



Press Release
2 April 2024

JSMP appreciates that the Court of Appeal has reactivated the Mobile Court Program that is operating regularly through the courts of first instance

At the start of 2024 the Court of Appeal reactivated the Mobile Court Program that is operating regularly through the courts of first instance. Therefore, the Suai Court of First Instance and the Baucau Court of First Instance have started operating mobile courts after a two year break. In 2023 the Dili Court of First Instance and also the Suai Court of First Instance continued to conduct mobile trials, however they were not regular, or only based on the initiative of judicial actors.

“The aim of the mobile court program is to bring justice closer to the people in rural areas. This program is also a good approach that reflects the current circumstances at the courts of first instance that are only concentrated in four municipalities across the country. Therefore, JSMP appreciates that the Court of Appeal at the start of 2024 has reactivated the mobile trials that are operating regularly in the jurisdictions of the Courts of First Instance (except Oecusse) that have not been operating for almost two years. The mobile courts can bring justice closer to communities and therefore can help communities who live a long way away or in rural areas gain easy access to formal justice that is affordable. Also, the mobile courts can reduce the number of pending cases in the jurisdiction of each court,” said Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, Executive Director of JSMP.

The mobile courts are conducted based on the schedule of the municipalities that don't have a permanent court, such as the municipalities of Ermera, Aileu, Liquiça and Atauro (which are covered by the jurisdiction of the Dili Court of First Instance). The municipalities of Manatuto, Viqueque and Lospalos (are covered by the jurisdiction of the Baucau Court of First Instance) and the municipalities of Bobonaro, Ainaro and Same (are covered by the jurisdiction of the Suai Court of First Instance). Therefore, when there is justification, mobile courts can operate in municipalities where a permanent court has been established, such as the Suai Court which brought justice closer to the community in Zumalai Administrative Post because a witness was heavily pregnant and therefore she could not travel to the permanent court to provide a statement.

Based on JSMP monitoring at the mobile courts operating in the municipalities of Bobonaro, Manatuto and Viqueque, in January and

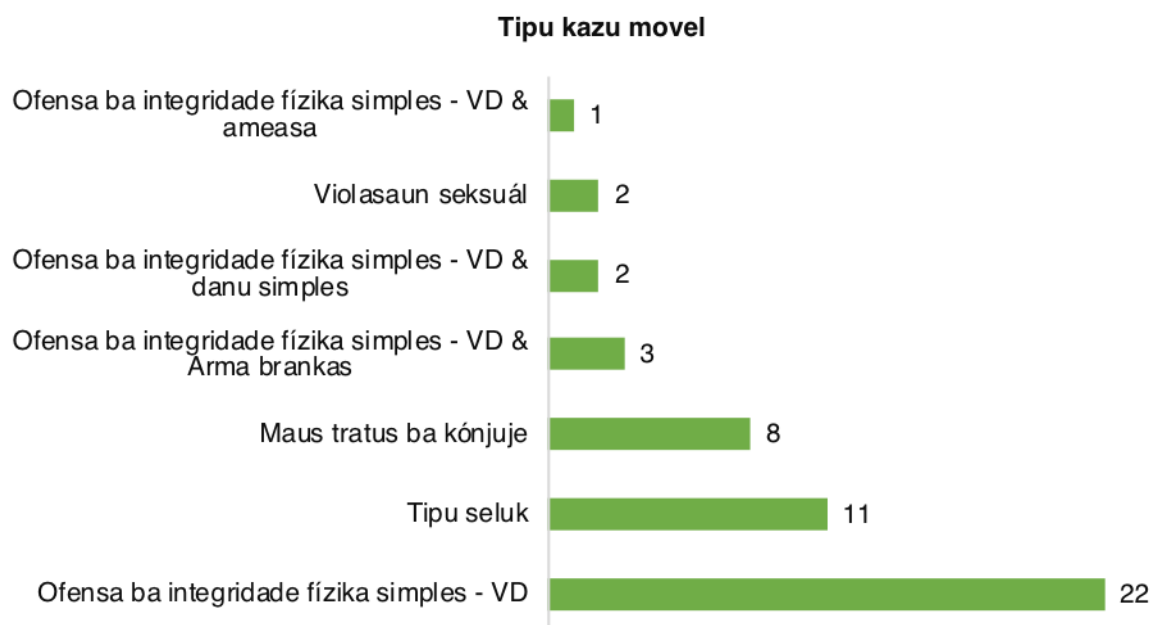
February 2024, JSMP managed to monitor 49 cases¹ and most of these involved gender based violence (GBV) with a total of 38 cases, as well as 11 other cases. 25 cases have been decided and 24 cases are still being processed.

More detailed information is provided in the table and graphs below.

Table:

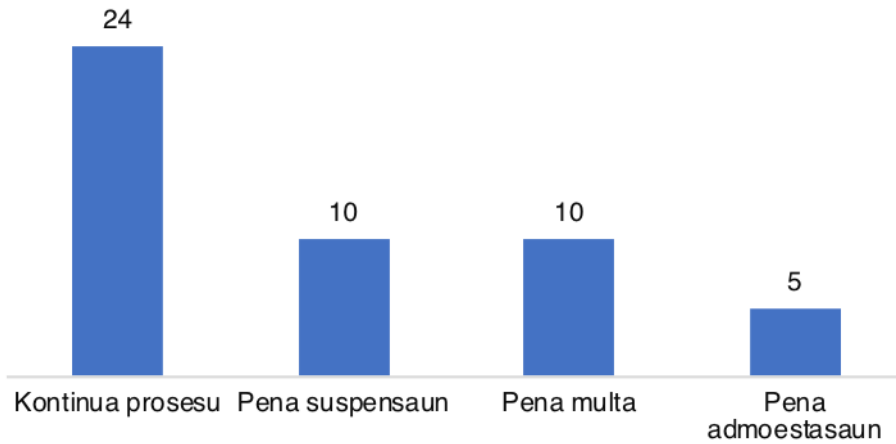
Court	Criminal	Civil	Total
Dili	0	0	0
Baucau	35	0	35
Suai	14	0	14
Oecusse	0	0	0
Total	49	0	49

Graph:



¹ These 49 cases do not represent the total number of cases that the courts of first instance tried through the mobile courts in January and February 2024.

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Previously, the mobile court program was supported by UNDP from 2010 until 2018 however in 2019 UNDP decided to stop supporting the mobile courts, therefore the mobile court program did not operate because there were no funds. Even though some courts continued to conduct mobile trials, these were not regular and only for some cases.

JSMP hopes that the reactivation of the mobile courts this year is part of adhering to the principle of fair, affordable and speedy trials.

For more information, please contact:

Ana Paula Marçal

Executive Director of JSMP

Telephone: 3323883/77040735

Email: ana@jsmp.tl