



JUDICIAL SYSTEM MONITORING PROGRAMME
PROGRAMA MONITORIZASAUN BA SISTEMA JUDISIÁRIU

Press Release
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Many minor victims in cases of neglect have not yet accessed formal justice

On 27 July 2021, through the Victim's Support Unit (VSS), JSMP went to Turiscaí Administrative Post, Manufahi Municipality to accompany four (4) minors from two families whose fathers have abandoned them for three years, so they could obtain a Timor-Leste certificate from the Directorate General of Registry and Notary Services, Ministry of Justice, in Manufahi Municipality, and previously JSMP accompanied these minors to register their case (of neglect) at the Suai Public Prosecution Service because their mothers did not know how to take these cases to court.

"Children are entitled to protection given by their parents and even if parents are separated both of them are still obliged to look after their children. The courts have made decisions in many cases of neglect, however JSMP believes that many of these cases are not reported because most members of the community don't know how to take their cases of neglect to the courts. Therefore, through the Victim's Support Unit, JSMP is ready to provide follow up to victims of gender based violence including cases of neglect, from the outset until their cases are registered at the Public Prosecution Service so that children can enjoy their rights in relation to alimony, accommodation and visits," said Ms. Ana Paula Marçal, Executive Director of JSMP.

Article 18.1 of the Timor-Leste Constitution states that Children shall be entitled to special protection by the family, the community and the State, particularly against all forms of abandonment, discrimination, violence, oppression, sexual abuse and exploitation. This is reinforced by Article 3.2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child that declares that State Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

When JSMP spoke with the victims and their families, they said that they were very happy to be visited by JSMP because there are many cases where men have abandoned their wife and children, however community members don't know how to take their cases to the courts and consider cases of neglect to be normal matters that don't need to go to court.

The families of the victims also added that they will inform other women who have been neglected by their husbands that JSMP can provide support and they can contact JSMP if they need support. They also recommended for JSMP to provide information about access to

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the courts and justice directly to community members in Turiscaí Administrative Post because to date no institutions have provided information about justice issues.

“In addition to the community members in Turiscaí, based on our observations during training in different locations, many community members have raised their concerns and spoke about their problems, namely that they don’t know how to take their cases to court and previously JSMP conducted activities to disseminate information about access to justice at the grassroots level but now these activities have stopped due to a lack of funds. Even so, we continue to note these concerns and will respond when we have financial resources,” said the JSMP director.

JSMP was informed about cases of neglect in Turiscaí Administrative Post by a staff member of the Ministry of Justice when this staff member was working in Turiscaí Administrative Post, Manufahi Municipality. Therefore, JSMP wishes to thank the Ministry of Justice for its collaboration and hopes that this collaboration can continue in the future, especially in relation to problems facing women and children.

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