



Press Release
08 March 2024

International Women's Day

JSMP continues to encourage everyone to come together to break the chain of violence and discrimination against women

8 March 2024 is International Women's Day and each year recognition is given to the struggle and contribution of women including promoting and carrying out actions to uphold the equality of women's rights.

The theme of celebrating international women's day this year is "**Invest in women: Accelerate progress**". This theme requires everyone to work, both the government and the entire society, to give opportunities and freedoms to women to enjoy their rights, even though many women continue to live with vulnerability, and to suffer a range of violence and discrimination from family and also society.

"The State of Timor-Leste through its relevant government institutions has engaged in a range of efforts to develop women and encourage women's participation in all aspects. Even so, many women and girls still continue to struggle to break the chain of domestic violence, sexual violence and sexual abuse against women and girls, and a wide range of discrimination that they face," said Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, Executive Director of JSMP.

She added that this commemoration appeals to everyone to combine their strengths to ensure and protect women from violence and discrimination that they face, and therefore guarantee that women can be free from violence and can enjoy their rights.

Also, the commemoration of this important day is an opportunity to observe and assess the development of equality achieved at the local and national levels, and also to encourage protection for women and children from all forms of violence against them. This commemoration complies with constitutional obligations with regard to international norms that have been ratified by the State.

JSMP also notes that many women and children are traumatized, and have lost their future because they have suffered a range of violence and violations, from their family and society. These situations and conditions are the result of cultural practices, that are a challenge in building a culture of equality in our society.

JSMP has discovered these realities through regular monitoring activities at all courts of first instance in Timor-Leste, and this monitoring has shown that

many cases of domestic violence, sexual violence and sexual abuse of minors, including incest, have been tried by the courts. Based on JSMP monitoring between January and December 2023, JSMP managed to monitor 533 criminal cases¹, and from this total there were 371 cases of gender based violence (GBV) against women and children, and 162 other cases. These cases show that women and children continue to suffer as victims.

JSMP appreciates all of the efforts of the State through a number of policies to ensure gender equality and legislative policy to protect women and girls from violence. Even so, JSMP continues to encourage all entities to contribute towards developing a culture of equality in our society and hopes that the commemoration of International Women's Day is a collective and institutional commitment to fight to end violence against women and girls in Timor-Leste.

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

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¹ This total number of cases does not represent all cases tried by the courts of first instance between January and December 2023. This number is based on the cases that JSMP managed to monitor at all of the courts of first instance.