



JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME
PROGRAMA DE MONITORIZAÇÃO DO SISTEMA JUDICIAL

Press Release

July 2008

Case delays at Suai District

In mid-July 2008 the Suai District Court conducted hearings in eight criminal cases. JSMP observed that several of these cases were relatively recent, dealing with incidents arising in 2008. The court continues to work through its backlog, however, with cases heard over this period dating from 2005 and 2006.

The public defenders office had been notified by the court and was expected to provide legal services to the defendants at these hearings; however they were reportedly unable to attend due to problems with transport and the price of fuel. Accordingly, the presiding judge appointed several private lawyers from the Covalima Legal Aid Service to assist in defense.

The President of the Court stated that the processing of these cases had not only been affected by transport problems but also by problems with electricity supply. The Suai jurisdiction still lacks a functioning generator and sufficient accommodation for assigned court actors. Hearings had often been relocated to Maliana and Same due to resource constraints, he said.

In addition to problems with facilities, these trials were further obstructed by the non-attendance of witnesses, victims, and defendants even though they had been notified by the court. This can be attributed in part to the fact that they live some distance from the court.

JSMP calls on the Ministry of Justice to investigate these resource issues, which continue to hamper attempts to deliver justice in the districts. Completion of the accommodation for court actors in Suai, as at other courts outside of Dili, would substantially assist in reducing case backlogs and producing more consistent and timely legal decisions.

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