



Press Release
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**Commemorating International Women’s Day with the theme of “Women in leadership in a Covid-19 world”
JSMP urges everyone to contribute towards reducing violence against women**

On 8 March 2021 Timor-Leste celebrated International Women’s Day as an important day to provide recognition to the contribution of East Timorese women and challenges that women face in achieving equality. The theme for international women’s day this year is “Women in leadership in a Covid-19 world.” This theme was chosen to address how the State of Timor-Leste is committed to ensuring women’s access to security, justice, health, education, freedom and also equal rights and opportunities as men in all areas.

“JSMP would like to take advantage of International Women’s Days to congratulate all women around the world, and particularly women in Timor-Leste, who have sacrificed themselves to protect women’s rights and bring about significant change in the lives of the younger generation. At the same time, JSMP also continues to encourage everyone to contribute towards reducing violence against women in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities, especially considering the Covid-19 situation, because these circumstances are also a major challenge for female victims in obtaining proper protection,” said Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, the Executive Director of JSMP.

JSMP is concerned and continues to raise the issue of gender-based violence because in reality most women in Timor-Leste continue to be vulnerable in a range of areas and they continue to suffer domestic violence, sexual violence, discrimination and neglect.

JSMP monitoring at the district courts in Timor-Leste has found that the courts continue to register cases involving women and children who have been victimized in a range of crimes.

In 2020 JSMP managed to monitor 494 cases of violence against women and girls at the courts from a total of 710 cases monitored by JSMP*. From these 494 cases, the courts imposed a suspended prison sentence in 251 cases, fines in 91 cases, and

* The total number of cases monitored by JSMP at the courts does not represent all of the cases tried by the courts. JSMP conducts court monitoring based on its human resources, and therefore it cannot cover all trials being tried by the courts.

prison sentences in 37 cases. Meanwhile in 2021, from January to March, JSMP managed to monitor 53 cases of violence against women and children. In 13 cases the courts applied suspended prison sentences, fines in 6 cases, and a prison sentence in 1 case.

In addition to cases monitored by JSMP at the courts, JSMP also provided assistance or received complaints from women and children who were victims of violence or experiencing problems. In 2020 JSMP managed to receive 36 complaints (34 complaints relating to crimes and 2 civil matters). Most of these 36 cases were categorised as crimes of domestic violence, namely simple offences against physical integrity, followed by rape and sexual abuse.

Meanwhile in 2021 JSMP managed to receive 8 complaints and all of these were categorised as crimes. These cases involved domestic violence, rape and the sexual abuse of a minor.

JSMP considers that the current situation in Timor-Leste shows that there is a need for serious assistance from the Government and relevant institutions to prevent and protect all women during this Covid-19 pandemic.

In relation with the commemoration of this important day, JSMP wishes to congratulate all women around the world, especially East Timorese women for having the courage to continue the struggle to defend women's rights and to struggle for truth and justice.

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