IMPACT OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS ON LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN AFFECTED BY WAR IN NORTHERN SRI LANKA

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

The study explored the impact of intimate relationships on women's livelihoods in a post-war context. It looked at how 1) gender norms, beliefs, and practices 2) marriage, and 3) termination of an intimate relationship, impact on women's livelihoods. Intimate relationships form an integral part of a person's social capital that plays a significant role in livelihood opportunities.

The analysis was based on 30 in-depth interviews with women in female- and male-headed households throughout the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

Gender norms, beliefs, and practices in the region expect a woman to be cared for and protected by a husband or a male figure such as father or brother. Seeking livelihoods and managing independently in society has been neither easy nor expected of women; a situation particularly challenging for the widowed and the separated.

In addition to being traumatized by the experience of war, many women have been abused financially, physically, and/or emotionally by their husbands. Severance of such marriages provided emotional relief for women. However, in the absence of a husband, they have been left with the responsibilities of the family breadwinner in a cultural context not fully conducive to working women.

The fact of not having their self-dignity harmed by an abusive husband seems to be of crucial importance in determining a woman's success. Widowed and separated women who have had non-abusive husbands and some capital to invest in a business have faced the challenge of livelihoods more successfully than those with abusive husbands.

The findings reveal the importance of psychological interventions to support these women, along with financial support necessary for livelihoods. The issue of a tarnished self-dignity, which is detrimental to a woman's social capital, seems far greater than the issues of not having access to financial capital.

Contents

1. Introduction

Sri Lanka, particularly the Northern and Eastern regions of the country, has been severely affected by internal conflict that lasted for several decades from the early 1980s till 2009. Death, disability, and displacement of people, loss of livelihoods and access to formal education, are few of the adverse effects of conflict that have contributed towards determining the region's socio-economic profile during and after the war. Within this social context, women (and children) are identified as a more vulnerable group on whom the impact of conflict is felt more severely than in the case of men (or adults) (McKay 2004; Onyango et al. 2005; Somasundaram 1998; Tolin and Foa 2006).

A detailed analysis of the qualitative data gathered during the course of the research emphasizes a very important theme: intimate relationships of women affected by war in the North of Sri Lanka shaping livelihood activities and choices. Therefore, the current paper looks at women whose intimate relations have either weakened or strengthened their capacity to engage in livelihood activities. The weakening of these capacities may have occurred by way of imposing social norms and values on the women, abuse, death, separation, and divorce while strengthening of them may have occurred through various kinds of support rendered by such intimate partners.

For the purposes of the study, intimate relationships are defined mainly as relationships a woman has with her husband/partner. Other intimate relationships with parents, siblings, and children also seem important in the context of post-war livelihood activities. The latter seems to play a secondary role (as opposed to the primary role played by spousal relationships) in terms of strengthening or weakening a woman's livelihood opportunities, mostly in the absence of a husband due to death, divorce or separation. The study proposes to analyze this phenomenon by way of attempting to answer three research questions:

- How do gender norms, beliefs, and practices prevalent in the community impact women's capacity to engage in livelihood activities?

- What is the impact of marriage on livelihood activities of women affected by war?
- What impact does the termination of marital relationships due to divorce, separation, or death, have on livelihood activities of women affected by war?

This paper intends to discuss certain key areas relating to the impact of marital relationships on the livelihood choices women make in post-war Sri Lanka: a) background of war-affected women in Sri Lanka; b) the conceptual framework employed; c) research methods; d) analysis and discussion of data followed by e) the conclusion.

2. Background: War-affected Women in Sri Lanka

The 26-year long civil war in Sri Lanka concluded in May 2009. It had intense impacts on Sri Lankan society as a whole, but also very particularly in the Northern Province. It was the Northern and Eastern provinces, which bore the brunt of the war. More than 70,000 people died due to the armed conflict. Communities' lives were disrupted repeatedly over 26 years. Families were compelled to relocate multiple times to multiple locations as a consequence of the war. Houses, infrastructure, and cultivatable land were ravaged (Arunatilake et al. 2001). It is recorded that there are 138,199 female-headed households (FHHs) in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka (Ministry of Resettlement, Reconstruction and Hindu Religious Affairs n.d.). This is principally due to the fact that many men living in the North and East died, disappeared, were injured were or detained as a result of the war.

Such widespread destruction will undoubtedly have some impact on gender and gender relations within a community. As men participate in armed combat or lose their lives because of it, women are left to shoulder the burden of providing for their families (Moser 2007; Rajasingham-Senanayake 2004). Therefore, we see that war opens up space to challenge certain gender stereotypes. However, with the conclusion of armed conflict, there is a possibility of returning to the status quo prior to the conflict as well. Consequently, some women will return to their traditional roles, while others may have to expand on those traditional roles entrusted to them. In many instances, life conditions dictate women to go beyond their traditional caregiver role and to adopt the role of the breadwinner of the household. For example, in Somalia, many women, with the loss of

their husbands to war, took on the responsibility of frequenting the market to sell produce and purchase goods (Sorensen 1998). This highlights the space that is made available to women to break certain barriers they were faced with before and during the war, in the post-war context.

In contrast, though, certain institutional factors could curtail the extent to which women may secure empowerment in Sri Lanka. Access to land is recognized as one of the key determinants in empowering women (Pallas 2011; Pena et. al. 2008; SIDA 2009; Swaminathan et. al. 2012). However, women in the North face the challenge of the Thesawalamei Law, which is applicable to Tamils domiciled in the Northern Province. The law does not recognize a woman's right to own land (Sarvananthan 2014). Though women can own their dowry property and half of their *theediaththam[1]* they cannot sell or manage the property without their husband's consent (Sarvananthan 2014). This situation truly undermines women in the North from improving their condition, particularly in situations where they have lost their husbands and fathers in addition to losing a lot of their assets including land. As a result of losing their husbands during the war, FHHs cannot alienate property or effectively manage it because they could not provide the death certificates of their husbands (Sarvananthan 2014). Situations of this nature undermine a woman's ability to stand on equal footing with men within society (Quibria 1995).

Social factors also impede women engaging meaningfully in a livelihood activity in the North and East (Sarvananthan 2014). Morrisson and Jütting (2005) have shown this to be the case generally across the developing countries. As Rajasingham-Senanayake (2004) points out, the lack of an appropriate cultural idiom, which encourages women to actively engage in the social and economic life of the community, can severely undermine the possibility of women continuing to play the new roles thrust on them during the conflict, once the war ended. Even a cursory glance through the interviews makes it clear that, in the North, social norms still dictate that women should remain at home. This has seriously undermined the types of livelihood activities women can engage in, and restricted them mainly to activities, which may be successfully accomplished within the household. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that women are likely to be pushed into the informal

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[1] The assets and wealth acquired after marriage by either or both parties involved.

sector due to the lack of employment opportunities created by economic deterioration and discrimination (Chingono 1996) and war is essentially a time of economic deterioration and discrimination (particularly for women).

Moreover, militarization and the culture of violence generated by war can exacerbate gender-based harassment and violence, constraining women's option to work outside their homes. As Sarvananthan (2014) argues, military phobia was one of the main factors which limited the economic activity of war-affected women in the North of Sri Lanka. Rape is a kind of torture and trauma experienced uniquely by women particularly during times of war and conflict (Amnesty International 2004; Kottegoda et. al. 2008; Meger 2011; Zilberg 2010). According to a report published by the ILO (2010), many women face social stigma in relation to being rape victims, either by virtue of being ex-combatants or by virtue of being a civilian. The report argues that in both scenarios many women were sexually abused either at the hands of the male combatants or by army personnel as civilians. Bandarage (2010) points out that there is a very real possibility of never really knowing about rape as a weapon of war in the Sri Lankan context. Rape victims face serious social challenges in reintegrating themselves into society. Therefore, in Sri Lanka, women who have been victims of rape have added impediments to overcome in achieving empowerment. In addition to dealing with social stigma, they have to overcome the psychological and emotional trauma of being raped.

As described above, the general social context in the North and East does not create a social environment within which it is easy for women to secure livelihood opportunities. Additionally, these women have undergone the losses and pains of war and continue to be challenged by the remnants of war. It is an established fact that the impact of war is felt more by women rather than men (ESCWA 2007; Plümper 2006). However, research has also shown that women are more likely to have access to livelihood opportunities and be economically active during and after the war in their attempt to recover and rebuild (Calderón, Gáfaro, and Ibáñez 2001; Petesche 2011). Exploring these possibilities fully continues to be a problem even for women with the skills and financial capital required for livelihoods in post-war Northern Sri Lanka due to the prevailing gender beliefs and practices in the region.

3. Conceptual Framework

In order to make sense of the data, many concepts were drawn on. This section intends to discuss the various concepts used in the paper and how they are relevant to the paper. It will consider: a) livelihood and the sustainable livelihood framework; b) social capital; c) intimate relationships; and d) the gender contract.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework has been widely used in understanding individuals' livelihood activities, particularly in the field of development studies. The concept was promoted by the Department for International Development (DFID) and the British state development cooperation agency (Haan 2012). It provides a more holistic means through which to approach livelihood studies. According to Carney (1998) "A livelihood system comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base."

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework identified five types of capital, namely human, physical, financial, natural, and social capital. Human capital refers to the labour required in order to engage meaningfully in a livelihood activity. Physical capital are those resources such as buildings, machinery, and equipment. Financial capital includes money in a savings account or a loan for example. Natural capital refers to those natural resources which are available to the individual to use in furthering their livelihoods, which are more important in rural settings rather than urban settings (Mishra 2009).

This paper will draw heavily on the final type of capital identified in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, i.e. social capital. Social capital has been defined in many ways. In essence, it captures the importance of social bonds and social norms in strengthening livelihood activities. According to Farr (2004), social capital is "complexly conceptualized as the network of associations, activities, or relations that bind people together as a community via certain norms and psychological capacities, notably trust,

which is essential for . . . future collective action or goods." DFID identifies three basic components of social capital. They are relations of trust, reciprocity, and exchanges between individuals which facilitate co-operation; common rules, norms, and sanctions mutually agreed upon or handed-down within societies; and connectedness, networks and groups, including access to wider institutions (Overseas Development Institute, 1999). Social capital looks at, but does not restrict itself to, the manner in which connectedness enables, and at times disables, the pursuit of gainful livelihood activities.

The impact social capital has on livelihoods, as well as the impact external stimuli has on social capital, has been the focus of many researchers. Mishra (2009) analyses both the negative and positive impacts that coal mining had on the social capital of communities living in Orissa. Sanyal (2009), using quantitative data, argues that microfinance serves to increase social capital amongst women in rural communities. This, in turn, has positive repercussions for their livelihood activities as well. LaLone (2012) sees social capital as a vital component of community resilience efforts and argues that it can play an important role in post-emergency situations.

War can be perceived as a period during which these social ties diminish or weaken due to militarization, death, and trauma. Death has a direct negative impact on social capital as it removes individuals with whom relationships have been maintained. Militarization and trauma lead to a lack of trust among members of a community which may weaken the social capital of the community as a whole as well as that of the individuals. However, Deng (2010) stresses that war may not always have a detrimental impact on social capital. Through his study with communities from Southern Sudan, he argues that communities exposed to endogenous counter-insurgency experienced a loss of social capital while those exposed to exogenous violence resulted in a deepening and strengthening of social capital. The war and violence experienced by communities in Northern Sri Lanka can be perceived as a mix of endogenous and exogenous violence. It is endogenous because the LTTE was a Jaffna-based movement and exogenous because the government armed forces appeared largely as an external force. Therefore, the impact of war on the social capital of women in the North of Sri Lanka has been somewhat mixed. Large-scale displacement of communities and large numbers of deaths have resulted in weakening

the community ties women had prior to the war and thereby the women's social capital. The common socio-cultural beliefs and practices in the region pertaining to gender roles have exacerbated the situation by providing restricted allowance for the empowerment of women. In the absence of strong community bonds, women have either tried to protect their intimate bonds within the family or considered the development of new intimate relationships as a way of ensuring their security and survival through difficult times (Lakshman, Schubert and Rajeshkannan, forthcoming).

It is important to note that social capital, while possessing the capacity to transform livelihoods for the better, also can adversely affect the livelihood pursuits of certain individuals, groups, or communities (Overseas Development Institute 1999). This is sometimes referred to as the "dark side" of social capital by some critics (Upton 2008). Social capital also involves social norms and beliefs. As such it can sometimes negatively influence certain groups. This is particularly true of women living in patriarchal societies. Caste, class, gender, religion, and ethnicity could often hinder a meaningful engagement in livelihood activities. Social norms and social institutions, which partially constitute social capital, limit the livelihood opportunities available to women while also limiting the extent to which they can engage in their livelihood activities. Generally, women's livelihood activities are constrained by two factors: women are responsible for reproductive functions within the household, and women's involvement in work outside the village generally carries negative connotations (Kodoth 2005). Research suggests that social norms regarding women places greater restrictions on married women rather than unmarried women's activities (Mannon 2006). This is due to the fact that married women are expected to fulfil their reproductive and caregiving function within the family, ahead of the productive role outside the family. In the case of Northern Sri Lanka, belief about the purity of women, virginity, and fidelity may work against women engaging in livelihoods.

In exploring the relationship between social capital and livelihoods of women in post-war Northern Sri Lanka, the study pays attention to a specific group of people, i.e. persons with whom women maintain intimate relationships, particularly husbands/partners. According to Robert Putnam (1995), the family is a crucial component of a person's

social capital. Coleman (1998) identifies the importance of parent-child relationships as a factor of social capital and he argues that "strong families" generate social capital. However, both Putnam and Coleman note the declining significance of family in modern times. It is perhaps the work of Pierre Bourdieu on social capital that is most relevant to this paper. For Bourdieu, the family is a motor of social capital (Gillies 2003). As such families with symbolic and material resources are capable of drawing on these resources to develop themselves. This, however, leads to inequity, as not everyone has access to the same resources and the same opportunities to develop themselves. Bates (2002) also has looked at how middle class families work hard to ensure that benefits are reproduced.

Intimate relationships then have a crucial role to play in generating social capital. Social capital is an indispensable component of the livelihood framework. Therefore, intimate relationships and the manner in which they are structured and operate will have important consequences on war-affected women's capacity to engage in economic activity. It is on this basis that intimate relationships, particularly spousal relationships, are explored in this paper. The analysis will also pay secondary attention to other intimate relationships with parents, siblings, and children to understand how these relationships supplement or substitute severed spousal relationships. Current literature stresses the important changes that are taking place in the family and how these changes affect women. Given economic pressures and other factors the household structures across the world are undergoing significant change. There is a shift from a breadwinner/homemaker model to a dual career model (Mannon 2006). Writing about the Latin American context, Vincent (1998) refers to the "Grapes-of-Wrath" effect to describe how, in households where men's economic resources are no longer sufficient, women transform their reproductive activities to "provide for the household in new ways." However, though women engage in economic activity, these activities are still greatly dependent on social norms regarding what is, and is not, permissible for a woman to do. There is a tendency for paid work to take place at home and/or mimic women's domestic responsibilities, which in turn serves to reinforce traditional gender boundaries (Estrada 2002).

Marriage creates a new relationship between man and woman. It creates a new household and also a new production unit (Fafchamps and Quisumbing 2005). According to

Fafchamps and Quisumbing (2005), throughout history marriage has provided the basis for not only household formation but also production within the household by way of providing a means for men and women to access land and labour. The composition of family and the sex, age, and other characteristics of household members are seen to play a key role in determining the livelihood strategies of a household in social contexts with strong gender-based division of labour (Thomas 2008). In societies where the general socio-cultural make up is not conducive towards females joining the work force, "wives" are likely to remain as housewives or opt for household-based income generating activities. Therefore, marriage plays an important role in the life of a woman, particularly with regard to decisions she makes concerning the pursuit, or non-pursuit of livelihoods, and the manner in which she should engage in that activity.

In their discussion of returned migrant women who have migrated from rural to urban Ghana, Tufuor, Sato, and Niehof (2016) claim that recently returned migrant women make decisions regarding their livelihood by balancing moral obligations to the household on the one hand, and self-maximizing desires on the other hand. The study shows the negotiations women have to make between their personal wellbeing and the wellbeing of the family. Women are responsible for ensuring cooperation within the family rather than conflict. It is in light of this burden that women make decisions regarding their livelihood activities. Therefore, it may be noted once again that the manner in which intimate relationships are formed and the manner in which they are maintained, determine livelihood activities of women.

Hirdman (1991) discusses the idea of a "gender contract" that is useful in understanding the balance women in patriarchal societies are expected to maintain between their household and workforce responsibilities. She attempts to understand the manner in which the gender contract has changed in Sweden over the last two centuries since the onset of industrialization. According to Rantalaiho and Heiskanen (1997) a gender contract is understood as "a pattern of implicit rules on mutual roles and responsibilities, on rights and obligations, and it defines how the social relations between women and men, between the genders and generations, and also between social production and reproduction, are organized in our societies." Hirdman (1991) dismisses the possibility

of gender relations being a static reality in society and argues that gender relations are constantly negotiated in the everyday practice of men and women in society. The post-war context opens up a space for a great deal of negotiations to take place regarding the place of women in society and gender relations within the household as well as wider society.

The above section has attempted to highlight the different ways in which social capital, intimate relationships, and gender intersect in determining the livelihood activities pursued by women. The war-affected women exist within a patriarchal social structure. Women who are still married live in male/husband-headed households while those who are widowed, divorced or separated from their husbands have the responsibility of heading the household. In the case of the latter, even though a husband is not physically present the women seem to suffer from either fond memories of the husband or from bitter memories of the exploitation caused by their ex-husbands. All women are burdened with dual responsibilities within the household and at work. In the case of the widowed, divorced or separated women, the dual responsibility is mandatory while married women have the option of non-engagement in livelihoods as they live under the security and protection of a husband. Three key factors that have an impact on women's social capital within post-war Northern Sri Lanka have been identified: 1) cultural norms and practices in the region; 2) war-related trauma; and 3) extended family relations. A woman's social capital plays a significant role in determining her position within the household. The success achieved by women in their livelihoods, and having supportive family relations within the household, enhance the women's social capital. The reciprocal relationship between intimate relationships of a woman and her livelihood activities essentially contributes to the strengthening or weakening of her social capital.

4. Research Methods

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in all five districts of the Northern Province, namely Jaffna, Mullaitivu, Mannar, Kilinochchi and Vavuniya. Under the GROW project[2] 120 in-depth interviews were conducted in the Northern Province. Participants for the research were selected using a non-random, purposive sampling method and were selected on the basis of their current or previous engagement with a livelihood activity. For the purpose of this particular paper 30 translated transcripts out of the 120 interviews were analysed. These 30 interviews were also purposively chosen to cover a wide range of issues and social factors which influence war-affected women's livelihood activities in the North. Of the 30 interviews chosen, seven interviews were done with married women (of whom two were remarried), 12 with widowed women, and 11 with separated women.

In analyzing the data, a thematic framework emphasizing intimate relationships was adopted. This framework allowed for a detailed analysis of how relationships between people, rather than social institutions, shaped livelihood activities.

The paper has certain limitations, which would be wise to keep in mind when proceeding. Firstly, the fact that the sample is entirely purposively selected restricts the generalizability of the findings. The non-random sampling technique used makes it very difficult to generalize the research findings to the entire Northern Province. Secondly, much could have been lost in translation. The interviews were conducted in the Tamil language and the transcripts of the have been later translated into English. Therefore, valuable nuances that provide useful insights into the lived experiences of war-affected women engaging in livelihood activities may have got lost in translation. Thirdly, the researcher did not have first-hand field experience as fieldwork was conducted by research assistants. This may have had an impact on the final analysis.

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[2] Post-War Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women in Sri Lanka (GROW) is a project undertaken by the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) with funding from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

5. Intimate Relationships of War-affected Women and their Livelihoods in Northern Sri Lanka

In war-affected regions of Sri Lanka, the nature of intimate relationships emerged as a salient factor in women pursuing and sustaining their livelihoods. The data clearly reveal two broad ways in which intimate relationships affect women – by either enabling or constraining them to engage in livelihood activities. Prevailing socio-cultural norms and practices, as well as conflict-related factors such as exposure to violence, disruption of education, and early marriage shape intimate relations to enable or disable women from pursuing livelihoods and decrease or increase their vulnerability as social actors.

Information revealed by the 30 women that are the subject of this paper point to some common characteristics of these women. It is important to understand these common characteristics prior to a discussion on the impact of intimate relationships on these women's livelihoods. The characteristics also explain the nature of experiences faced by these women during and after the war. Except for one woman who was never displaced, all other 29 women have experienced multiple displacements during their childhood and/or teenage life.

Another common characteristic of these women was their low levels of educational achievements. The experiences of war and financial difficulties created an environment that made it difficult for these women to continue formal education. Of the interviewees, one had studied up to Grade 4, 12 between Grades 6 and 11, 10 completed the G.C.E. (Ordinary Level) Examination and one completed the G.C.E. (Advanced Level) Examination. Data on the education levels of six women were not available. In many cases, these women, after discontinuation of education, were given away in marriage either to protect them from being abducted by the LTTE or to fulfill some ulterior family motive.

This socio-economic and cultural milieu within which these women's life stories have been written contributed towards them having to ensure their survival under

very vulnerable conditions both within and outside of the home. Vulnerability in the outside world was created by factors such as war, poverty and low levels of education. Vulnerability inside the home was created by weak and fragile intimate relationships either with parents or husbands. In both situations, the fact of being a woman was a prime reason for being vulnerable. War and post-war conditions exacerbated these vulnerabilities.

In this backdrop, the data presented in this study looks at these women's intimate relationships and their impact on women's livelihoods with particular attention placed on their marital relationships. The role of other intimate relationships within the family is considered as secondary relationships that substitute or supplement a severed spousal relationship.

6. Impact of Marriage and Severance of Marriage on Women's Livelihoods

As in many patriarchal countries in South Asia, the common perceptions and expectations of marriage in Northern Sri Lanka closely resemble the conventional gender contract discussed by Hirdman (1991). Furthermore, Rajasingham-Senanayake (2004) writes about Hindu cultural notions of the auspicious married woman and the inauspicious widow in Northern Sri Lanka. Religiously established gender beliefs of this nature are likely to form the foundation for gender practices in these parts of Sri Lanka making it very difficult for a woman to live an economically and socially secured life in the absence of a husband or at least a "protective" male figure. The husband would "provide for and protect" his wife and children in exchange for the wife's "care giving" services for the husband and children. Norms, beliefs, and practices pertaining to gender in the region are formed around this perception of marriage and women are seen largely as a group that needs the protection of a husband or at least the protection of an older and/or stronger male family member such as a father, brother, or son.

The marital expectations of the women interviewed during this study closely resemble the description above. At the time of marriage, all women have anticipated to being "provided for and protected by" the husband. Their perception of marriage is clearly

depicted in the following statement by a woman who was given away in marriage at the age of 16.

> *After dropping out of school, I was given away in marriage. He was a mason and labourer. He earned about Rs. 2,000 a day. He buys grocery items. When he worked I was at home. I had children. I didn't go to work after my marriage. I cook at home (Kilinochchi, 55).* [3]

However, the majority of women in the sample have been denied this kind of protection either due to the death (of the husband), which is an inevitable consequence of war, or due to separation, which may have also been an indirect result of the war. Many women who were separated from their husbands have been forced to make that decision in response to unbearable amounts of financial, physical and/or emotional abuse that they have been subjected to by their husbands. This kind of abusive behaviour has been identified as a male form of response to prolonged exposure to conflict (see Rajasingham-Senanayake 2004). Abusing and traumatizing their wives could be a means of relieving the stress and trauma of war for men who are themselves traumatized by the experience of war either by direct involvement or by seeing and hearing of violence on a daily basis.

> *My husband caused most of the problems I faced. He doesn't go to work and he doesn't let me go to work. (Interviewer: Why is that?) I don't know, he is very suspicious of me. (Interviewer: Why? What is he suspicious about?) He is afraid that others might talk to me. (Interviewer: What does he do? Does he fight with you about that?) No, he doesn't do anything to me, but he will pick fights with others if they talk to me or he would go around telling people that I am going to work without his permission (Mullaithivu, 24).*

> *When my son was 1 ½ years old, my husband's behaviour was not o.k. So I left him. My mother was in Neelamadu. I left him and went there . . . After seven months he also came there. For about two months he was o.k. Then I conceived*

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[3] Data presented as quotations will indicate the area from which the respondent came and her age within brackets.

my second son. Then again he started to misbehave (Interviewer: What do you mean misbehave?) Alcohol, women, and more than that, he was suspicious of me. When I was five months pregnant, our fathers also advised him. But he didn't listen. So I left him. Then he went away. After that, I was with my mother for about five years (Mannar, 46A).

Wife-abuse was, however, not common only to men who failed to fulfil the clichéd breadwinner role attributed to husbands. Sometimes men who fit the stereotypical male breadwinner role were also abusive of their wives. Whatever the nature and cause of abuse, such abusive marriages, except for a few, have eventually ended up in separation.

He looked after me very well. If I give the list, he would bring it home. I need not go to the shop. Everything he brought home. (Interviewer: Was your husband an alcoholic?) Yes. He used to hit me as well as my eldest child. I sit and cry. Some days I scream. Then my father comes to my rescue. So I don't like my husband (Kilinochchi, 36).

(Interviewer: Did your husband have any bad habits?) Yes. Drugs, alcohol, gambling, and women everything was there. (Interviewer: Did he beat you?) Yes, he did. So I have decided I don't want him. I didn't work when he was there. He looked after us well. He maintained us. I don't know what happened. Some said that someone had cast a spell on him (Mannar, 42).

(Interviewer: When did you marry?) In the year 2001, My daughter was born in 2002. (Interviewer: When did he abandon you?) I sent him abroad in 2003, with that he separated from me. (Interviewer: To which country did he go?) To Qatar. He fought with his employer and stayed without work. He didn't send me money. I sent him money by pawning all my jewels. They were all redeemed only after my brother went to Qatar for work and sent money. There was no help from my husband (Vavuniya, 41).

Not all women who were abused by their husbands opted to leave their husbands. Their decision to remain in the relationship was mostly influenced by cultural norms prevalent in society. Some women continued in abusive marriages for the sake of having a male "protector" for them and their children's well-being. These women believed that retaining the father of their children in the house would ensure social recognition for children and ensure that children have access to any assets that may be in the possession of the father (Yount and Li 2009).

> *Whatever said and done the children need their father. My father is old. How long would they look after me? So I thought it's better to live with him (KIlinochchi, 34).*

> *(Interview: Are you divorced?) No. I only filed a case for alimony. I do not want a divorce. What if my children ask, "Why did you divorce him?" when they are grown up? He wanted me to apply for it. And his father wrote the land in my name in his will. Both of us have to sign if we are to do something with that land. I do not want my children to lose it. So I only filed a case for alimony. He said he will only pay 7,000 rupees. It was decided that he has to pay 20,000. He only pays 5,000 (Jaffna, 39).*

The above quotations clearly indicate the negative impacts of voluntarily severing a marriage in this socio-cultural context. In this war-affected social scenario, people might treat a widow sympathetically as death is seen as a vicious consequence of war. However, sympathy will be offered only as long as the widow acts within the boundaries socially assigned as appropriate for a (once) married woman. As explained by respondents, when a woman (widowed or otherwise) crosses this boundary and takes up the role of the family breadwinner, which may require more social engagement outside the house, these sentiments of sympathy usually convert to envy and disgust. However, the community does not seem to shed sympathy on women who "voluntarily" sever marital relations through separation or divorce. As explained by one respondent, the community does not consider the causes of separation/divorce but always finds fault with the woman who decides to leave the husband (see later). Severance of marriage due to death, separation

or divorce, has a detrimental impact on a woman's social capital, irrespective of the cause for severing the marriage (Rajasingham-Senanayake 2004). For women who have not hitherto engaged in any livelihoods, severance of marriage is sure to shatter their financial capital base. Likewise, their social capital is also likely to weaken as they lose the social recognition that was once attributed to them as married women. The weakening of both financial and social capital due to severance of marriage would make it difficult for the women to find and/or sustain livelihoods.

The abusive husbands described above have not provided the anticipated financial protection nor have they allowed the women to find such protection by themselves. Furthermore, husbands' abusive behaviours have stigmatized the women socially and traumatized them, making it difficult for them to have a "normal" social life. In some cases (see above Mullaitivu, 24), abuse seems to be a case of "over protection." Men who are raised according to the accepted gender norms and practices of the region, seem socially constrained by their anticipated role as the sole breadwinner of the family, incapacitating them of realizing their wives' potential to engage in livelihoods; a situation that could result in the "over-protective" behaviour towards the wives. Additionally, prolonged exposure to war is likely to have "taught" these men the vulnerability of women and hence the need to protect them physically by keeping them in the house. Irrespective of the cause of abuse, it has undoubtedly contributed to a weakening of the women's financial capital as well as social networks which has, in turn, restricted their potential for livelihoods even after the severance of marriage. The abuse has traumatized women physically and psychologically, debilitating their physical and psychological capacity to find and engage is livelihoods.

Widowed or separated women's experiences during the time they were married not only determined their perception of marriage but also had a significant impact on their self-dignity. Widowed women who have had fulfilling marriages, were very nostalgic of their past while separated women who were married to abusive men were pleased to be alone. However, many of these women, irrespective of the reason that encouraged or forced them to seek employment, have gained confidence and become empowered as a result of being "employed." The separated women who have been once abused by their husbands

showed less potential for success in livelihoods. The trauma of abusive marital relations has made it difficult for these women to succeed in livelihoods and face the social challenges of being separated. The trauma of abuse seems to have had a severe detrimental impact on the women's self-dignity affecting their competence in the world of work.

> *For two years I was mentally ill. As soon as he left I was so upset. For five years I took tablets. Even now I cannot sleep without pills (Mannar, 42).*

> *I was married in 1996. Then started work in 1999 or 2000. I was working for three years. We have to categorize the prawns and crabs. Then at that time, my husband started to quarrel with me. He fought with me all the time. He came to my working place and fought. At that time we were living separately . . . He doesn't go to work. He was an alcoholic . . . Then he physically abused me. Many times I tried to commit suicide. Once I tried to burn myself. I consumed 30 sleeping tablets and was unconscious for five days in the hospital. I cannot survive. I cannot look after my children. How much society puts you down and criticizes you when you don't have a husband (Mannar, 39).*

The war that lasted for over three decades has essentially been a determining factor in shaping the life conditions of these women. Some widows who have enjoyed comfortable times when their husbands were around blamed the war for all their current miseries. Such deaths have weakened their social networks and also denied them the protection of a husband (and/or the protection by an older son). Women who have been considered the "protected" now have to be the "protector," not just of themselves but also of their dependents.

> *(Interviewer: Do you think your life would have been better if there was no war?) Of course, I wouldn't have known this side of life and I'd have been happier. My husband took me everywhere in his lorry and I didn't even know how to get to the road. He did everything for me, he is so loving and caring. Now, I have to walk everywhere. Sometimes, it's too hot to walk in the sun and sometimes I feel so*

tired while walking, but there is nothing I can do other than cry about my life now . . . The Army took him with them. They asked everyone who worked with the LTTE to surrender to them, so my husband surrendered. Then after a while the army brought his documents and told me that he was shot by LTTE. (Interviewer: The Army took him and told you that the LTTE shot him?) Yes, what can I do? I cried and cried and asked them to show his body, they didn't. I asked the Grama Niladhari and other officers to provide me with his death certificate, but they didn't. They are telling me that someone must confirm his death. What can I do to prove to them that he is dead? I haven't even seen his body (crying) (Mullaitivu, 52).

If there wasn't a war, I wouldn't have lost my husband and sons. My two sons would have looked after me well if there wasn't a war. Why are we in this state? Why should we be like this? My sons would have been income earners. Even if my husband had left me, my sons, who were educated up to grade nine would have definitely looked after me in a better way (Kilinochchi, 47).

As explained by the first widow above, the war has not only taken away the women's husbands but also the social recognition they once received as married women. Lack of social connections and women's subordinate position within society seem to constrain them further making them feel even more helpless in the absence of a man. For example, one could argue that the above woman could learn to drive the lorry that was once owned by her husband. However, constrained by the narrow rules put in place by society, a majority of the women interviewed did not even consider such choices as feasible solutions to their problems. Driving a lorry or hiring a three-wheeler alone is not perceived as suitable solutions to the difficulties of walking under the blazing sun by a woman (once) married. In addition to the war, several other social forces seem to act toward disempowering the women. The gender norms and practices prevalent in the region were a main disempowering force which restricted women to the house. These norms were not conducive for widowed or separated women to engage in livelihoods in the absence of a male figure in the family.

Society expects women to dress up nicely and cook at home. That's all they are allowed to do, anything that requires going out of the house is not allowed. We have a lot of issues in the society. A woman who lost her husband cannot dress well at all in this society. If she dresses well and goes out for whatever reason, the only implication is that she is meeting a man. The situation is worse if a woman leaves a man. The reason why she left him is not taken into account. People will never point their finger at a man. It's always a woman's fault. A widowed woman has to go to Samurthi, DS office and everywhere all by herself, but all that people say is she is seeing a man. I am not exaggerating; this is what happens in the society. It's always a problem when there is no male travel companion with you. It's quite less within the areas of Killinochi and Vavuniya, but if you pass those areas you are prone to harassment. I was harassed on my way back home after sending off my husband to Qatar. That is one thing I am scared of while travelling. Sometimes I travel with my uncle, but it's not always possible to have someone to travel with (Mullaitivu, 35).

Society in the Northern Province, in general, seemed less tolerant of working women irrespective of the presence of a husband or not. Some married women were forced to seek livelihoods due to their husbands' ill health. In such cases the work involved was usually done with the support of the husband. However, women's visible presence in the "world of work" temporarily without a husband created challenges even for married working women.

He is like, not mentally all right. He is allergic to fire, heat, and cement. When we married he was a labourer. In the nights he falls sick. He says his skin is burning because of the cement. He used to go one day and stay back the next day. So we started to sell string hoppers. If I make he would supply. Once he was admitted to the hospital. I went to supply. Men said something at the hotel. It hurts. It's very difficult for a woman to supply. If he is not there it's very difficult . . . Some said, "Wait, will you?" some held my hand while giving the money. I was scared (Mannar, 36).

The situation was worse in the case of widowed or separated women who did not have a husband at all. Some women shared stories of how they were harassed by some individuals or groups that exercised power over them in their workplaces. Certain officials in government offices and aid agencies too seem to possess this kind of attitude. The points made by Mannon (2006) and Kodoth (2005) about social norms and negative connotations that govern women's social position is relevant here. Members of the community and/or officials in organizations harassed women on the basis of these norms either by way of direct comments at the women or by way of gossip.

When we go out alone, and when they inquire and find out that the woman is single, they pass hints or follow you. I have suffered. I come home and cry. They continuously follow. Some say, "Get into the three wheeler, we will drop you". Before I bought a cycle, many wanted to drop me home. Sometimes I have argued with them too . . . If I go for an aid, they ask for a death certificate or a divorce certificate. In one place a lady officer at XXX[4], asked, "You said you don't have a husband but you are wearing pottu (the dot worn by Tamil women on their forehead)? Have you married again?" I said I don't want your aid. I don't have the necessity to answer your question. And I left (Mannar, 46).

There was a storeroom at the shop (where I was working). Sometimes I need to go there to take supplies to the shop, the owner also comes with me during such times. The three-wheeler drivers observed this and fabricated the story (that I am having an affair with him). They always make up such stories. I couldn't accept this as I have a daughter with me. I immediately informed this to the wife of the owner and his cousin and told them that, "I cannot continue the job in this situation" (Vavuniya, 41).

Another problem that debarred the widowed and separated women from engaging in livelihoods was the difficulty of attending to their children while working. Although the severance of abusive marital relationships gave the women the freedom necessary for engaging in livelihood activities, by such time many women were burdened with the responsibility of caring for children. Inability to look after children, particularly girls, and

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[4] Name of the organization has been taken out to ensure confidentiality.

inability to attend to children's needs were mentioned by many women as reasons for not engaging in livelihoods or for seeking home-based livelihoods. The situation was aggravated in the absence of able parents and/or siblings who would be willing to help these women with childcare. Having young children has been raised as a factor that determines the employment options taken up by women (Van Putten et.al. 2008). Some women had to abandon profitable employment due to the difficulty of looking after their children while going to work. Women who could find formal employment outside of home sought home-based self-employment opportunities so that they could attend to their children's needs as well as their protection while working (Rajasingham-Senanayake 2004).

When I married he looked after me well until he got used to this drinking habit. Whenever I ask for money he doesn't give. So I thought I should work. Whatever he gives is also not enough. I can work. My only barrier is no one is there to look after my children. Then I have to drop and pick them from the montessori and the school. So it's difficult. I can work from home. (Interviewer: So if there's someone to look after the children you will work?) Yes, but that will never happen I can only do something from home. I like making snacks but it will not work here. I can't sell them. We have to work hard to make a profit. If he supports I can do. But he will not do it (Kilinochchi, 34).

It was a good earning at the Garment Factory. However, my children struggled to a great deal. If I go to the factory nobody looks after them. They could not manage themselves, if they go to school the dressing was incomplete. Sometimes they forget to put on their socks. I usually press their dresses though. No one was available to prepare them to go to school. My younger sisters are residing nearby but, they don't take care of my children. If I ask them to do so, they come up with comments like, "You are going to work and all" (Vavuniya, 34).

(Interviewer: Since you don't have work that gives you enough money, what do you want to do?) If I can restart my short eats business that will be more than enough. I don't like to go out for my work. Because I have two daughters, if I go

out to work, I will not be able to spend time with them or get back home on time in the evenings. In that case, my daughters will be alone in the house. I don't want that. You know what happens in the country these days. You cannot leave your children alone at home. Also, I don't like to go out to work. If it's the short eats business, my eldest daughter will help me with it and I will also find ways to expand it (Mullaitivu, 52).

Abusive marital relationships have been a recurring theme in the lives of many women interviewed. These women who have been denied the expected protection from a husband, were faced with the additional stress and trauma of being abused by their husbands. Experiences of war, low levels of education, and early marriages are all interrelated factors that may have resulted in abusive marital relations. In a cultural context where girls were being raised to be "looked after" by a man, the education of girls was paid inadequate attention; a factor that encouraged dropping out of school and early marriage (Kottegoda et.al. 2008). Many women in the sample have been forced into marriage or consented to it without fully realizing what they were getting into at an early age, particularly after dropping out of school. While some girls who had fallen in love after dropping out from school consented to marriage, others were forced into marriages arranged by parents. In other cases, young girls and boys opted or were forced into marriage due to fear of being forcibly recruited by the LTTE. Whatever the reason for marriage, women often regretted having been married early because many such marriages have eventually become abusive

I was good in studies and sports as well. The family didn't have the necessary facilities to educate me further. Father was bedridden. I only had a brother. No one to help me. So I studied up to the 10th grade but didn't do my O/L exam. I married at 16 due to the war. My studies were interrupted due to poverty. My parents were scared that we might join the movement. So when he was interested to marry me, they gave me away in marriage. Poverty was the reason for giving up studies (Mannar, 46).

I would say it is a forced marriage. It's not like I loved him. But we were seeing each other. Our families had some issues so his family wanted me to come into their family as a revenge on my family. My parents didn't accept us, but his family was okay. I was nineteen years old when I got married, I didn't understand what was going on (Jaffna, 32).

That was during the time the LTTE was recruiting people, and I kind of had to marry him. He took me with him to marry me while I was studying because he was afraid that the LTTE might take him with them. We were in love and when he asked me to come with him I went with him because he was in trouble. He convinced me that he will be taken (Mullaitivu, 24).

A common solution sought by many abused or widowed women has been to return home seeking assistance from parents for childcare and financial stability. In some cases, extended family members, such as siblings, uncles or aunts have come to the rescue of these women. The extended family, which becomes less significant in a woman's life after marriage, re-enters her life when the marriage breaks down as a source of empowerment both socially and financially. This pattern is confirmed in some quotations cited above. In some cases, going in line with the accepted gender norms of society, the extended family has not allowed the women to seek employment outside the house. In such situations, the parents and/or siblings have both helped financially and looked after the woman's children.

Even though my father's earnings are not enough to conduct the family, I could not leave my children behind. My father said let's manage with whatever we've got. So he went to work, leaving me to look after the children... I wanted to work. My father's salary was not enough, right? But he didn't let me. Since he has no job now, I decided to go (she has been working in a mixture factory since 2014). But I have health issues. Headaches. My eyesight became poor as well (Kilinochchi, 40).

(Interviewer: Is there any other reason you don't want to go outside and work?)
No, my mother raised me that way. My father is a government officer. And even when I was married, I go out with him if I have to, but I am not very interested going outside my house. I get everything I need inside the house. After he died, my parents were looking after me. Now my father is helping me, so I am okay (Vavuniya, 39).

I don't have enough money. I mean I don't know how to tell someone about my problems, but I am telling you because you asked me. I asked my brother to help, so he is helping my children to get an education. My father will give his pension for other expenses. That is how life goes (Vavuniya, 39).

Loss of a male breadwinner adds more stress to the life of a widowed/separated woman who has to now work for a living in addition to fulfilling the care-giving responsibilities she has been providing for her family. A clear violation of the gender contract is visible here and it has resulted in a re-negotiation of the homemaker/breadwinner roles within the household (Mannon 2006; Vincent 1998). Some widowed/separated women's understanding of their role as breadwinners of the family also was shaped within socially accepted cultural beliefs and as a result they seemed fully content that their parents and/or siblings were providing for them. Cunningham (2001a and 2001b) observed how parental attitudes had a significant impact on the formation of young adults' conception of gender roles within the household.

However, many of these women, with or without support from the extended family, have realized that they cannot strictly go by what society expects of them given their unique situation of having to care for their children both as a mother as well as a father. These social circumstances and sentiments seem to have given these women mental strength to get through with their life. Here too, sometimes the encouragement provided by parents, particularly mothers, was visible.

My mother was very encouraging. She said, "Whoever says whatever, you are the judge of yourself. As long as you are correct you don't have to worry about

anyone. You need to worry only if you do wrong. Wherever you want to go you go. You protect yourself." My mother's confidence and guidance are the reasons for my career. Otherwise, my life also could have been a disaster… Mother married when she was 35. No one can go near to her. She is a very strong and tough woman. No one dares to tease her. She is not soft like us. Very tough. All were scared of her. She says, "Don't be scared, if you cry and sleep in a corner, there will be cats sleeping in your stove. No one who teases you is going to feed you. So you have to earn. You have to be courageous'' (Mannar, 46).

No one really likes me driving a three-wheeler. From my mother to my relatives— they all have a problem with it. I told them I need to take care of my own problems as a head of household and I don't care about who is talking about me and who is making fun of me. I only care about my work and my future. They think women shouldn't drive an auto. They also said it's indecent to drive an auto and many other reasons. An auto is better than driving motorbike. They don't get it (Mullaitivu, 36).

Some separated/widowed women considered the option of remarriage to overcome the issues they faced as single women. In some cases remarriage has contributed to an improvement of the women's social position while in others it has further exacerbated their vulnerabilities. Irrespective of the outcome of remarriage, the desire to remarry highlights the cultural significance attributed to marriage as a form of "protection."

My parents are old and my mother is sick. When they are gone I am going to be all alone with my son. No one will take care of my son and if I am alone, others will talk different things about me, so my life would be complicated. I need someone to support me when I get old and I am still young. I got married young and I have a son. So, if I married someone I will be supported and safe, that is why they let me remarry (Jaffna, 30).

When I was with my ex-husband, yes, it was like living in a prison. I was like a slave. He was always suspicious of me and treated me very badly. But after I left him and married this one, I am so happy. My husband is a good man (Jaffna, 32).

(When my husband died) I had little children and I'll be honest with you, my last son was born after I came here. I got pregnant by my closest cousin. He promised me he will look after me but he cheated on me and said he is not the father of my son. I went to court and took the test and got the birth certificate. He is married now; he has no connections with us. I was young and helpless and trusted that he will look after us. I regret it happened... However, my relatives and neighbours shunned me. I felt very bad, even my parents didn't understand me. It's only now, that people are slowly starting to talk to me. A woman shouldn't live without her husband. If you make one mistake in one weak moment, people will always judge by the mistake. People still talk about me. It's something that you have to face if you are a woman. I wish I am never born a woman again. People even told me that I got the housing scheme because I slept with one of the male officials (Kilinochchi, 36).

Amidst these difficulties and trauma, however, research shows that war has a unique way of economically (and therefore socially) empowering the widowed, divorced or separated women by forcing them to take up the breadwinner position within the household (Calderón, Gáfaro and Ibáñez 2001; ESCWA 2007; Petesche 2011). Some widows who opted to start a business have excelled in their livelihood activities. For example, a woman who was a very successful entrepreneur had won several awards and trainings for her food products. Though she regretted her husband's death, she was in a way happy about her achievements as an individual.

If my husband was alive, I could have depended on him. But I lost him and everything in the war. Starting a business was my only option and along the way, I learned a lot. It was all good experiences (Mulaitivu, 36).

Successful women, like the one above, however, have had one common feature. They have had some form of financial capital (cash or an asset) that could be invested in a business or the support (in cash or in kind) of a family member (parent or sibling) to help them with the establishment of a business. Furthermore, none of them spoke of being abused or cheated by their husbands while being married; an indication of marriage not being detrimental to their self-dignity as women (Loring 1994; Sackett and Saunders 1999). These conditions have supported them to strengthen their financial and social capital to excel in what they did.

All women in the sample, whether successful or not in livelihoods, explained how they continue to be vulnerable to sexist/gender-based harassments in the absence of a husband, as gender norms and beliefs are intact.

> *I became strong; I do the work a man does. I have to make all the decisions and take care of everything about my family . . . I learned how to live through the hardships. And I also learned how to live in this society and how to adjust to the society and I also learned farming. I have never done any of those work before. I don't want my children to go through the same. I teach them to be wise. I am worried about my daughters, not my sons. Because girls are more vulnerable than boys, you know what happens in the society now. Since I made a mistake, people may try to treat my daughter like they treat me. I don't want that to happen to her (Kilinochchi, 36).*

> *It's good if you can stand on your own feet. When I suffered no one was there to support me. At the same time I don't have any capital to improve my economy. If I ask for help they immediately ask "Oh! Don't you have a husband? Can you give your phone number?" Society is such (Mannar, 39).*

Women who were married "rich" and of higher social status had more potential for being successful in livelihoods. These women were less likely to be abused by their husbands and were of relatively higher educational backgrounds. There were two women from the Vellalar caste in the sample and their experiences had a similar flavour of "good fortune."

While it may be possible that these women were more committed and motivated than the others, their experiences also suggest an exposure to more positive social conditions as indicated by their level of education (one woman had studied up to the G.C.E. Advanced Level) and the initial capital that would have been necessary to start the kind of businesses they were involved in (cement pillar making and food products). Both women had several employees working under them, which also indicates the magnitude of their businesses. These two cases clearly point out the positive impact of having access to social and financial capital for successful livelihoods by women.

The study reveals that being married significantly improves a woman's social capital in the war-affected zones of Northern Sri Lanka making it difficult for women to engage in livelihoods in the absence of a husband. Widowed and separated women encountered several difficulties in strengthening their financial and social capital base which was necessary for effective livelihoods and vice versa. Women who were married to abusive husbands faced additional psychological challenges, which had a detrimental impact on their social capital. Their social network was shattered due to psychological trauma and stigma caused by abusive relationships with husbands. In the long term, the trauma of being abused has damaged the women's self-dignity to the extent that they are unable to function effectively in terms of livelihood activities.

Many women sought one of two solutions to their problem of having to play a dual role as the breadwinner father and the care-giving mother. Some women returned to their parents/extended family seeking support, while others opted to remarry. Both solutions had positive and negative impacts on the livelihoods of women in the sample. Re-marriage has resulted in further abuse for some women while for others it has provided the anticipated protection and support. In the case of the latter, their livelihood activities have also been successful. Returning to one's parents/ extended family after an abusive marriage has supported the women with childcare enabling them to engage in livelihoods. In the long-term, returning to parents/extended family has enhanced women's protection and self-dignity. These women appear happier and more confident than the ones not so supported by their extended families.

7. Conclusion

The paper attempted to understand the impact of marital relationships on women's livelihood capacities during and after the war in the Northern parts of Sri Lanka. Thirty in-depth interviews with married, widowed and separated women provided data for analysis. However, the fact that the data was collected for research more into the area of economic aspects of war-affected women's livelihood activities is a main limitation of the current analysis. The data was analyzed to see the impact of marriage and of severance of marriage on these women's capacity to engage in livelihoods.

Socio-cultural norms and beliefs promote women in the post-war areas, as elsewhere, to think of marriage as a form of security and protection for women. These norms promoted practices that looked upon women as deserving the care and protection of a husband or a strong male figure such as father, brother or son. These gender norms resulted in a social climate which made it difficult for a woman, particularly a widowed, divorced or separated woman, to engage in livelihoods. Such women were prone to sexual harassment at the workplace and society in general. Some married women were kept away from livelihoods by their husbands in order to avoid this kind of harassments, while others were supported by their husbands to engage in livelihoods. Women who were supported by their husbands in their livelihood activities were very happy and satisfied with their life, which improved their self-dignity. Another group of women who were struggling in their livelihoods had tarnished self-dignities as a result of being abused by their husbands.

Marriage, in this cultural backdrop, essentially forms a significant portion of a woman's social capital. Severance of marriage or marriages with abusive husbands was detrimental to a woman's position in society as well as her opportunities for livelihoods. Women who have been abused by their husbands had the added disadvantage of a tarnished self-dignity, which made it even more difficult for them to succeed in the world of work. Social capital in the form of heightened or an untarnished self-dignity, along with some financial capital to invest in livelihoods, seemed like the perfect recipe for a woman's success in livelihoods.

Some widowed and separated women returned to their parents upon the loss of their marital ties. Support received from parents and/or extended family also contributed to the enhancement of these women's protection as well as self-dignity. Women receiving support from parents and/or extended family seemed happier and confident in their livelihoods as well as day-to-day existence. However, the support received from parents did not have the same impact as did a supportive husband. In many cases, parental support was adequate for the mere survival of the woman and her offspring. In some cases the parents did not allow their daughters to engage in any livelihoods. Instead, they offered to earn and provide for them and their offspring. This kind of financial dependence, though resulting from a protective parental attitude, seemed to make these women more vulnerable.

Deaths due to war or ill health were reasons that led to the severance of marital relationships. Death of the husband forced these women to seek livelihood opportunities to ensure their and their children's survival. It also created a void in the women's social and financial capital, which then had to be filled by way of livelihoods. Successful engagement in livelihoods offered women improved earnings, which was an essential component of their financial capital. Likewise, the social recognition and status that came with successful livelihoods improved the women's social capital.

Women affected by war have been put in a situation where they are forced and encouraged to negotiate the gender roles they are familiar with. Their expectations of marriage, which are determined by the gender norms and practices of the region, have been breached by their husbands in many cases. This has led to a situation in which women have been forced to take over the breadwinner role instead of their traditional role as homemakers. The study looked at marital relationships as a form of social capital, which could enhance and facilitate women's social position. A reciprocal relationship could be observed between women's social position and their livelihood opportunity. Women with higher educational qualifications and of higher caste possessed stronger social capital, which made it relatively easy for them succeed in livelihoods. Success in livelihoods further enhanced their social capital. Others who did not have a strong social capital base struggled in their livelihoods due to lack of financial and social capital. Many of these

women also had to overcome the psychological trauma of being abused by their ex-husbands. A tarnished self-dignity seemed to have a strong detrimental impact on women's livelihood success; a far greater detrimental impact compared to not having access to financial capital.

The findings suggest the need for psychological interventions along with financial interventions in order to support war-affected women in their livelihoods. The same psychological interventions could also support men who are abusive of their wives.

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IMPACT OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS ON LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN AFFECTED BY WAR IN NORTHERN SRI LANKA

Empowerment of women in areas adversely affected by several decades of internal conflict in Sri Lanka has paid considerable attention to economic and social aspects. Aid programmes continue to focus on providing financial capital to women and promoting gender equality by way of improved access to education and livelihoods. However, women affected by war are not only troubled by the unavailability of livelihood opportunities but also by their broken-down social networks, which form an integral part of their social capital. War has had several forms of negative impacts on marriage, resulting in widowhood, divorce, or abusive relationships. Breaking down of spousal relationships or being married to abusive husbands has played a crucial role in retarding these women's capacity for livelihood activities. Being married to an abusive husband seem to have had a far more debilitating impact on women's livelihood capacities than not having access to financial capital. Empowerment of these widowed and/or abused women demands psychological interventions simultaneously with financial and social intervention.

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