



Press Release
10 March 2023

Participants from Uma Quic Village received training for the first time about access to justice and the prevention of gender based violence

On 8 March 2023 JSMP held training for Village authorities and some community members in Uma Quic Village, Viqueque Administrative Post, Viqueque Municipality. The participants in this training comprised a sub-village chief, a female delegate, male and female youths. There were 20 participants, comprising 15 women and 5 men.

The material presented in this training focused on access to formal justice, the definition of domestic violence, the Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV), the legal process and how to refer cases of gender based violence in accordance with the formal justice process.

The aim of this training was to disseminate information and increase the knowledge of members of the village authorities and the communities about gender based violence and procedures for cases according to formal justice.

“JSMP considers this training to be very important and there is a need to continue disseminating information to community members across the entire territory, especially to those in rural areas about how to access formal justice and to prevent gender based violence. JSMP will strive to continue sharing information based on its existing resources to increase the knowledge of community members,” said Deputy Director of JSMP, Mr. Casimiro dos Santos.

A representative of the Uma Quic Village Chief, Ms. Severina A. Pinto, was very grateful to JSMP for facilitating this training in their village and requested for ongoing dissemination of the same information to communities who have not yet had the same opportunity so they can take their cases to the formal justice system if they have any problems.

This training was split into four (4) sessions, namely human rights, gender based violence, access to justice and legal aid work in relation to gender based violence.

During the session on materials, the participants were very active and enthusiastic and asked questions and conveyed their concerns. During the session on materials, the participants asked about community members who do not wish to report crimes of domestic violence because they are afraid that people will say that they are interfering in other people's problems. They also asked about the meaning of a fine and a suspended prison sentence. Also, other concerns were raised about the procedure for cases involving threats (why can they be withdrawn), and the problem of husbands separating from their wives and neglecting children.

In response to the question about community members feeling afraid to report cases of domestic violence, JSMP explained that the law (Criminal Procedure Code) states that a person who sees or hears a public crime can make a report, and that police officers, public servants, public authorities or public managers have the obligation to make a report in accordance with the law, and if they don't make a report they will be held responsible for a crime known as failure to make a report which carries a penalty of 2/3 of the maximum and minimum punishment for the crime that has not been reported. JSMP also explained to the participants that they should not feel afraid to make a report because we already have the Law on Witness Protection. This law guarantees the safety of witnesses so that other people will not know their identity.

Regarding suspended sentences, JSMP explained that the suspension of a prison sentence means the defendant's prison punishment has been suspended. Defendants will not serve a prison sentence, however they will serve their penalty outside of prison as a burden that they shall bear wherever they go. If during the period of suspension the defendant commits another crime, the court can revoke the suspended sentence and the defendant will have to serve the sentence in prison and the new case that he committed during the period of suspension will be processed.

In relation to the question about withdrawing cases involving threats, JSMP explained that the crime of threats according to the law is a semi-public crime, which means that the criminal procedure depends on a complaint and the victim has the legitimacy to withdraw, close or proceed with the case. If the victim consents to withdrawing the case because the victim has reconciled with the defendant, the victim can request withdrawal even if the case has reached the court. Also, crimes characterized as semi-public can be resolved at the village or sub-village level.

Regarding the issue of husbands separating from their wives and neglecting children, JSMP explained that a husband neglecting his wife and children is a civil case and these cases are considered urgent and need to be taken immediately to organizations that provide legal aid to victims of gender based violence such as JSMP, ALFeLa and the VPU to provide assistance and to have the case registered at the Public Prosecution Service to be processed in accordance with the law so that the children can

have their right to food support from their parents and if their parents do not fulfil their obligation to provide food support they can be held responsible for a crime known as failure to provide food assistance pursuant to the Penal Code and they will be punished.

During the sessions of this training the participants also recommended to JSMP to continue providing the same training to defendants and persons convicted of crimes of gender based violence and to communities, so that they will know how to process cases at the court and the punishments that the court can apply to convicted persons.

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