



Press Release
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JSMP signs MoUs with leaders of Lifau Village, Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno and Ogues Village, Covalima for the Community Security Support Program (PASK)

On 26 February 2023 JSMP together with leaders from Lifau Village, Pante-Makasar Administrative Post, Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno (RAEOA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding JSMP's Community Security Support Program (PASK) with specific activities to monitor the process of resolving disputes through the community justice system and to ensure harmonization between community justice and formal justice. Previously, on 18 February 2023 JSMP also signed an MoU for the same program with leaders from Ogues Village, Maukatar Administrative Post, Covalima Municipality.

“Through this program JSMP can provide even more support to the justice sector by working together with community authorities who play an important role in ensuring peace and harmony in the village through community justice processes. JSMP will utilize these opportunities to help the village authorities to increase their knowledge about the relevant laws so when there is a process to resolve disputes at the village level there can be harmonization between the laws and the community justice system which includes helping them to access formal justice. JSMP hopes that the MoU signed by the two parties can provide guidance to achieve the objectives of accessing justice in a fair and transparent manner,” said Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, Executive Director of JSMP.

During the ceremony to sign the MoU in Lifau Village, Pante-Makasar Administrative Post, Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno, the Village Chief Lazaro Quenat thanked JSMP for choosing Lifau Village for this program, to help the village authorities to resolve disputes because it was acknowledged that most of the village authorities don't have enough knowledge about the law. The Village Chief added that they will fully utilize this opportunity to improve their community justice system.

Also, Mr. Eurico da Costa Bobo, who is the Administrator of Pante-Makasar Post, Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno, said that he will fully support this process to ensure that communities can obtain proper justice, both through formal justice and also community justice.

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Meanwhile the Honorable Judge Hugo da Costa Pui, the Judge Administrator of the Oecusse Court of First Instance, believes that this cooperation between JSMP and Lifau Village is an important step to help the community and the court. The judge added that community justice makes a contribution to the work of the court, especially for cases that involve conflict where the parties are able to achieve reconciliation before cases reach to court. This is a way to harmonise relations in society and to avoid other crimes from occurring. The judge also emphasized that for public crimes the case can't just be archived, however if the parties reconcile then the court will consider this as a mitigating circumstance for the defendant or the parties who have a dispute.

Meanwhile a representative from the Public Prosecution Service, Mr. Martinho Caet, and also the Coordinator of the Oecusse Office of the Public Defender, Afonso Gomes, made similar statements that this program will really help to reduce their work load because the village authorities can perform their role in relation to the withdrawal of complaints in cases that are semi-public in nature and perform mediation in civil cases.

Meanwhile Mr. Damião Quenat, the Deputy Commander of the Pante Makasar Police Station, Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno, said that he will fully support the JSMP program because it will help the community to resolve issues in accordance with the formal law because many members of the community lack information.

The village authorities used this opportunity to make a request to court actors in relation to cases that occur in their village, especially the procedures for obtaining alimony for children who have been neglected by their parents.

Meanwhile, during the ceremony to sign the MoU in Oges Village, Maukatar Administrative Post, Covalima Municipality, Mr. Constantinho do Carmo Cardoso, the Administrator of Maukatar Administrative Post, in his speech was very grateful to JSMP for choosing Ogues Village as the focus of JSMP support to improve community justice so that when village authorities perform mediation for community members, they will not go against the applicable law. The authorities from this municipality requested for the village authorities to take advantage of JSMP's support to improve their knowledge and at the same time requested for JSMP to also provide support to other villages.

Also, Jose Maria de Araújo, the Judge Administrator of the Suai Court of First Instance, congratulated JSMP and the authorities from Ogues Village for signing the MoU because he believed that it will make a significant contribution to formal justice because when village authorities are able to properly resolve community disputes fairly and in accordance with the law, this will reduce the work of the court and the village authorities also play an important role in reconciling the two parties and also disputes between families.

Also, a representative from the Office of The Public Defender, Domingos dos Santos, said that the cooperation between JSMP and the authorities from Lifau Village will reduce the work of the Office of The Public Defender in performing mediation in civil cases such as cases that involve families, land disputes and other cases. Therefore this public defender said his office will support this entire process when JSMP and the village authorities need their intervention.

Also, Mr. Anacleto da Costa, the Deputy Commander of PNTL in Maukatar Post, said that to date there has been some cases that the police have tried to resolve through Village Police Officers (OPS) for semi-public cases, therefore this support from JSMP is an important step and the police are ready to provide support.

Also, Mr. Nivio Benevides, a representative from the New Zealand Embassy, stated that the signing of this MoU is very important, because through this program JSMP can help to improve the knowledge of the village authorities about formal justice and also the relevant laws, so that when they resolve disputes involving community members there is no confusion. The New Zealand Embassy considers that it is crucial to ensure fair justice for all communities, therefore a request was made to the village authorities to fully utilize this opportunity to support community members to access fair justice and ensure that community members can use customs in accordance with the applicable law.

The village authorities used this opportunity to ask questions to the court authorities about the dispute process and crimes that occur in their village.

The ceremony to sign the MoU in Lifau Village, Pante Makasar Administrative Post, Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno, was attended by those participants who made speeches, and also by village authorities such as sub-village chiefs from three sub-villages, namely Nefobai, Oemolo and Tula Ika, customary elders from Lifau Village, customary elders from three sub-villages, delegates, representatives of female and male youths from Lifau Village, Neighborhood Chiefs, OPS from Lifau Village and the TAF team.

Also, the ceremony to sign the MoU in Oges Village, was attended by those participants who made speeches, and also by village authorities such as sub-village chiefs, customary elders from the village and sub-village, representatives of female and male youths from the village, customary elders from the sacred house, delegates, members of the Community Policing Councils (KPK), customary elders, OPS from Oges Village and the TAF team.

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.

Through this program JSMP has met with Village Leaders including authorities and customary elders in 9 villages and five municipalities, namely Baucau, Covalima, Ermera, Aileu and the Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno. In the end JSMP and TAF chose the option of conducting monitoring in four villages, namely Samalete Village, Railako Administrative Post, Ermera Municipality, Oges Village, Maukatar Administrative Post, Covalima Municipality, Lifau Village, Pante Makasar Administrative Post, Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno, Uma Ana-Ulu Village, Venilale Administrative Post, Baucau Municipality.

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