence of crisis tendencies generated by shifts and continuities in the social construction of gender norms underlying both maternal and marital cathexis. Echoing Enloe and Connell the contribution here underscores the tensions produced by the interactions between gender norms and female agency that transgressed and disrupted Timorese logic and blurred distinctions between the public-private sphere that for Timorese women was based on necessity given their impoverished patriarchal familial and wider post-conflict context. The findings of the research corroborate Pearse and Connell's (2016) point concerning the interconnections between norms, women's agency and *intersectionality*. Also substantiating Heise's elaboration of the ecological framework, it attributes the gender-poverty-violence nexus not to any one cause but rather a constellation of elements interacting at various levels of the social ecology (1998). These include women's wider socio-historical and socio-cultural

contexts, their immediate situation comprising interpersonal relations, family circumstances and women's individual situation characterised by multiple axes of diversity. This implies that gendered poverty, GBV and the links between the two are conflict-related but also products of more generally unequal gender relations implicit in pre-colonial Timorese society interacting with the wider post-colonial conflict-affected political economy (Erturk 2009; Freedman 2012; Kabeer 2014; Niner 2016; True 2012).

Understanding gender as socially constructed by the intersectional nature of affective-economic-political-cultural dimensions of social life also draws attention to the importance of *emotions*. These tend to be omitted within political egalitarian theory owing to the gendered public/private division and hierarchy that neglects the affective domain as an independent site of injustice (Lynch 2010). This stems from a two-dimensional conception of justice, with redistribution and recognition representing the two fundamental and mutually irreducible dimensions of social justice (Fraser 2008 cited in Lynch 2010). The implication of the contribution here is that the gendered politics of care governing women's affective relational realities need to be positioned at the heart of gender analysis and not as a derivative or in a secondary sense. It means that if a transformative gender mainstreaming approach is ever to re-structure the underlying framework generating gendered poverty and GBV, it must be based on a critical understanding of gender as *relational-intersectional*. This implies rescuing affective realities from the sub-altern trap by taking into account the inter-relationship between affective relations with other social systems including the economic, political and cultural, and between each of these (Esquivel 2014; Eyben and Fontana 2011; Lynch *et al* 2009a; Walby 2009; Squires 2009). This substantiates Lynch who highlights the importance of affective equality for producing a society governed by principles of deep egalitarianism. She further states that:

'The significance of all of this for public policy is that it is not possible just to address problems of inequality or social injustice in one social system without addressing inequalities in related social systems. Inequalities are intersectional and deeply interwoven because human beings have multidimensional, structurally influenced identities that are constantly in flux' (Lynch 2010, p. 7).

Discussed in greater detail in section 8.3, overall in terms of gender mainstreaming, this contribution points to the need for a *holistic* and *nuanced* approach to be adopted in a critical gender-transformatory framework, if the gender mainstreaming scholarship, policy and praxis are to have any potential in coming to grips with the gender-poverty-violence nexus and ending gender inequalities in conflict-affected contexts (True 2013). Meanwhile and dealt with in the next sub-section 8.2.2, such an approach involves bringing deeper meaning to the continuum of gender, poverty and violence by problematising specific issues related to the paradox through the lens of marriage and motherhood – the two most salient constructs appearing to turn women's households into a bearer of gender, serving patriarchal interests and engendering women's relational vulnerabilities. Drawing out the major implications of the study, I now elaborate on the multidimensionality of gender norms underlying the two interrelated gender constructs, specifically their *relational-intersubjective-intersectional* attributes. This means focusing on the interdependency between norms constructing marriage and motherhood and dominant models of masculinity and femininity and on the intersections these had with women's family situations, interpersonal relationships, localities and the wider conflict-affected context (Eturk 2007; 2009; True 2012).

### **8.2.2 Marriage, Motherhood and the Continuum of Gender, Poverty and Violence**

Together, marriage and motherhood emerged as the universally prescribed destiny, an important source of security and respectability and the dominant and expected social arrangement for adult Timorese women. As institutions both were depicted as 'bearers of gender' (Elson 1994), working out *asymmetrically* with unequal effects for women. Marriage was often portrayed in 'instrumental' terms, in the sense that women's expectations of their conjugal relationships emphasised material security more often than desire, affection and emotional companionship. It was also highly patriarchal in that, throughout the study wives were conveyed as subordinate to husbands to whom they were expected to be wholly dedicated and serve (Moore 1988, Jackson 2012). This finding echoes Chant's observation for The Gambia, the Philippines and Costa Rica (2007a) and Lavinias and Nicoll's for Brazil. According to the latter:

'the conjugal contract ... places women in a relationship of subordination and dependence in the family ambit and ... a sexual division of labour which reduces their autonomy and compromises their potential as human beings' (2006 cited in Chant 2007a).

According to the gender *relational-intersubjective-intersectional* perspective, the social construction of gender in marriage and motherhood found strength in the mingling of the interactional and the structural with the symbolic (Thompson and Walker 1989; West and Zimmerman 1987). This too generated conditions under which gendered care relations and GBV were reproduced in women's lives. In this study the heterosexual marriage relationship linked into wider patriarchal cultural forms (Moore 1988) which inhibited women's agency and well-being and increased their risk to GBV victimisation. Marriage was male-dominated and this and women's subordination in it was tempered by the interdependence of social norms, social structures of labour and power relations and emotional attachment in the arena of marital relationships. Alongside women's non-economic dependency on husbands other emotional components inhering marital cathexis were the roles of women and men. These were deeply interconnected with symbolic conditions and normative influences encompassing the cultural practice of *barlaque* and collectivism and family orientation. These acted together to construct a understandings of gender based on difference and specialisation.

The study underscores the presence and strength of the structures of inequality pervading women's lives and that are the root cause of their experiences of GBV (Freedman 2016; O' Rourke cited in Boesten and Wilding 2015). A critical insight generated by women's voices is that through marriage, gender inequalities - manifested in the control of women's mothering and the exploitation of maternal strength and hard work – contributed and often evolved into domestic servitude, exploitation and multiple forms of GBV. Erasing the false distinctions between gender inequalities and GBV and between different forms of GBV, this substantiates Kelly's (1988) concept of a spectrum or a range of everyday inequalities, interactions and violent behaviours as being part of the same continuum of behaviour that reinforces

the normalisation of GBV. In both rural and urban communities, women were responsible for the day to day welfare and well-being of their families which typically meant they shouldered heavy and mostly unequal care and financial burdens whilst also dealing with the lack of money, hunger, poor housing, exhaustion and anxiety. Those rearing families in the presence of husbands also lived with constant threats and acts of GBV. By virtue of the gender norms relating to (re)production, husbands meanwhile escaped childcare and housework whilst their privileged bargaining position afforded them power to command shares of household resources that were not commensurate with their earnings. Mindful of the need to avoid essentialising constructions of 'female altruism' and 'male egoism', husbands were frequently presented as prone to retaining more of their earnings for discretionary personal expenditure, whilst women compelled to work for pay appeared to devote the bulk if not all of their earnings to household expenditure. Reductions, irregularities and omissions in husbands' financial contributions led to severe 'secondary poverty' which in addition to pre-existing levels of family poverty fuelled women's affective and economic anxieties and exhausting levels of maternal-conjugal altruism compelling them to shoulder the burden of survival as both 'shock absorbers' *and* carers (Chant 2007a). There was little data showing women to have gained personally from any of this. Evidence was also remarkably absent of non-breadwinning husbands forfeiting possibly their few remaining masculine privileges that exempted them from unpaid domestic chores. Bringing money into the home did not seem to afford women recognition or reward or alter marital power asymmetries that would increase female power to negotiate and leverage lighter workloads. It also did not appear to tame male behaviours that were depicted as 'egoistic' or pacify husbands subscribing to hyper and violent masculinities. Moreover all of these injustices seemed mostly tolerated by participants who, whilst frustrated and exhausted, depicted them as expected aspects of the every day life. Almost nowhere in the study did women convey having challenged husbands or looked to re-distribute inputs, no matter how injurious inequalities were to household or maternal welfare. Women, including those earning a personal income, did not manifest self-efficacy or a sense of entitlement to leverage for

themselves a fairer affective deal in the household, not to mind convey a belief that acting is possible (Boudet *et al* 2013). This points to the intractable presence of hegemonic gender norms underlying women's internalised subjugated status, their 'natural' assignment to the private sphere of unpaid work and unequal intrahousehold power relations that forged strong links between patriarchal marriage and motherhood. Rao and Walton express concern with this 'inequality of agency' and its central role in perpetuating gender inequality (Rao and Walton 2004 cited in Boudet *et al* 2013). Women's lack of efficacy also reflects the constant dialogue between gendered moral values with the social construction of male power and female vulnerability inherent in marital *and* maternal cathexis. This ultimately shaped women's agency and affective and economic 'preferences' and practices (Folbre 2012) by constraining their ability as *wives* and *mothers* to contemplate, act and negotiate in their own interests.

In relation to the power of maternal cathexis and women's intrinsic sense of gendered identity and personhood, the evidence conveys that corporeal and affective stress, strains and costs imposed on women signified trade-offs against the costs of norm violation. These included social sanctions and emotional discomfort expressed in some narratives as the kinds of painful feelings of maternal guilt, shame or anxiety associated with female insubordination or perceived maternal 'inadequacy' and 'incompetency' (West and Zimmerman 1987). There was a sense from the data that some women might not have wanted to re-distribute their workloads, roles and responsibilities they were so invested in, even if the power they yielded from these was nominal. Redistribution would not only threaten intensive motherhood fundamental to women's moral identity and adulthood, but also thwart breadwinning masculinities and caring femininities, disrupt kin relations and signify disrespect for aspects of *lisan* such as *barlaque* and the Timorese logic assigning women full responsibility for care and domestic work. This suggests that the notion of transformation or re-imagining gender was neither merited nor even remotely feasible. The salience of the interaction between female obedience and adherence to customary practice with gendered care relations expecting collective or 'other-centred' interests to dominate women's

choices, personal desires and needs is thus unsurprising. It played a key role denying women '... the full exercise of their personhood and human rights' and also prevented women 'from taking any decision in their interests in the first place' (Brickell and Chant 2010, p.148). This was further expected, normalised and reinforced by women's immediate situation including their family circumstances, low standards of living and concrete material pressures characteristic of a post-conflict environment of underdevelopment. As primary caregivers women's time and energy was entirely devoted to the daily grind of family poverty, the drudgery of domestic work that demanded hard physical, cognitive and emotional labour and constituted a major part of their everyday working lives. Over and over participants described the severe pressure they were under sending children to school and providing their families with regular meals, clean laundry and a comfortable family life in extremely impoverished living conditions. This was particularly evident amongst rural women living in areas with poor physical infrastructure forcing them to walk long distances to fetch and haul water and access plots of land to cultivate food for domestic consumption. Both rural and urban women rearing large impoverished food-insecure families stated that maternal fears of malnutrition amongst their children had led them to adopt altruistic food behaviours such as female self-denial of food. As pointed out in chapter five, many mothers frequently agonised about their children going hungry and conveyed not thinking twice about going without food themselves when resources were scarce. Reinforcing women's confinement to the household and compelling them to go to inordinate lengths to ensure family survival was the severity of family poverty and other aspects of women's conflict-affected localities that depleted the time and energy required to contemplate, act in their own interests and negotiate a better deal for themselves in the household. Further constraining women's agency and institutionalising their adherence to the gender order was the expectation that women should be servicing husbands as well as children that often translated into even greater corporeal and affective altruistic workloads, severe levels of exhaustion and violent reprimand for 'failing' to meet male needs according to expected standards.

According to a *relational-intersubjective-intersectional* gender perspective, women's

intrinsic motivations - interacting with their socio-cultural conflict-affected immediate environment - normalise maternal altruistic expectations and behaviours. This contributes towards the unequal distribution of inputs and burdens fundamental to the social construction of motherhood as an *institution under patriarchy* oppressive to women (Rich 1976). There is evidence linking this to the disempowering influence women's marriages had on their mothering practices given marital expressions of male advantage and masculine ideals and power (Johnson 1988; Rich 1976). Marriage situates mothers first and foremost as wives. It made mothers wives which enabled women to be controlled by men, as marriage appeared in the study to be male dominated - often resulting in GBV and 'paternal irresponsibility' (Kabeer 1994, p. 113). Moreover kinship and marriage norms defined wives as subordinate and of less comparable worth to their husbands, demanding an endless flow of female obedience and altruisms. This reflected the manner in which masculine norms constructed marriage inequalities that discriminated against wives and reinforced husbands' own preferences, attitudes and 'manly' behaviour towards the family that discouraged caring masculinities and traits such as *paternal affective altruism*. Participants often found husbands 'uncaring', 'egoistic' and 'unreliable' particularly those who drank heavily and/or had no paid work. Husbands were perceived to be affective failures when they failed to conform and fulfil their expected economic role. These women had cause for concern that any modifications in parenting arrangements would adversely affect their children and the quality of care being provided to them and other loved ones. Related to this is another interpretation and one that resonates with Pearson (1981), that, familiar with the immense challenges of providing quality care in impoverished conflict-affected circumstances and influenced by prevailing gendered care norms - women expressed reluctance to trust and engage 'incompetent', 'lazy' or 'drunk' men as fathers in the care of their children. They also worried about being blamed for any negative consequences. Still related to the power of masculinities implicit in marital cathexis, women's 'preferences' and altruistic practices were further influenced by violent aspects of hegemonic masculinities. These were conveyed throughout the study as an attempt by husbands to enforce their authority within the

marriage and household, possibly influenced by men's perceived need to counter the pressure on the male breadwinning norm caused by maternal employment and/or male unemployment. Therefore and discussed further below, husbands' uncaring and violent behaviours might have been fuelled by the conflict-affected environment that intensified gender roles and identification with the public-private divide. Helping to explain this might be the pressure and injuries inflicted on hegemonic masculine ties by male unemployment, the high levels of which were maintained by the underdevelopment and informalisation of the Timorese economy (Niner 2016). Consonant with Hanlon, it is possible that indigenous manifestations of breadwinning masculinities – that had become militarised - were incompatible with affective constructions of fatherhood and thus constrained the possibility for men's role in the care of the family (2009). Threats and acts of GBV - including abandonment - dominating women's everyday lives would have discouraged already terrified wives from challenging male egoist behaviours such as 'paternal irresponsibility' and from negotiating a better deal for themselves in terms of housework. Women made trade-offs. The price of peace in the home was inordinate affective and corporeal workloads. Maintaining unequal burdens of care and tolerating financial deprivations helped them 'keep the peace', diffuse potential GBV and prevent marital dissolution and its reverberations such as social stigma, financial insecurity and destitution, threatening their children's welfare and own mothering and self-worth (Brickell and Chant 2010; Kabeer 1994). Echoing van Staveren and Odebode's findings in Nigeria (2007), in terms of the workloads, responsibilities and affective inequalities, propelling maternal altruisms was a combination of women's conflict-affected impoverished localities and intrinsic and extrinsic motivations manifested in women's sense of moral duty to care, mothers' love and concern for their children's welfare, husbands' masculinities-imposed constraints on female agency and negotiating power. It would seem that, given their internalisation of their gendered roles, identity and subordinated position, women, as *mothers* and as *wives*, were faced with little alternative other than to accept the double load of working for pay and on an unpaid basis in the home. There was little that seemed empowering or transformative about this or the shifting nature

of the male breadwinning norm that compelled women to work, given not only the motivations but also the inequalities inherent in feminised paid work and women's unequal access, control and expenditure of income coming into the home. Resonating with Johnson, O' Reilly, Rich and others, irrespective of its cultural significance, motherhood-in-patriarchy emerged in this study as a norm far from the idealised interpretation of feminine empowerment enabling mothers to exercise self-efficacy and individual agency within the home for purposes other than their children and family welfare.

The articulation between the feminisation of obligation and 'altruism' with everyday subjugation and gendered violence bears further witness to the multiple *relational-intersubjective-intersectional* dimensions of gender structuring inequalities in women's everyday lives. This triad of dimensions underscores the complexity and the significance the gender-kinship-marriage nexus (Rubin 1975; Siskind 1973) had for the social construction of gendered care relations, GBV and the links between the two. The present study adds to this nexus the institution of motherhood. How women's relational realities are conceptualised must take into consideration the prevailing context of patriarchal socio-cultural marriage norms, intergenerational family power relations and family poverty and wider underdevelopment characteristic of a conflict-affected environment. The cultural logic governing marriage and household relations implicit in marital cathexis appeared to reinforce the subordination of women, contribute towards the lack of recognition, redistribution and reward for unpaid care work and increase women's vulnerability to and entrapment in violent relations. Designed to maintain kin and male responsibility for the continuity of the patrilineage, this logic included marriage norms and the practices of *barlaque*, patrilocality - the practice of Timorese women leaving their family and land of origin to live with their husband and his family on their land and dwelling - and inheritance patterns where women only have rights to access the land depending on their husband (Narciso 2010). Also significant was the strong emphasis on fertility. All of these were fundamental to patriarchal 'household strategies', bestowing preferential treatment to sons whilst promoting the cultural devaluation of daughters, both of which were the two principles

of inequality expressed through kinship and marital cathexis.

The disempowering effects for women of the customary marital practice of *barlaque* featured throughout the narratives as it was charged with binding wives into inequitable family arrangements governed by the gender division of labour and bolstering husbands' power, allowing them to do as they pleased in terms of marital behaviours. It was also depicted as constraining wives' capacity to respond to GBV. These data substantiate the Timor-Leste feminist scholarship that has noted the recent commodification of *barlaque* and argues that this along with the asymmetrical exchange of goods favouring the bride's family gives rise to unequal power within the family. There was a perception amongst participants that women and their labour and fertility were being paid for by husbands giving them the right to do what they want to their wives (Niner 2011;2012; Ospina 2006; Wigglesworth 2012). This form of *barlaque* relegates it to the practice of dowry or bride-price which instils the notion of ownership, manifested as pressure on women to bear more children than they want to (Niner 2012). Data gleaned from the narratives further that *barlaque* reinforces emphasised femininities and disciplines women who should be subservient to their husbands (Narciso 2010) and subject to violent attacks if they fail to conform to expectations (Cristalis 2005, p.20}. There is also evidence showing how women's relationships with their in-laws came under strain by the burden imposed by this customary marital practice. For example some data conveyed wives' performance in the domestic sphere being measured against *barlaque*, with any sense of their perceived inadequacies becoming the focus of frustrations within the extended family (Niner 2012). This was said to evolve into harsh forms of domestic servitude and a combination of marital and woman-on-woman GBV. Furthermore and supported by the prevailing Timor-Leste gender scholarship, the data detected that patrilocality alongside *barlaque* reinforced discrimination and violence against women owing to the inter-generational power dynamics between women. Still resonating with the Timor-Leste scholarship, as well as providing husbands and in-laws with extra power to enforce domestic servitude and take out their frustrations on those in a weaker position, a further criticism mounted against the current model of *barlaque* by

participants were the consequences of its monetisation and the level of resources it requires that imposed severe economic burdens on mothers rearing large families with adult sons, leaving them with scarce and inadequate resources for food, education and health care and driving them into further poverty.

Corroborating the existing literature on GBV in Timor-Leste, this study however did not find a strong connexion between *barlaque*, patrilocality and GBV (Grenfell *et al* 2015; Khan 2012; Niner 2012). This resonates with other research that has found that rather than being the cause or trigger of GBV, *barlaque* is something husbands draw on to legitimise their violent behaviour and reinforce their rights over their wives. In this study but neglected by the existing scholarship, mothers-in laws too were said to employ this *customary marital practice* to reinforce intergenerational power relations and the gendered organisation of extended family life and legitimise GBV. One mother-in law specifically conveyed not only an expectation to reap its labour-related dividends but also feeling empowered by *barlaque* as she (mis)interpreted its function as affording her the right to do as she pleased within the patrilocal extended family setting, discipline and psychologically abuse her daughter-in law, evict her from the home and retain informal custody over her children. This complex marriage practice, whilst associated with high levels of GBV against women, is not its root cause, but serves discursively as part of a wider patriarchal architecture of GBV and control of women in East Timorese society (Grenfell *et al* 2015; Khan 2012). Niner who highlights the key distinction between the use of the terms value and price suggests that a focus on the original principles of *barlaque*, rather than the amounts exchanged, may improve the outcomes for women (Niner 2013). However economic development would tend to reverse this process, highlighting price over non-price values.

The strong emphasis on fertility and its profound significance for kin within indigenous culture was found to contribute towards women's subordination and increase their vulnerability and entrapment in violent relations. For example there was a tendency for women and their fertility to be viewed as the property of husbands and their family who pressure women to bear many children (Niner 2011; Ospina 2006). The data

support other research arguing that highly valued fertility reinforces the imperative of motherhood and the potential of limiting women to that primary role (Niner 2011). In every study site, bearing many children and responsibility for rearing large families was found to severely limit women's time for economic participation that would generate empowerment and independence from violent husbands (Ospina 2006). As argued by McKeown *et al*: 'Both men and women are diminished by a system that over-identifies women with motherhood and under-identifies men with fatherhood' (McKeown *et al* 1998 cited in O' Connor 2000). Furthermore it was not uncommon for women to come under pressure from their husbands' families to produce children and for infertility to lead to various forms of GBV including rejection within the marriage, wife abandonment and stigmatisation within the extended family. Another important dimension of the cultural imperative of marriage and significance of fertility and motherhood is the age of marriage, particularly in rural areas. Some accounts note that it is not uncommon for women to marry very young and to significantly older men (Grenfell *et al* 2015; Wigglesworth 2012). Meanwhile the marrying age for boys typically coincides with their economic independence (Wigglesworth 2012). In Timorese culture, as power and authority in the family is derived from age and gender differences in age and economic independence reinforces the subordinate position of wives and the powerful superior status of husbands (Wigglesworth 2012).

Women were made vulnerable to exploitation and entrapment in marital and woman-on-woman forms of GBV by an another inter-related strategy maintaining kin which was in relation to grandchildren that pitted generations of women against one another (Kandiyoti 1988). This was manifested in a number of complex ways including mothers' tolerance of GBV perpetrated by young teenage and adult sons and the mother-son dyad often depicted as stronger than husband-wife relations. Of significance also were mother-in law-daughter-in-law tensions that reinforced the subjugation of wives and escalated into GBV and grandmothers' efforts to gain informal custody over grandchildren. These findings provide a number of important insights for understanding the character of gender operating in women's lives one of which relates to the tensions between kinship and motherhood which produced crisis tendencies.

The second insight conveys that the web of GBV that women were caught in was often a product of power relations acting inside *and* outside the marital relationship.

Another important link between gender inequality, GBV and potentially oppressive aspects of the logic governing kin, marital and household relations was the reliance of family stability on a gendered order devaluing women and girl children, expecting them to assume a subordinate position to fathers and husbands, the key decision makers and heads of women's households. Articulated in nearly every narrative was the idea that wives are subordinate in the marriage. Thus and notwithstanding the power of elite women, the prominence of the female element and the centrality of fertility as a powerful asset within indigenous belief systems, Timorese women's status in this study appeared to be one of subordination. This substantiates arguments made by Timorese gender equality advocates such as Maria Paixao, a female veteran and parliamentarian, who in relation to the public sphere but applicable to the private domain asserts that: 'Patriarchal systems and male-biased traditional power structures within our society that impede women's leadership and equal participation in decision-making still exist' (Paixao de Jesus da Costa 2009 cited in Niner 2011). Timor-Leste scholars too note this such as Niner who when referencing the consequences of militarised post-conflict Timorese masculinities, asserts that, what is being advocated for by those demanding the return of women to the 'traditional' role post-independence is this 'narrower' more confined life intended to maintain the higher status and power of those advocating female subjugation, domesticity and maternalism in the first instance (Niner 2011). Substantiating the 2010 National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) and other research and reports documenting gender inequality in Timor-Leste, there is consistent evidence in this study of widespread tolerance for women's subordination, their over-representation in the domestic sphere and unpaid work and certain levels of domestic physical GBV. In the vast majority of narratives most forms of gender inequality including the use of physical force by a man in an intimate relationship was in certain contexts considered normal (Khan and Hyati 2012; Haider 2012). It was not uncommon for participants including those elected to represent women's issues on public bodies to either deny the very existence of GBV against women or view male violence as part

of the natural order of everyday life and an appropriate mechanism for disciplining wives particularly those who transgress gender norms underlying Timorese logic maintaining kin and the organisation of everyday life.

The data suggest that women's subjugated status and expected behaviours imposed socio-cultural constraints on their self-efficacy and agency which served to fuel women's reluctance to negotiate better outcomes for themselves not just in terms of the workloads and responsibilities but also in dealing with GBV. These behaviours included conjugal-maternal altruism, obedience and tolerance. For example maternal altruism requiring women to be constantly available to their children limited their potential to gain economic empowerment and independence from violent husbands, engage the criminal justice system, leave a violent marriage and pursue other help-seeking responses to ensure safety for themselves and their children. Women's 'decisions' to tolerate violent marriages were also structured by negative feelings of anxiety, shame and fear that alongside the Catholic Church ensured their reverence to kin and family, the sanctity of marriage and idea of togetherness.

As previously raised but requiring further attention, women's vulnerability, endurance, tolerance and feminine other-centred responses to GBV need to be understood in terms of what was happening to Timorese masculinities. According to the *relational-intersubjective-intersectional* gender perspective, the feminisation of obligation and 'altruism' and its links with everyday subjugation and gendered violence in Timor-Leste is a legacy of the Indonesian occupation and an endemic problem typical of societies where men and older women dependent on the reproductive work of wives, daughters and daughters-in-law often seek to return to social norms to the pre-war status. This presents problems for women particularly when:

'... conflict has been part of life for several generations, as the brutalising aspects of war on human behaviour are difficult to eradicate. War also changes gender roles, and women often find themselves fulfilling roles previously assigned to men, who find their former role as breadwinners usurped. Widespread unemployment also causes bitterness and frustration which may find expression in alcohol abuse and violence in the home

(Cristalis and Scott 2005, p. 94).

Data in this study support arguments that GBV in post-Independence Timor-Leste is a normalised response to personal, social, political and economic grievances and frustrations (Cristalis and Scott 2005). Alongside cultural and historical explanations, other factors frequently cited for men's GBV against women in Timor-Leste include frustrations borne out of socio-economic marginalisation, lack of education, unemployment and poverty. This was conveyed by a number of women participating in this study who described their husbands some of whom were war veterans turning to GBV in response to having few options for meaning and status. Commenting on the links between militarised masculinity and GBV, Sideris notes that:

'The overall social destruction inherent in dirty wars leaves men with few opportunities to implement traditional roles as providers. Thus war leaves men with either an eroded sense of manhood or the option of a militarised identity with the attendant legitimisation of violence and killing as a way of maintaining power and control' (Sideris 2001 cited in Saramento 2012).

In Myrttinen's study of male violence in urban areas, participants identified domestic violence as an outlet for their socio-economic frustrations especially in light of the recent and rapid growth in wealth accumulated by the political elite. Men's economic disempowerment is exacerbated by the fact that in Timor-Leste men are required to assume the primary breadwinning role within the family, provide the main source of income and also undertake physically demanding 'hard work' such as farming and house construction. Performing such 'masculine jobs' is said to show to the community and wider society what it is to be a 'good, strong and real man' (Streicher 2011: interview). Alongside breadwinning status also are values such as endurance, tenacity and as well as self-reliance and autonomy. These values are closely interrelated in the sense that masculine pride is vested in men's ability to work and provide for their families. Years of conflict and occupation have made living up to various traditional expectations of masculinity extremely challenging for many Timorese men today who feel both a strong sense of entitlement to better socio-economic conditions yet deep frustration at not achieving it.

In addition to the cultural-historical and the socio-economic arguments, Myrntinen thus extends the main explanations for GBV to include the rapid changes taking place within post-Independence Timorese male identities. According to the cultural-historical argument, GBV is the product of an indigenous patriarchal society in which violence has become an accepted way of life' owing to Timor's history of colonisation, occupation and violent conflict (Myrntinen 2012, p. 104). The normalisation of GBV in participants' lives and the attitudes underlying responses of elected women representatives to GBV provide testimony to this. As the Timorese indigenous gender order did not exist independent of Portuguese colonialism, the presence of the Catholic Church and Indonesia's military occupation, any understanding of GBV post-Independence demands attention to the intersection between Timorese patriarchy, the role of the Catholic Church and the history and culture of violence associated with occupation and colonialism (Myrntinen 2012). Timorese commentators such as da Costa and Trindade argue that Timor-Leste's history of external militarised rulers normalised a pre-existing link between the upholding of authority and the use of violence which today shapes the social acceptability of resorting to violence for political and social means. For example da Costa, secretary general of the East Timorese men's organisation *Asociaaun Mane Kontra Violensia* (Association of Men Against Violence or AMKV) notes:

East Timorese society has traditionally been patriarchal with male political power, polygamy and men in control over women, sometimes with force. This patriarchy was strengthened by the Portuguese colonial power and by the Catholic Church. During the Soeharto years, violence was everywhere and the educational system was highly militarised, teaching violence as a method to solve your problems' (Myrntinen 2012,p.111).

Siapno asserts that 'Militarisation was so successful in East Timor that even after independence, violence and war is still an attractive option for most men' (Siapno 2006). Myrntinen (2012) who has described the violence that took place in Timor throughout the war as an everyday tool used to impose and challenge authority argues that this dual function of reinforcing and challenging power has been carried into post-Independence Timor. This was particularly evident in women's narratives describing

their family and married lives. It also substantiates Saramento's argument that the dominance of an aggressive political culture that favours a type of strong, militarised masculinity marginalises women, placing them in less visible traditional roles, and lowering their status (Saramento 2012). Partly a product of the years of conflict, when 'being a man' was equated with a 'warrior ethos' (Niner 2011 p. 429), a number of scholars assert that this culture arguably contributes to the continuing high levels of GBV against women in the domestic sphere and the emergence of 'generations of men who feel that violence is the only tool at their disposal to confront and attempt to resolve problems, whether of a personal social or political nature' (Abdullah and Myrntinen 2009 cited in Myrntinen 2012).

Myrntinen argues that the intersections between masculinities and violence however cannot be blamed entirely on Timor-Leste's violent past, its present day socio-economic conditions and on a post-Independence patriarchal culture in which hegemonic forms of masculinity condone violence. These are significant 'contributing' factors but must be viewed as 'partial' explanations as 'they often do not take into account that even men who have experienced the violence of the conflict and occupation, are socio-economically marginalised and uphold patriarchal values are not automatically violent in the public or private sphere' (Myrntinen 2012, p. 116). Instead the picture is much more complex involving responses to transformations in patriarchal structures and male gender identities. Post-independence Timorese society is undergoing rapid social change meaning that some of the central pillars upon which Timorese class and gender relations have been built are under threat which has implications for the construction of both masculine and feminine identities. GBV in Timor is a product of efforts to confirm and challenge power structures and a manifestation of the conflict and tensions between hegemonic and protest masculinities. Traditional gender divisions of power and labour are being threatened where decision-making and breadwinning status are no longer viewed or exist as a male preserve. Yet male dominance and 'breadwinning' status remain potent symbols in popular constructions of masculine identity. Gendered violence has indeed become a normalised tool for men to vent their frustrations and seek redress to socio-economic

grievances in both the private and the public domains. Myrntinen views it also as a product of rapid changes taking place within male gender identities and the renegotiation of power dynamics within Timor-Leste's overall patriarchal social structure (2012). In this study GBV perpetrated by husbands appeared as a tool used to challenge and confirm gendered power and entrench male privilege perceived to be under threat. It is possible that participants' husbands used violence against their wives to overcome feelings of powerlessness, frustration or vulnerability that they experienced within and beyond marriage and the household (Isdal and Rakil 2002 cited in Myrntinen 2012). GBV was thus about reasserting and/or renegotiating *power* relationships.

When considering constraints on women's maternal-conjugal agency and affective and economic practices, a major point in need of emphasis is that women's analysis of their own life situations appears as much about men's affective and financial egoism in contrast to women's compulsory altruism underpinned by the power of GBV. Their analysis also emphasised the negative effects both the informalisation of Timor-Leste's post-conflict economy and gender ideology and norms promoting the public-private divide had for affective gender equality and GBV. Allowing us to understand gender norms in terms of their behaviour such as resilience, relaxation and resistance (Pearse and Connell 2016) and intersection with the local context, this type of analysis challenges an essentialising interpretation of hegemonic femininity, specifically the selfless 'female altruist' (Brickell and Chant 2010) and the powerful assumption underlying 'maternal altruism', that women, by virtue of their identities as mothers and wives, are 'naturally' predisposed toward nurturing and self-sacrifice (Whitehead 1981; see also Harris 1981). The approach followed by the study elucidates that, as wives and mothers, Timorese women's vulnerabilities and individual responses to gendered poverty and GBV as they went about ensuring family survival are not clear cut. They are complex and as much about *affective* dimensions and women's desire for marital quality and peace in their homes (Ahmed 2014) as they are about women's responses to 'compulsory' burdens, structural constraints and the absence of alternatives to mis-recognition, mal-redistribution and lack of reward for unpaid care

work (Esquivel 2013; Fraser *et al.* 2004/ within the prevailing unequal, conflict-affected gender order dominating their maternal and married lives (Brickell and Chant 2010; Folbre 2012).

That women's investments, burdens and responsibilities for dealing with poverty had failed to bring about marriage equality or improve their status relative to men and other adult family members is testimony to a fundamental injustice pervading the relationality, intersectionality and intersubjectivity of the gender construct shaping women's lives. Paradoxically women's investments in marriage and motherhood served to reinforce affective gender inequality and contribute towards GBV. The data intimate that the *continuum* of gendered poverty and violence found strength in the interaction between women's socio-historical conflict-affected localities with socio-cultural norms underlying maternal cathexis dominated by Timorese femininities-in-patriarchy and marital cathexis dominated by hegemonic masculinities. Assumptions underpinning the norms structuring male and female gender identities include the inferior position of wives, the 'naturalness' of husbands to head up households, exercise dominance, aggression and male prerogatives including egoism and control over their wives' time, energy and money. The seemingly low level of female power, agency and negotiation whether in terms of workloads and responsibilities or GBV underscores the fear and lack of trust women as *wives* had in 'lazy' 'incompetent' and violent husbands combined with the tremendous pressure women as *mothers* were under to provide maternal support and feminine care, send their children to school and not allow them suffer from hunger or malnutrition. These data illustrate the intractability of hegemonic gender ideology and intrahousehold power relations, the deleterious effects of which profoundly shaped the very volatile and precarious situations women appeared caught up in that included gendered poverty, vulnerability, subjugation and violence.

The data suggest that since the end of the conflict, alongside a forceful increase in women's economic participation was a resurgence of traditional views that continue to define Timorese women as primary caregivers and men as primary breadwinners and heads of households with unwavering authority. This seems to be largely a function of

the continuity in unequal intra-household power relations and a dynamic where breadwinning norms in men's lives have yet to be replaced or accompanied by male caregiving norms and where mothering remains paramount in Timorese women's lives. Instead of replacing the centrality of motherhood and domesticity for women, paid work seems to have been incorporated into an ever-expanding portfolio of maternal obligations with very little evidence of a corresponding expansion in the portfolios of participants' husbands for whom maintaining power appeared paramount and constant. Furthermore, where the onus on women to act more responsibly than men towards the family seemed to be benefiting men and family welfare, it penalised women (Brickwell and Chant 2010), increasing their overall workloads *and* vulnerability to GBV. This suggests that GBV whilst driven by concrete material pressures characteristic of a post-conflict environment, has its roots in ingrained gender hierarchical relations within the indigenous symbolic gender order assigning differential value to feminised and masculinised subjects. This was evident not least in prevailing male marital behaviours such as infidelity, abandonment, financial monopoly including appropriation of wives' money and threats and acts of GBV that represent hostile reactions to female employment that thwarted breadwinning masculinities and threatened male marital authority.

### **8.3 Summing up for Gender Mainstreaming**

The current enquiry responds to the call from within feminist scholarship to dig deep into the complexities and bring substantive meaning to the concept of gender that is intelligible to local contexts (Grabska 2011; Subrahmanian 2004). By unpacking the gender-poverty-violence nexus, the research has attempted to move critical debates forward and address the on-going gender conundrum troubling gender mainstreaming theory, policy and practice including for Timor-Leste where it has been the main state-led institutional mechanism seeking to address gender inequality during the first decade of independence (2002-2012). The research has approached this endeavour by exploring Timorese women's everyday life experiences within the family, capturing qualitatively the social construction of gender at this particular moment in Timor-Leste's history.

To synthesise my observations and the patterns in my fieldwork, I proffer the term *gendered vulnerability, subjugation and violence nexus*, the main elements of which are as follows: (i) the gendered *distribution* of responsibility, inputs and burdens of dealing with poverty (ii) the gendered *capacity* to negotiate responsibilities, inputs and burdens and (iii) the articulation between gender inequalities in inputs, burdens and lack of reward with GBV. These patterns present a rather dismaying scenario in which, corresponding with women's investments, burdens and responsibilities for dealing with poverty was not what Elson terms recognition, reward or a redistribution in workloads (Elson). This insight illuminates the intractability of asymmetric family norms underlying intra-household labour and power relations. These interacted in complex non-linear ways re-producing *domestic gender inequality* that evolved from the feminisation of subjugation and responsibility to exploitation, coercion and GBV (Cockburn 2013). The thesis breaks open the nexus, establishing that the links between gender, poverty and violence are shaped by intersections between norm behaviour, the cultural construction of female individual agency and the wider structure (Aghtaie and Gangoli 2015; Pearse and Connell 2016; Raj 2000). Patriarchal social structures, norms and inequalities generating conjugal-maternal vulnerabilities both pre-existed and were aggravated by the armed conflict and Indonesian military occupation of Timor-Leste and the informalisation of the Timorese economy resulting in detrimental consequences for Timorese masculinities and femininities in terms of affective gender equality and GBV. It is also possible that forced institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming and other post-independence orthodox development democratisation paradigms and processes known to exile cultural cathexis might also have done little to curtail this aggravation. Such an understanding of the social construction of GBV elaborates upon similar research conducted in Timor-Leste by Niner, Grenfell, and in other developing country contexts affected by armed conflict such as the DRC (Freedman 2012), Liberia (Thornhill 2012) and South Africa. It substantiates major insights made by Cockburn, Freedman, Sweetman, True and other feminist scholars that gendered poverty and GBV in violence-affected contexts are not only products of conflict but also more generally unequal gender relations in society interacting with the

wider political economy and must thus be conceptualised as a *continuum of violence* (Davies and True 2015; Cockburn 2004; Freedman 2012; True 2012).

This brings me back to the the overarching insight of the thesis—the multidimensionality of gender in terms of its relationality, intersubjectivity, and intersectionality. Based on women's understandings of their social world and their right to be recognised on their own terms (Eyben and Fontana 2011), this contribution adds to the growing body of heterodox scholarship promoting alternative paradigms that bring culture and care in from the periphery. The women participating in the study were eager to avail of the opportunity to *represent* their own situation, illuminating how, as 'individuals-in-relation' (England 2005 cited in Lynch 2010) their intersubjectivities and relational realities of gendered care, poverty and GBV were structured by patriarchal constructs of marriage and motherhood, masculinities-in-flux and intersectionality, the analysis of which need to be integrated into a critical gender-transformatory framework. However what appears to be missing from critical gender mainstreaming scholarship and current debates regarding conflict-affected gender relations put forward by True 2012; Cockburn 2004; Freedman 2012 and others is the complex inter-relationship between *affective relations* and other social systems including the economic, political and cultural, and between each of these (Esquivel 2014; Eyben and Fontana 2011; Fraser 1995; Lynch et al. 2009a). Substantiating the links between affective inequality and GBV, this study underscores the need for a nuanced and holistic understanding of care and for care to be visibilised in the development paradigm (Eyben and Fontana 2011) and in gender mainstreaming scholarship, policy and praxis if these are to have any potential in coming to grips with the conflict-affected gender-poverty-violence nexus and in producing a society governed by principles of deep egalitarianism. Applicable to the case of gender mainstreaming, according to Lynch, the significance of all this for public policy is that:

'[...] it is not possible just to address problems of inequality or social injustice in one social system without addressing inequalities in related social systems. Inequalities are intersectional and deeply interwoven because human beings have multidimensional, structurally influenced

identities that are constantly in flux' (Lynch 2010, p. 7).

Building on established feminist scholarship and focusing on real issues affecting Timorese women, the findings from the study illuminate the *affective* dimensions of gender's relational-intersectional-intersubjective attributes, indicating that gender care relations, poverty and GBV are interconnected and operate cyclically. This interrelatedness is exacerbated by the wider context, characterised in post-independence Timor-Leste by pre-existing gender power inequalities, cultural cathexis and the legacies of colonialism and violent conflict. In the hope of contributing towards the resolution of some of the conceptual problems surrounding a social relations and transformative interpretation of gender mainstreaming, these nuanced and locally grounded findings provide the academic community with a contextualised meaning of gender and an understanding of its role in maintaining the gender-poverty-GBV nexus. The findings are also practically useful as they have the potential to support gender mainstreaming in Timor-Leste that addresses Timorese women and girl's lower status in the family, community and society. For example, understanding how the virtuous gender-poverty-GBV cycle is reproduced and how it can be broken is critical for determining structural pathways for policy and programming interventions that can transform inequitable gender relations in Timor-Leste post-independence. Specifically, the study has generated evidence relevant for the various levels of the policy-making process where specific components of the current gender mainstreaming programme of work are taking effect (Daly 2005). As described in chapter two these components include integrating gender across line ministries, units and departments, building the institutional capacity of key agencies including the Secretary of State for the Support and Socio- Economic Promotion of Women (SEM), the coordinating entity of the government for gender mainstreaming and subjecting state-led development instruments to gender analysis. The findings are also relevant for the various approaches to integrating local concepts and gender perspectives across state-led national, local and suku development and governance processes.

In terms of the implications of the findings for policy-making, at the level of rhetoric,

the emphasis and insights into the relationality and intersectionality of gender helps to shift the way gender is generally conceptualised in public policy-making, such as the discursive leap from WID to GAD, ensuring that meanings and strategic framings of gender applied to a specific policy domain resonate with women's lived realities. This opens up the possibility of gender mainstreaming getting important issues for Timorese women onto the policy table such as the role of the extended family, gender roles, divisions of labour and power hierarchies between women and men and between women and notions of hegemonic masculinities and femininities. This would allow for a move away from Timor-Leste's current integrationist gender mainstreaming approach towards the implementation of a 'twin-track' strategy to deal with everyday real issues affecting Timorese women and transform structural gender inequality embedded in and beyond the family that lie at the root of gender subordination.

The concept of gender provided by the study is also relevant at the institutional level in terms of assisting the GoTL implement gender mainstreaming. As described in chapter two, the operationalisation of each of its components of work relies on the use of dedicated techniques such as training and gender analysis tools whether to support policy actors heretofore not associated with gender in the design and implementation of policies, or expert staff within SEM to provide technical support to regular policy-makers incorporating gender perspectives in their policies.

Where applied to the technical level then, the study's conceptualisation and grounding of gender in the reality of women's lives is highly relevant, enabling the use of policy-making tools and analytical techniques such as the social-relations framework in the policy-making process. Central to transformative gender mainstreaming, the social-relations framework deals with multiple gender regimes and orders and deepens a gender analysis of the political economy and structures of labour and power, including 'invisible' occupations and other aspects of gender relations maintaining women's association and lower status in the private domestic sphere. This type of analytical technique would have the effect of including indigenous knowledge in Timor-Leste's

development process, gendering ways of seeing and doing development thus bringing substance to specific policy domains, minimising the lack of fit between the sectoral mind-set of development policy and planning interventions and the relational, intersubjective and intersectoral realities of women's family and married lives (Reeves and Baden 2000). For example the social-relations framework informed by the findings from this study would help ensure that the ideological basis of gender relations including power structures governing gendered family roles, responsibilities and obligations receive maximum attention in gendered poverty and GBV debates and that the issue of unpaid care work is made visible in Timorese public policy and key sectors of employment, health, education and social protection. Whilst supporting the implementation of technical tools and mechanisms such as the Inter-Ministerial Gender Working Group (IM GWG), this in turn ensures an emphasis on gender mainstreaming operational outputs such as gender policies and programmes rather than institutional inputs focusing on gender check-lists and blue-prints, thus diminishing the potential for gender policy evaporation and instrumentalist and integrationist approaches to gender mainstreaming that prioritise 'smart economics', GDP and economic growth over gender equality.

#### **8.4 Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of the study is that the analysis of the data did not attempt to fully integrate a life-course with the gendered ecological (Heise 1998) structuralist approach (Connell), owing to time and volume restrictions and an already complex analytical framework. Whilst lying beyond the scope of the study, a strong case can however be made for applying the life course approach to the findings. In Timor-Leste, because of their low status, lack of power and other manifestations of gender inequality in the natal and marital family, women and girls are at risk of experiencing gendered poverty and intimate and non-intimate GBV throughout their lifetimes. Widely accepted and used to study GBVAW (Watts and Zimmerman 2002 cited in Solotaroff and Pande 2014), a life-course perspective might have helped build a more comprehensive narrative of gender, in particular how inter as well as intragenerational dimensions of gender relations intersect with other social structures and markers of identity to

mediate the social construction of gendered poverty and violence at multiple stages of women's lives - from infancy, girlhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age - in different family contexts. One adaptation of the life-cycle framework might be to organise the data and analysis of the types and forms of gendered poverty and violence in the three findings chapters as they occur by life stage. This would generate more holistic analysis of the multidimensionality of gender relations and their social construction and operationalisation within the social institution and distinct gender regime of the family, where cathexis and intergenerational and other forms of *intersectional* labour and power relations between women and men and among women are constructed, reproduced and transformed. Meanwhile given their imperativeness and critical significance in social and cultural norms and everyday life in Timor-Leste, marriage and motherhood would remain paramount and constant for the analysis. This would allow for more in-depth discussion of the socio-cultural-historical-economic-affective- dimensions of the gender-poverty-violence nexus, not least the thus far under-theorised links between unpaid care work and GBV in both the natal and marital home. Integrating the life-course approach in this way would add greater nuance to our understanding of the concept of gender and the conundrum surrounding gender mainstreaming theory.

### **8.5 Opportunities for Further Research**

Whilst understanding their virtuous cycle is critical for determining transformative gender mainstreaming interventions, how gender, poverty and violence are experienced by women as mothers and wives in everyday family life after conflict remains an under-researched area of inquiry. Consequently more research and nuanced critical inquiry is needed before their linkages are clearly understood and structural pathways are identified and acted upon that connect the underlying context characterised by gendered power inequalities.

This study represents a starting point for exploring these linkages, providing initial insights into the complex operation of gender relations, the more *affective* dimensions of which have so far received minimal attention in both gender analysis and policy

seeking to end inequities that reinforce women and girls' lower status in the home and wider society. The study offers the basis for further conceptualization of gender, identifying a number of key areas where scholarly efforts and resources are needed to address specific knowledge gaps, enhance our analysis and approaches to gender mainstreaming policy, programming and praxis. Broadly speaking, for a deeper understanding of the spectrum of everyday gendered care relations, poverty and GBV, further research is needed to better establish its multiple *affective* dimensions and how these are fuelled and interconnected by gender-based norms and values. More specifically and integrating the life-cycle approach, it requires greater nuanced critical inquiry into the relational-intersubjective-intersectional attributes that strengthen the virtuous cycle of the feminisation of unpaid care work, women's limited access to decent paid work, minimized decision-making and financial autonomy and experiences of marital and non-marital GBV. This necessitates exploring in greater depth how each of the following are shaped by the wider context characterised by the legacy of violent conflict, cultural cathexis, gender power inequalities and a hierarchically-ordered kinship system:

- (i) The intra and inter-relationality of gendered identities, including dominant models and varieties of hierarchical femininities and masculinities;
- (ii) The dominance of marriage and motherhood as interrelated gendered constructs;
- (iii) The reproduction of intersectional power asymmetries, especially intergenerational inequalities between women and the links between these and affective inequality and GBVAW perpetrated by women.

## APPENDIX A GUIDED REFLECTIONS

1. Think about how life is everyday as a woman.

From the minute I get up and start my day around my family. What is my role and how does it affect things in my life

**Imajina ita nian moris hanesan feto. Imajina katak ita hamriik iha laran ita nia rai, no ita hakteke ba ita nia an, saida maka hau nia papel hanesan feto iha uma laran no moris laron – laron....”**

2. Think about all the things I have to do on a daily basis? Feed the family, take care of the small children, tend to my husband.

**Saida maka imi halo iha laron ida ohin? Iha dader iha meiodia lorokraik no kalan? (tein etu, prepara ropa eskola ba oan sira. Serbi laen kaben.**

3. How is my life everyday? In what ways is it difficult. What difficulties do I face? Different people. Is this a kind of discrimination?

**Oinsa ho feto sira nia moris laron – laron? Sente defisil? Hasoru ema oin – oin, la justo hanesan feto? karik iha diskriminasaun ruma durante momento hirak ne’e hotu**

**Hare ba hau nia an hanesan feto, rona lia barak husi familia, trata tolok, sente katak hanesan feto kiik liu iha uma laran, dala balu sente treste, kontente, hamnasa, tanis. Dala barak sente treste maibe rai deit iha hau nia fuan ho laran.**

4. If things are difficult, why is this so, such as hardships, violence. What about my power, my ability? Dreaming of a good life.

**Se Violensia Domestika akontese mai hau, buat hirak ne’e nusa maka akontese? karik tamba hau feto? hau dehan husik deit? Tamba sa maka discriminasau hirak ne’e akontese mai hau? hau sente hau nia an lavale iha moris laron – laron?**

## **APPENDIX B      FGD INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Focus Group Questions and Probes**

Q.1.What are the main kinds of things women do throughout the day?

Possible probes:

How about you yourself?

What about other women in your family and in the community?

Q.2 Describe a time or a typical situation when you experience hardship.

Possible probe:

What happens?

What circumstances give rise to everyday hardships.

Q 3. In what ways do these affect you?

Possible probe:

How does it affect your relationship with others?

## **APPENDIX C      1:1 INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. Would you like to tell me something about yourself?
2. How is everyday life for you?
3. What are the kinds of things you do on a daily basis?
4. Please describe hardships or aspects of everyday life that are challenging.

Possible probe:

What circumstances give rise to everyday hardships?

In what ways do these affect you?

How does it affect your relationship with others?

**APPENDIX D**

**MAP 1: TIMOR-LESTE ON THE GLOBE**



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APPENDIX E

MAP 2: DISTRICTS OF TIMOR-LESTE



Copyright: Wikimedia Commons Atlas of the World

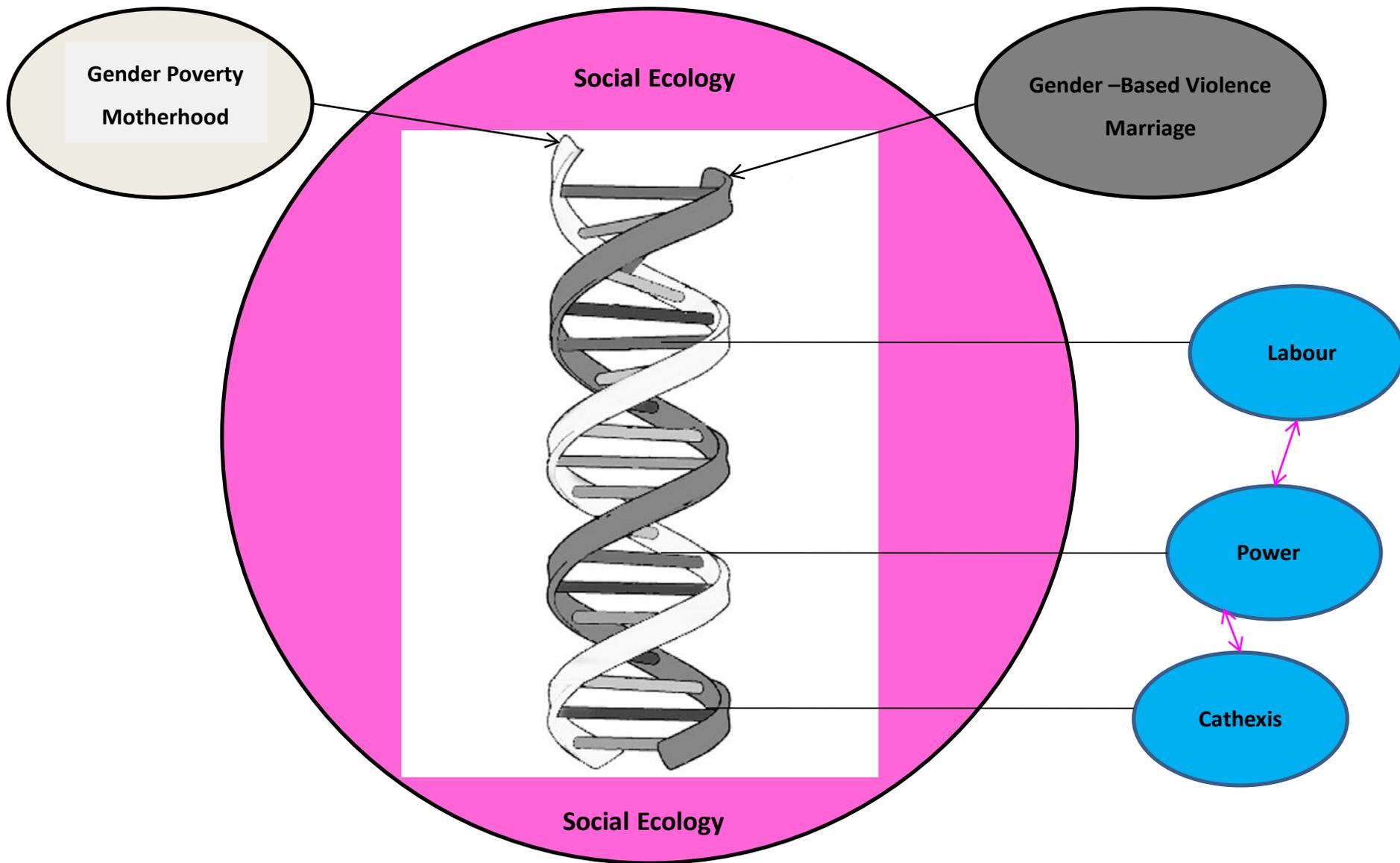
## Figure 1

# Heise's Ecological Framework: The Different Levels of the Social Ecology



**FIGURE 2:**

**CONCEPTUALISING THE GENDER-POVERTY-VIOLENCE NEXUS THROUGH A DOUBLE STRUCTURE**



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