



Press Release
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First time that training has been provided about justice
“Community members from Zulo Village learn about formal justice procedures”

On 5 August 2021 JSMP held training for members of the village council and female residents in Zulo Village, Zumalai Administrative Post, Covalima Municipality 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, women’s representatives, delegates and members of the Zulo 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.

“This training can increase the knowledge of female residents and members of the village council about their rights and obligations in a democratic nation, the law making process, and access to formal justice, in order to help community members exercise their rights and uphold their interests in accordance with the law through formal justice. Also they can gain knowledge about their rights to have free access to information,” said the Executive Director of JSMP, Ms. Ana Paula Marçal.

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 actively asked questions and made comments. During the session on democracy the participants asked why members of sovereign organs have immunity, but ordinary citizens don’t, and in the session on the formal justice system the participants asked why police beat community members who don’t make a complaint because they fear that their complaint will not be processed and also about cases of separation between spouses where children have been neglected.

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In relation to the issue of members of Government and National Parliament having immunity, JSMP explained that the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure of the National Parliament grant immunity to members of the National Parliament and members of Government so they are not accountable for criminal acts that carry a penalty of less than 2 years and five years while they are performing their duties, they can be held accountable if their immunity is removed at the parliament or when they complete their term in office as a member of parliament or member of government. This means that they are accountable for their criminal acts just like ordinary citizens, but after their immunity is removed or if they have completed their term in office as a member of parliament or member of government because they have performed their duties in the public interest.

In relation to the issue of police beating community members, who do not make a complaint because they are afraid that their complaint will not be processed, JSMP responded that if community members are afraid or have doubts about reporting a case involving a police officer to the police, they can make a complaint directly to a prosecutor and they can also present a complaint to the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice.

Regarding cases of neglect, the participants said that to date many community members have faced these circumstances, and there were two participants whose husbands had left them and neglected their children. They believed that neglect was not a crime, and they did not know how to have their case processed. In relation to this issue, JSMP explained that when a husband abandons his wife and children, if the matter is urgent then the case can be immediately reported to the Police Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU) or directly to the Public Prosecution Service because they represent minors in prosecuting such cases before the courts so that children are provided with food assistance by their father. If a father or mother does not comply with a court decision regarding providing food assistance to their children, then they will be charged with the crime of failure to fulfill an obligation to provide food assistance pursuant to the penal code. Also, JSMP spoke about the work of JSMP and ALFeLa in relation to providing legal aid to victims of gender based violence.

The Zulo Village Chief, Mr. Joao Lopez de Carvalho, in his speech wholeheartedly thanked JSMP because the circumstances are difficult (local area confinement for public health reasons) as the result of the Covid-19 pandemic, however JSMP was able to share some important information to community members from Zulo Village. The Village Chief also said that during his mandate this was the first time that JSMP had disseminated information on access to formal justice for community members in Zulo village and the Village Chief believed that the information provided by JSMP can help improve the knowledge of members of the Village Council and women to build their capacity so they can work better in the community and can help community members if they encounter problems and help them take their cases to the formal justice system if their rights are violated.

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