



Press Release
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JSMP holds training for members of the village council and female residents in Lalisuc Village

Participants raise issues about civil cases, crimes, rape and the law

On 9 February 2022 JSMP provided training for members of the village council and female residents in Lalisuc Village, Pante-makasar Administrative Post, the Autonomous Region of Oecusse on “Democracy and the role of sovereign organs, public participation in the law making process and access to formal justice”.

There were 20 participants in this training, comprising 15 women and 5 men, including Sub-Village Chiefs, Village Police Officers, women’s representatives, delegates and members of the Lalisuc village community.

This training was aimed at increasing the knowledge of female residents and members of the village council about democracy, the role of sovereign organs, public participation in the law-making process, access to formal justice including knowing their rights about the freedom to access information in order to allow them to perform their work more effectively in the community. Previously, in 2021 the same training was conducted by JSMP in Baucau and Covalima Municipalities.

“This training was aimed at increasing the knowledge of members of the village council and female residents about the law making process in a democratic nation, and how to access formal justice when encountering a problem and to have knowledge about the right to freely access information,” said Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, Executive Director of JSMP.

The training was split into sessions that dealt with democracy, the role of sovereign organs, public participation in the law-making process, access to formal justice (rights, the law, crimes, the roles of judges, prosecutors, public defenders/private lawyers and the police) and the right to freely access information in accordance with the Constitution.

During this training session the participants responded enthusiastically to the materials and raised issues relating to civil cases that take a long time to be processed, marital rape, semi-public crimes where the parties make a complaint to the court or through the village chief and sub-village chief and laws that don’t reflect the living circumstances of the people and if these laws can be amended or not.

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In response to these concerns, JSMP further explained that sexual violence can occur within a marriage. If one party does not wish to engage in sexual intercourse and is forced, then this is considered to be violence. Because due to certain circumstance a person could suffer pain, be tired or could suffer from another condition that does not allow that person to have sexual intercourse. Healthy sexual intercourse in a marriage means that both parties are willing participants. Regarding the issue that civil cases take a long time to be processed, JSMP explained that many civil cases are complicated, for example land disputes. Also, specific judges to handle civil cases have only recently been appointed to some of the courts and civil cases involve the interests of one individual and another individual, whereby the parties (applicant and respondent) need to actively check their defence. Regarding the issue of semi-public crimes that are not processed via the local authorities, JSMP explained that it depends on the victim's desire to resolve the case at the village level or at the court because the victim has the right to process the case.

Regarding the issue of amending laws that do not reflect the living conditions of the people, JSMP explained that in accordance with principles of law, amendments can be made to laws that do not reflect the circumstances or conditions of the people. There are two types of modifications, namely an amendment and/or a referendum. An amendment means that when a law does not match the circumstances or conditions of the people, the legislative organ, such as the Parliament and Government can directly make a modification or via a proposal. However, if the legislative bodies do not want to make an amendment, then another option is to hold a referendum. This means the people participate in a referendum (vote) to change the law.

During his opening speech, the Lalisuc Village Chief, Mr. Hermelindo Lalisuc, thanked JSMP for coming to his village to distribute information about democracy and access to formal justice to members of the village administrative structure and community members in his village. The Village Chief also urged the participants to pay attention to the materials so they can improve their work at the grass roots level.

Meanwhile Padiæ Sub-Village Chief, Mr. Gaspar Naheten, when closing this training recommended for JSMP to provide awareness raising about information like this every three to six months for communities in Oecusse because many communities do not yet have knowledge about how to process their cases through the formal justice system.

This training activity was made possible with funding from the European Union, with partner support from CEPAD, and the training was conducted by JSMP.

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