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PRESS RELEASE

JSMP Concludes Suco Council Training on Access to Justice and Women’s Rights

(Thursday October 1, 2015 – Baucau Municipality)

On Thursday, October 1, 2015, USAID’s Ba Distrito Project (Ba Distrito), completed its final training for 100 suco councils on *Access to Justice and Women’s Rights*. The final training took place in the administrative post of Laga, Baucau municipality.

The purpose of the training was to educate key community leaders—sucu chiefs, Lia-Na’in, and women’s representatives—about access to justice and women’s rights under the Constitution of Timor-Leste and associated laws and the ways in which local leaders can assist members of the community to access formal and traditional justice.

The training was implemented by Ba Distrito’s national partner, the Judicial System Monitoring Programme (JSMP), who developed and delivered this training to members from 100 suco councils in Baucau, Covalima, Ermera, Liquiça and Oecusse.

The training is part of a series of 10 training modules, which are being delivered to 100 suco councils as part of Ba Distrito, a project which is generously supported by the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

USAID Mission Director, Mr. John Seong, said, "USAID’s Ba Distrito Project’s *Access to Justice and Women’s Rights* training to suco councils members enables members of suco councils to have a proper understanding of applicable laws. The training aims to facilitate access to justice for Timorese, especially women and girls as well as citizens living in rural areas, and promote gender equality within the Timorese Society."

The training was delivered over three days, and participants learned about rights and laws in Timor-Leste, gender equality, women’s rights, law against domestic violence, access to the formal justice system, and helping victims in the community.

"JSMP believes that this training will help community leaders understand our legal system in terms of women’s rights and this will help them to make appropriate interventions in the context of conflict resolution in the community, based on the nature of individual cases and within responsibilities that the law provides them," said Mr. Luis Oliveira Sampaio, Executive Director of JSMP.

In many cases, local leaders are the first point of contact for members of the community, and they often provide advice about various issues including prevention and resolution of conflict.

To strengthen understanding about key legal issues and increase access to justice at the grassroots level, Ba Distrito has partnered with legal aid organizations to provide legal education and consultation to poor and vulnerable people in Baucau, Ermera, Liquica and Oecusse.

Ba Distrito Chief of Party, Ms. Carolyn Tanner, from Counterpart International, said, "The training provided by JSMP will increase the ability of community leaders to make decisions and guide their community in a way that reflects the rights provided to all people under the constitution. Given the roles of the suco council members, particularly suco chief, Lia-Na’in, and women representatives,



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this training will equip them with adequate knowledge to better understand and contribute to social harmony and inclusion in their respective sucos.”

In addition to the providing training to suco council members, Ba Distrito also funds legal aid partners to provide legal information outreach sessions and legal aid directly to members of the community at suco level.

Ms. Francisca M. Soares, Chief of Village in suco Soba, Laga Administrative post, who participated in the three day training, said that, “This training is important in order to increase our understanding about how we can resolve problems, and also how we can promote women’s rights to inheritance such as property, and rights to alimony.”

The information delivered at these sessions is further reinforced through a series of public service announcements about similar issues that are covered in the suco council training and legal outreach sessions such as law against domestic violence, civil and penal codes, women’s property rights, and alternative dispute resolution. The series is currently being broadcast on community radio in Covalima, Ermera, Liquica, and Oecusse.

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USAID works in partnership with the government of Timor-Leste to support broad-based and effective development. Since 2001, USAID has provided over \$308 million in development assistance to Timor-Leste. USAID supports Timor-Leste in its efforts to build a more prosperous, healthy, and democratic country through programs that foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth, especially in the agriculture sector; improve the health of the Timorese people, particularly women and children; and strengthen the foundations of good governance—all areas which are highlighted in Timor-Leste’s Strategic Development Plan 2013-2030. Learn more at www.usaid.gov/timor-leste.

Counterpart International is a global development organization that empowers people and communities to implement innovative and enduring solutions to social, economic, and environmental challenges. For nearly 50 years, Counterpart has been forging partnerships with communities in need to address complex problems related to economic development, food security, and nutrition, and building effective governance and institutions. With a presence in 25 countries, every day Counterpart works in partnership with people and communities worldwide to build sustainable solutions to shared challenges. Learn more at www.counterpart.org.

Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP) was established on 28 April 2001 with the objective to monitor the trial process in the Indonesian Ad Hoc Tribunal for human rights violations and the Special Panel for Serious Crimes in Timor-Leste. Currently, JSMP is a leading NGO in Timor-Leste, monitoring the justice system and engaging in advocacy about legality, transparency, accountability, and strengthening rule of law. JSMP’s vision is a democratic society that guarantees justice and human rights for everyone. JSMP’s mission: JSMP works collaboratively to promote and protect democracy, law, justice and human rights through monitoring, legal education, and advocacy.