

Assumptions and evidence

“Women are economically dependent on their husbands.”

Evidence | Women provide important economic support for their families, through domestic and caring work in families and other kinds of work (such as small scale gardens, sale of consumer items and kiosks, preparation and sale of food and drinks) to generate income for the family.

“Poverty causes domestic violence.”

Evidence | The report cannot say that domestic violence is caused by money or poverty. However, women say the lack of money and poverty is a key tension within the household. DHS research in Timor shows women in higher income families are more likely to have experienced physical violence (45%).

“Rural women are more vulnerable economically than urban women.”

Evidence | Women in rural areas had more options for generating income than women in urban areas. This may mean that women in urban areas are more dependent on their husbands than women in rural areas.

“Women can choose to leave her violent partner if she really wants to.”

Evidence | In interviews with women who had experienced domestic violence, we heard that women left their partners only when domestic violence was very severe. In these cases, leaving her partner was more about survival than about choice.

“Barlake causes violence against married women.”

Evidence | The research did not hear from women that barlake was a cause for violence. The researchers heard though that barlake may be used by men as a threat or talked about by men who are abusing women.

“Women and children will suffer if courts send abusive husbands to prison.”

Evidence | In interviews with women who had separated from their partners due to domestic violence, many had a better economic situation (6 out of 9 victims). These women were from rural areas and were more active than urban women in income generation before their separation and after.