



Press Release
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The administrative structure in Uma Ana Ulu Village only recently came to understand that women and men have the same inheritance rights

On 3 and 4 May 2023 JSMP held training on the issue of access to formal justice that focused on civil and criminal cases and the competency of the local authorities to resolve criminal and civil cases in accordance with procedural law. The participants who attended this training comprised members of the village administrative structure such as the village chief, sub-village chiefs, customary elders and delegates, Village Police Officers (OPS) and community members from Uma Ana Ulu Village, Venilale Administrative Post, Baucau Municipality.

“This activity was carried out with the intention to increase the knowledge of village authorities on how to resolve and direct cases involving community members in accordance with legal preferences at the sub-village or village level and how community members can take their cases to the formal justice system when they don’t agree with the resolution mechanisms at the village or sub-village level,” said Mr. Casimiro dos Santos, Deputy Executive Director of JSMP.

During the opening ceremony the Uma Ana Ulu Village Chief, Mr. Vicente De Sousa Boavida, was really happy with the program to provide training on access to formal justice that was provided by JSMP in their village based on an agreement set out in a Memorandum of Understanding that was signed several months ago. The Village Chief encouraged the village leaders and community members to concentrate and actively ask questions if there are any doubts, so that they can have a good understanding of the information provided by JSMP.

The Sub-Village Chiefs in this village said that this was the first time that they had heard information that women and men have the same inheritance rights within the family and they only heard for the first time that civil cases can be resolved at the village level, however this does not mean that these matters cannot be taken to court.

The materials distributed during this training session dealt with the process for criminal and civil cases and how community members can take their cases to the formal justice system.

JSMP provided this training over two days, namely on 3 and 4 May 2023, and there was a plan to involve judicial actors such as judges, prosecutors and public defenders to explain the process for dealing with criminal and civil cases at the courts, however this did not eventuate because the judicial actors were busy with trials. 22 people participated in this training, comprising 15 men and 7 women, and from this total there was one person suffering a mental disability and 1 member of the LGBTI community.

During the two days of training the participants actively conveyed their concerns and suggestions. On the first day the trainers provided materials on criminal matters, and the participants asked if village authorities could resolve public crimes and said that community members were afraid to make a report regarding public crimes because it causes problems between those persons and the person making the complaint.

On the second day the trainers provided information about civil cases and procedures, and the participants asked what happens if a person occupies another person's land for many years and wants to be the owner of the land, and State projects regarding community farms and land and projects for owners to only secure flora, and when couples separate only the husband has the right to their assets and the father has the right to the children.

In relation to the aforementioned issues and doubts raised by participants, JSMP said that there is the Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, the Civil Code, the Special Regime on the Definition of Ownership of Real Estate, the Law on Expropriation and the Civil Procedure Code.

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