



## Press Release

13 September 2023

### **JSMP accompanies Customary Elders from sacred houses and members of the administrative structure of Ogues Village during the process of consultation to review the rules on *Tara-Bandu* (traditional prohibition)**

On 28 and 29 August 2023 the Judicial System Monitoring Program (JSMP) accompanied customary elders from sacred houses and members of the administrative structure of Ogues Village to review the *Tara-Bandu* (traditional prohibition) in Ogues Village. During this process to review the rules of this *Tara-Bandu*, the role of JSMP was to help ensure that these *Tara-Bandu* rules will really contribute towards peace and tranquility in Ogues Village, Maukatar Administrative Post, Covalima Municipality.

The *Tara-Bandu* rules in Ogues Village were established for a period of five (5) years, and were previously created in 2013 with the condition that a renewal ceremony would take place, however after implementation by 2018 the village administrative structure didn't have any funds and therefore they were unable to conduct the aforementioned ceremony, so in early January 2023 the village administrative structure produced an initiative to renew the *Tara-Bandu* including making changes to some articles that the community and the village administrative structure considered to be unfavorable for the communities. During this revision process the village administrative structure and also JSMP were able to obtain advice so that these rules do not conflict with general principles in national laws.

On the first day there were 17 participants in this consultation process, including representatives from the village administrative structure, the sub-village chief, customary elders and representatives of veterans. On the second day there were 23 participants, including the Soga Sub-Village Chief and Ogues Sub-Village Chief, customary elders and community members.

"JSMP is grateful because members of the village administrative structure and customary elders in Ogues Village wanted to involve JSMP in the revision process of their *Tara-Bandu* rules in the village, so that they match national laws and this is also a part of collaboration between JSMP and Ogues Village that took place this year," said Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, Executive Director of JSMP.

Before commencing the process to review this *Tara-Bandu*, JSMP first presented the results of interviews conducted in some communities and with members of the village administrative structure including the sacred houses about their thoughts relating to the implementation of *Tara-Bandu* rules in Ogues Villlage, that took place from March until August 2023 for 22 persons, and the majority stated that they really need to reduce the

sanctions within the rules of the *Tara-Bandu*, reduce the cost of taking resources within the village such as rocks and timbers that are used to build houses including sand and to shorten the harvest time for food in the village such as corn, jackfruit, coconuts, candlenuts, mangoes and coffee.

After hearing JSMP's presentation, the village administrative structure and customary elders from the sacred houses acknowledged that the communities regretted these circumstances during the implementation of *Tara-Bandu* rules, therefore they agreed to recommend changes to the harvest time. In relation to sanctions, the village administrative structure and customary elders agreed to replace fines of mutual compensation, and also to reduce administrative costs for the Ogues Village community relating to the collection of natural resources in the village.

During the process to accompany the review of the *Tara-Bandu* rules, JSMP made some improvements and also continued to hear the opinions of community members about what they would like to change and add to the rules of the *Tara-Bandu* and to be given utmost consideration in customs within the village that value peace and tranquility in the community with consideration of national laws that are in existence.

Mr. Antonio Marçal, as a Representative of the Maukatar Post Administrator, was very grateful to JSMP as an organization that monitors the justice system and can contribute to the consultation process through this revision so that the Ogues Village community can have good *Tara-Bandu* rules and they can be used to resolve disputes in the community.

Meanwhile the Village Chief, Mr. Faustino de Araújo, in his speech said that the support provided by JSMP during the review of the *Tara-Bandu* rules was important because he acknowledged that they lack information about the procedural laws, and sometimes the sanctions that are set out in the *Tara-Bandu* rules could contradict national laws. He added that JSMP's support could help to ensure that these rules could not only help communities to resolve problems, but they could also help the village administrative structure to consider problems that they could resolve and those problems that they don't have the competence to resolve, even though they are resolved at the village level.

According to the plan, after this consultation JSMP and the village administrative structure and customary elders will meet again before finalizing the aforementioned *Tara-Bandu* rules.

This training activity and consultation was conducted by JSMP through the Community Security Support Program (PASK), through collaboration with The Asia Foundation (TAF) and financed by the Embassy of New Zealand.

For more information, please contact:

Ana Paula Marçal

Executive Director of JSMP  
Email: [ana@jsmp.tl](mailto:ana@jsmp.tl)  
Telephone: 3323883/7704073