



**JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME  
PROGRAMA MONITORIZASAUN SISTEMA JUDISIÁL**

**Press Release**

**23 September 2021**

**JSMP meets with the President of the Court of Appeal:  
new buildings in the district courts will have separate spaces for defendants,  
victims and witnesses**

On 20 September 2021, the Judicial System Monitoring Programme-JSMP team met with the Honourable Judge Counsellor, President of the Court of Appeal, Deolindo dos Santos, at the Court of Appeal in Dili.

The aim of this meeting was to introduce the new JSMP structure and also present the work of JSMP, especially the new Victim's Support Unit. Also, JSMP expressed its appreciation for changes that have occurred at the courts.

After thanking the President of the Court of Appeal for taking the time to meet with the JSMP team, JSMP presented its new structure and requested ongoing collaboration and support from the court. Then JSMP presented its work, and also introduced the new Victim's Support Unit which has been established to provide legal aid to victims of gender based violence including crimes such as the sexual abuse of a minor, rape, cases of domestic violence as well as civil cases involving the exercise of parental authority and alimony for minors. JSMP also expressed appreciation for a range of changes, especially court facilities such as cars for judges, a computer for each judge and the provision of kobe houses to two courts to respond to limited space. Also, JSMP praised the courts for working in shifts during while the State imposed local area confinement for public health reasons and mandatory lockdown.

During this meeting JSMP also made recommendations to the President of the Court of Appeal to also have a specific judge to deal with cases involving gender based violence and also to have a specific judge to deal with cases of corruption. Also, JSMP raised the issue of disabled persons seeking access to formal justice, such as facilities at the courts that do not provide guaranteed access to disabled persons (ramps and bathrooms).

Before responding to these thoughts and concerns, the President of the Court of Appeal thanked JSMP for carrying out an important role in monitoring the justice sector to further improve the work of the justice sector. Regarding the new structure, the President of the Court of Appeal urged JSMP to collaborate to ensure proper justice for all persons seeking justice.

In response to the issue regarding the creation of a Victim's Support Unit, the President of the Court of Appeal considered this to be an excellent initiative that can help victims who are seeking justice, and can also result in changes and the creation of new and different relationships with other organisations.

In relation to courts facilities, the President of the Court of Appeal said efforts have been made with limited funding to respond to some concerns, and other concerns will be addressed in the next few years to further facilitate the work of the courts.

At this opportunity the President of the Court of Appeal also said that there is a plan to establish new courts in the municipalities in 2022, namely in Ermera Municipality, Bobonaro Municipality and Viqueque Municipality as well as the construction of new buildings at the Baucau District Court and Suai District Court. The construction of the Dili District Court is taking place and it should be completed next year. The President of the Court of Appeal also stated that the new court buildings would have a waiting room for victims, defendants and witnesses, to respond to everyone's concerns that the parties have to use the same waiting room at the courts. Also, the President of the Court of Appeal said that the courts will enter into a contract with organisations representing disabled persons to help the courts with sign language.

In relation to the mobile court, the President of the Court of Appeal said that now there is a new mechanism to manage activities of the mobile court to make it more effective. Therefore, the President of the Court of Appeal urged JSMP to continue monitoring the activities of the mobile court.

In relation to having specific judges to deal with cases characterized as gender based violence and corruption, the President of the Court of Appeal agreed with the thoughts of JSMP and there is the possibility that specific judges would be assigned to deal with such cases, however the issue is one of human resources. Therefore, the President of the Court of Appeal said that the Judicial and Legal Training Centre is responsible for producing new court actors, and this centre would need to be reactivated.

Last of all the President of the Court of Appeal again thanked JSMP for its work and urged JSMP to work even more efficiently and to continue collaborating with the courts to provide justice for all.

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