



SUAI DISTRICT COURT FUNCTIONING AGAIN

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On the 10 and 11 March the Suai District Court (which has jurisdiction over Suai, Maliana, Ainaro and Same) started functioning again in Suai, after conducting all of its activities in the Dili District Court for the last two years. The non-functioning of the Suai District Court in Suai was due to a lack of funds, and this has been exacerbated by the fact that all judges, prosecutors and public defenders will be attending training for the next two and a half years.

The Suai District Court recommenced its operations by handling only a few cases, whereas all administrative activities are still being conducted in Dili. The international judge, Judge Sandra Silvestre, has scheduled four or five hearings a month, according to the schedule from the registry section of the Suai District Court. The limited number of hearings scheduled for the Suai District Court is also due to the fact that the appointed international judge is also assigned to handle cases scheduled for hearing at the Oecusse and Dili District Courts.

The Suai District Court is still experiencing a number of technical obstacles, such as the small number of cases being scheduled for hearing (only two cases in two days), along with the fact that suspects have to be escorted from Dili, and also a lack of interpreters who are much needed.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, JSMP congratulates the international judge for doing her best to settle cases quickly without delaying the trial process. This differs to what has taken place up to now where only a single hearing would be held at one time, for instance the examination of witnesses or the defendant. In contrast, the current judge is able to hold two or three hearings consecutively for the same trial. This was evidenced in the two trials heard on 10 and 11 March, namely Case No 41/04 and Case No 35\04, where the judge not only conducted the examination of the witnesses or defendants but also heard the charges and handed down decisions.