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Timor-Leste commemorates National Women's Day: Promote Women to positions of decision making to pioneer inclusive change

On the 3rd of November each year we celebrate National Women's Day in Timor-Leste. This is an important date for women in Timor-Leste because this date is set aside as a National Day of Celebration. This commitment shows that the State of Timor-Leste recognises the importance of the contribution, role and participation of women in the context of national construction and development. The theme for national women's day this year is **“promote women to positions of decision making to pioneer inclusive change”**

“JSMP congratulates the Government on its commitment to continue to promote women by involving women in decision making. However, women and girls continue to be vulnerable in their day to day lives, so the support provided from the Government and all parties is really important to uphold the rights of women and girls so they can contribute even more to the nation,” said the Executive Director of JSMP, Ms. Ana Paula Marçal.

The real situation in Timor-Leste shows that women in rural areas continue to face a number of challenges in defending their constitutional rights, because of the influence of local customs and practices which often discriminate, ignore and undermine their rights, even though the Timor-Leste Constitution does not allow for these discriminative practices, especially to ensure women's participation in national affairs and to ensure that women are free from any form of violence.

In addition to these issues, JSMP is also concerned about criminal acts that continue to remain prevalent against women, and JSMP advocates that women must be able to live free from any form of violence, therefore this year's commemoration reminds us to recall the suffering faced by women, as most Timorese women continue to be vulnerable in a number of areas. They suffer from domestic violence, sexual violence, discrimination, neglect, and other forms of gender based violence.

JSMP monitoring at the district courts indicates that from January to October 2020 there were 340 cases of domestic violence, 53 cases of rape, and 5 cases of incest, and most cases that were registered and tried at the courts were predominantly cases associated with forms of gender based violence, and most victims were women and girls. These crimes include domestic

violence, rape and sexual abuse against underaged girls characterised as incest, neglect and other crimes that impact on national development and will burden the nation in the future.

JSMP hopes that the celebration of this National Women's Day in Timor-Leste will provide an opportunity to all components of society across Timor-Leste to consider and reflect what is required to make more improvements in the future to ensure that men and women work together to promote national development.

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