**Press Release**

**2 August 2024**

**Lifau Village - JSMP signs and launches amended Tara-Bandu rules**

**The participants: amended Tara-Bandu rules really respond to community concerns**

On 29 July 2024 the administrative structure of Lifau Village, Pante-makasar Sub-Region, Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno (REAOA) signed and launched the first amended Tara-Bandu rules in the Lifau Village community centre. Previously, on 20 June 2024, JSMP and the Asia Foundation (TAF) facilitated a consultation on these Tara-Bandu rules.

“We have entered the final phase of a long process that involved a number of discussions and consultations with the village authorities, Village Police Officer, and community members, and although there were difficulties, we managed to gather ideas and thoughts to ensure that the aforementioned rules really reflect the needs and real conditions and in particular the customs of the community in Lifau Village. Therefore, on behalf of JSMP I would like to express our deep gratitude and appreciation to all parties for their support, especially the village authorities who have prepared these rules,” said Mr. Casimiro dos Santos, Program Manager of JSMP.

This Program Manager added that these Tara-Bandu rules are not the only rules or mechanisms that the authorities will use to resolve problems. The formal justice system can be used because these Tara-Bandu rules are considered to be complementary only to the formal justice process that currently exists.

Therefore, the Lifau Village Chief in his speech expressed deep gratitude to JSMP for facilitating and revising the Lifau Village Tara-Bandu rules and also the information that was shared by JSMP which can reduce problems in the village.

“We express our deep gratitude to JSMP because these rules are excellent and can help our village administrative structure to resolve community problems in Lifau Village. Previously, the Lifau Village community had many cases, however the presence of JSMP has managed to reduce problems in the family and the community, because JSMP facilitated the dissemination of information, and community dialogue and trainings about access to formal justice,” said Mr. Delfino Sole, the Lifau Village Chief.

The Village Chief also stated that by reactivating these Tara-Bandu rules it can make it easier for the village and sub-village administrative structures to conduct mediation for community problems in Lifau Village.

In his speech the PNTL Commander of the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno stated that Tara-Bandu rules are not new, because they have existed since the time of our ancestors with the intention of enabling communities to live with respect and trust for each other, and the presence of JSMP has further improved these Tara-Bandu rules and will observe their implementation, in particular regarding community problems that the village administrative structure resolves in the village and the sub-villages. He added that in Oecusse cases of domestic violence continue to be high, and he hopes that the presence of JSMP can further help the village administrative structure to resolve community problems because cases often involve animals entering other peoples’ plantations and all of these are submitted to the police. Therefore he asked for the village administrative structure to properly identify cases before they are taken to the formal justice system, because sometimes certain cases can be resolved at the village level. However public crimes cannot be resolved at the village level because the courts have competence to deal with and decide public crimes, therefore he asked for these cases to be referred to the courts.

The Commander also asked JSMP to continue monitoring the implementation of these Tara-Bandu rules, and therefore if something is not right with their implementation, they can make constructive suggestions and share their thoughts.

At the same time, the former Village Chief, Mr. Lazaro Quenat, when speaking with JSMP acknowledged that these Tara-Bandu rules have experienced positive changes because of the intervention and assistance of the JSMP program that has accommodated all of the thoughts of the community in the process of revising these laws.

He said “I truly believe that the implementation of these Tara-Bandu rules will be more effective because the village administrative structure and community members have a good understanding about the content of these Tara-Bandu rules because the village administrative structure village and community members are directly involved in the entire process, and this is linked to the support provided by JSMP”.

The Oemolo neighbourhood catechist, Mr. Jose Tani, when speaking with JSMP also stated that these Tara-Bandu rules are an amended version that will truly respond to community concerns.

“The Tara-Bandu rules that have just been reactivated are excellent and they truly reflect the circumstances of the community and their concerns to date because the previous rules involved large fees and heavy sanctions that made it difficult for the community members to resolve their cases in the village and most community members had to take their cases to the court even though these cases could have actually been resolved at the village level. Therefore, I express our deep gratitude to JSMP for all of the support offered to Lifau Village,” said Mr. Jose Tani, the Oemolo neighbourhood catechist.

There were 34 participants in this ceremony to sign the new rules, namely 5 women and 20 men. The participants included the PNTL Commander of the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno and his officers, a representative of the Pante-Makasar Sub-Region Administrator, Village Chief, customary elder, Sub-Village Chiefs, Village Police Officer, catechist, representatives of women and men, and community members in Lifau Village.

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