



Press Release
17 April 2023

JSMP and court actors disseminate information to local authorities and community members in Lifau Village and Samalete Village

On 17 April 2023 JSMP disseminated information about the formal justice process for local authorities and also 35 community members in Samalete Village, Railaku Administrative Post, Ermera Municipality and on 28 March 2023 a session to disseminate information was also held in Lifau Village, Pante Makasar Administrative Post with a total of 31 participants. This dissemination of information covered specific topics with discussion about the definition of the law and crimes, the nature of crimes and how to take cases to the formal justice system and also types of penalties.

“JSMP was happy to support local authorities and also community members in Samalete Village to increase their knowledge about the formal justice process which is part of a Memorandum of Understanding between Samalete Village and JSMP regarding the program to support community justice. This process is also an important part of responding to concerns raised by village authorities and community members during the assessment conducted by JSMP when commencing work with this village,” said Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, Executive Director of JSMP.

In this session to disseminate information that was held in Lifau Village, the village authorities and community members asked specific questions about the implementation of the Law Against Domestic Violence, that does not allow parents to hit their children, however some parties consider that hitting a child is not an act of discrimination against the child, but rather part of educating the child. In response, His Excellency Prosecutor Mateus Nessi, and Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, the Executive Director of JSMP, said that the law does not allow any person to commit violence against any person, including a family member. The participants also asked about what happens when a wife and husband decide that they don't want to be together and they make an agreement at the village level, however is it possible for them to get back together if they later on decide that they want to, and in response the Chief of the Oecusse District Office of the Public Defender, Afonso Gomes Fatíma, said that, the law on marriage considers this to be an agreement made by the two parties, therefore when they decide that they want to be together again, the law does not prohibit them, including agreements that are made as part of community justice. Meanwhile, the Judicial Secretary of the Oecusse Court of First Instance, Johanes Narro, highlighted that local leaders can't adjudicate matters because the law does not allow this, however they can only conduct mediation between

the two parties and they need to reach an agreement. Meanwhile, public crimes can be resolved in accordance with the culture, however this process does not finalise the matter and the process continues until a decision is issued by the court.

During the session to disseminate information in Samalete Village, the village authorities and community members raised a lot of concerns about what they need to do in cases involving alimony when the parties don't agree with each other when resolving the process in accordance with community justice, and some cases where a man does not want to take responsibility for impregnating a woman. In response to these questions, JSMP explained that during the process to resolve disputes at the community level the village authorities act as mediators, therefore the decision depends on the parties, and if they don't reach an agreement, they can be assisted to take their matter to the court which has the final authority to issue a decision in their case. In cases involving a man who denies responsibility for impregnating a woman, JSMP explained that this is a civil process and a DNA test can be carried out when the baby is born and now this type of examination can be carried out in our country because the Scientific and Investigations Police Unit (PSIC) now has these facilities.

This dissemination of information is part of a Memorandum of Understanding between Samalete Village and JSMP in accordance with a program to support community justice. This session to disseminate information was attended by the Village Chief, Sub-Village Chiefs, customary elders from the village and sub-villages, members of the Community Policing Council, representatives of the sacred house and community members.

The Community Security Support Program (PASK) is a joint effort between JSMP and The Asia Foundation (TAF) which is financed by the New Zealand Embassy to conduct research on the effect of community justice to resolve disputes in the community.

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