



**Press Release
Covalima Municipality**

**Human Trafficking is a new issue for community members in Beiseuc Village –
Covalima Municipality**

JSMP has provided training on Human Trafficking and Gender Based Violence in Beiseuc Village, Tilomar Administrative Post, Covalima Municipality over four (4) days, from 29 August until 1 September 2023.

This training was officially opened by the Beiseuc Village Chief, Mr. Saturnino C. Maia and a representative of the Executive Director of JSMP, Ms. Flora Soriano Menezes, as the Coordinator of the Legal Research Unit and the Advocacy and Training Unit.

“The aim of this training was to build the capacity and increase the knowledge of mobilisers and community leaders about crimes of human trafficking and gender based violence and how to engage in prevention and help victims when crimes occur in the community. JSMP identified and selected Beiseuc Village for this training because this village close to the border with Indonesia and is an area where citizens from the two countries of Indonesia and Timor-Leste travel back and forth,” said Ms. Flora Soriano Menezes, the Coordinator of the Legal Research Unit and the Advocacy and Training Unit.

In his speech, the Beiseuc Village Chief thanked JSMP for selecting his village for training on crimes of human trafficking and this was the first time it has happened in his village. He stated that this information is very important, because sometimes in the border area people from Indonesia come and tell lies by saying that those who go to work in Indonesia will receive a large salary, however when they get there they have to perform other work which was not agreed and they receive a small salary.

Therefore the Village Chief requested for the participants to fully participate over the four days so they could understand the materials provided by the facilitators/trainers and in the future they could share this information with other colleagues who were unable to attend the training.

During this training the participants conveyed their concerns, namely that they are afraid to make a complaint in cases of human trafficking and gender based violence because it could harm the relationship between them and the suspects and/or victims. Another issue was that some members of the village made a complaint about a case of homicide, however it has been five years already and there has been no progress or information regarding this case.

In response to the concerns raised by the participants, such as feeling afraid to make a complaint in cases involving domestic violence and human trafficking, JSMP responded that community members should not be afraid to make a complaint because Timor-Leste has the Law on Witness Protection which provides protection to witnesses to ensure that the police and prosecution service will not reveal the identity of a complainant to others and if the police or the prosecution service need to take a statement from a witness they will ask for it to be done separately, without the presence of the suspect or victim. Also trials can include the use of teleconferencing, whereby the image and voice of a witness or victim can be disguised.

In relation to a complaint made by community members a long time ago, without receiving any information about the case, JSMP responded that the parties (victim or suspect) or families can seek confirmation from the Public Prosecution Service to ask about the progress of the case because in some cases it takes a long time to search for evidence which depends on the complexity of the case and often in some cases the process is delayed because the parties don't really collaborate with the court, for example the court notifies the parties to attend a trial, but they are absent which undermines some of the proceedings which take a long time.

This four day training event was officially closed by the Beiseuc Village Chief, Mr. Saturnino C. Maia, and a representative of the Executive Director of JSMP, Ms. Flora Soriano Menezes, as the Coordinator of the Legal Research Unit and the Advocacy and Training Unit.

During the closing ceremony the Village Chief thanked JSMP because the materials provided during this training were very important and essential for community members, especially the material on human trafficking because Beiseuk Village is close to the border and there is a risk that such crimes can happen at any time. Also, the village chief recommended for JSMP to also provide training in the future about drugs, because some community members involved in cock fighting purchase drugs in Atambua, Indonesia to give to their roosters to improve their strength, and there is a concern that they could be misused by members of the community.

The participants in this training included members of the village administrative structure such as the village chief, sub-village chiefs, delegates, youths, a Catholic religious leader and community members from Beiseuc Village, totalling 31 participants, comprising 16 women

and 15 men, and the last training session was attended by the Covalima Municipality Commander of the Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU).

This training was conducted with the financial support of the Government of Timor-Leste, the Ministry of the Interior that was directly managed by the United Nations agency UNWomen.

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