

EVALUATION

‘Protecting the rights of women and children affected by Gender-Based Violence in Timor-Leste’ (2021-2025)



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Acknowledgements

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Photo Credit

Cover image depicts the ALFeLa team with the evaluation team in October 2025, image courtesy of the evaluation team.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALFeLa	Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no Labarik
ANCP	Australian Non-Government Organisation Cooperation Program
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CFJJ	Centro de Formação Jurídica e Judiciária - Centre for Legal and Judicial Training
CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CODIVA	Coalition for Diversity and Action
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DME	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FOKUPERS	Forum Komunikasaun Ba Feto Timor Loro Sa'e - Communication Forum for East Timorese Women
GBV	Gender-Based Violence. <i>This term also encompasses Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). GBV is used as the preferred term in this evaluation report as it better captures underlying gender norms and systemic gender inequality and acknowledges young men and boy survivors.</i>
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
JSMP	Programa Monitorizasaun Sistema Judisiál – Judicial System Monitoring Program
KII	Key Informant Interview
KLATU	Komisaun Luta-Anti Tráfiku Umanu - Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Timor-Leste
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
LADV	<i>Law Against Domestic Violence</i> (Law No. 7/2010)
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex and other diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and sex characteristics
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning
MSSI	Ministry of Social Solidarity & Inclusion, Timor-Leste
NAP-GBV	National Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence (2022-32)
NAP-PCTP	National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons (2026-30)
NAP-CP	National Action Plan for the <i>Protection Law for Children and Youth in Danger</i> (2023)
NGO	Non-government Organisation
OPD	Organisation for People with Disabilities
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
PNTL-VPU	Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste - National Police of Timor Leste, Vulnerable Persons Unit
PRADET	Rekuperasaun no Dezenvolvimentu Psicolójiku iha Timor-Leste - Psychosocial Recovery & Development in East Timor
RHTO	Ra'es Hadomi Timor Oan, national Timor-Leste OPD
SSEI	Secretary of State for Equality & Inclusion, Timor-Leste
UN	United Nations
WRO	Women's Rights Organisation

Executive Summary

The ‘*Protecting the rights of women and children affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Timor-Leste*’, project was implemented from 2021 to 2025 by Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no Labarik (ALFeLa) in partnership with the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) and funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through the Australian NGO Corporation Program (ANCP). The project focused on four intended outcomes: improved women and children’s access to justice (1); increased duty-bearer ability to implement GBV laws (2); influence on laws upholding women and children’s rights (3); and strengthened organisational capacity of ALFeLa through support from IWDA (4).

This evaluation aimed to understand project impact and effectiveness, including successes, and enabling factors, and challenges, barriers, and risks; assess the extent to which the project, IWDA’s support and partnership increased ALFeLa’s organisational capacity; and provide actionable recommendations for the project, ALFeLa’s sustainability, and the partnership. The evaluation was completed between September 2025 and April 2026 (including one week of data collection in Dili in October) by a team from IWDA, comprised of the Senior Program Manager-Quality, Timor-Leste Program Manager and Timor-Leste Program Coordinator. The evaluation process was co-led team with ALFeLa’s management team and involved a comprehensive desk review, key informant interviews with 18 external stakeholders, and a focus-group discussion and data-validation workshop with 20 ALFeLa staff.

The evaluation found that the project met or exceeded all expected outcomes, with some internal design and monitoring limitations and external structural and resourcing challenges. The project demonstrated strong impact at the individual level – with GBV survivors reporting safer and more informed engagement with the justice system due to ALFeLa’s accompaniment; community level – contributing to increased rights’ awareness and willingness to report GBV; systems level – improving judicial efficiency, referral coordination, legislative protections and their implementation; and organisational level – with ALFeLa maintaining and strengthening its profile, credibility and trust with GBV survivors, referral partners and duty-bearers.

ALFeLa’s legal aid services significantly strengthened women and children’s access to formal justice by reducing financial, geographic, and socio-cultural barriers and improving survivors’ experience of the legal process (Outcome 1). ALFeLa strengthened the justice system’s ability to respond to GBV by increasing duty-bearer knowledge through training, and case handling efficiency through case management, transport, and referral coordination support (Outcome 2). However, broader structural access barriers persist, including shortages of judges and lawyers, case delays, limited transport, and infrastructure, persisting gaps in law, socio-cultural stigma against reporting especially in rural areas, and intensified legal and practical barriers for LGBTQI+ and people with disabilities. ALFeLa’s evidence-based advocacy and policy contributions influenced more gender-responsive and survivor-centric laws and their effective implementation, including community-level implementation as a result of awareness raising, although systematic measurement of some advocacy gains and public awareness raising was limited by weaknesses in indicator design (Outcome 3). ALFeLa substantially strengthened operational and organisational capacity across program management, MEL, finance, leadership and governance, however increasing resource constraints pose a critical risk to ongoing capacity strengthening and sustainability (Outcome 4).

IWDA’s support made an important contribution to ALFeLa’s organisational development and ability to deliver its strategic plan. Flexible funding, financial systems strengthening, and resource mobilisation support were valued by ALFeLa, especially in an increasingly resource constrained environment. The partnership was widely described as strong, respectful, and supportive, and can be strengthened by addressing language barriers, adapting reporting processes, and more active investment in self and collective care.

Recommendations from the evaluation focus on three priorities: continuing programmatic and advocacy efforts to address persistent barriers to justice, strengthening organisational sustainability through resource mobilisation, and improving program design and MEL through clearer outputs, stronger outcome indicators, and more systematic tracking of results and influence. Continued support from IWDA should remain flexible and partnership-based, while also increasing its focus on sustainability and strategic accompaniment.

Introduction

This document is an end-of-program evaluation report of the project, *‘Protecting the rights of women and children affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Timor-Leste’*, implemented from 2021 to 2025 by Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no Labarik (ALFeLa) in partnership with the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) and funded by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through the Australian NGO Corporation Program (ANCP).

The evaluation was conducted by a team from IWDA, comprised of the Senior Program Manager-Quality, Timor-Leste Program Manager and Timor-Leste Program Coordinator. The evaluation was completed between September 2025 and April 2026, and including one week of data collection in Dili from October 27-31, 2025.

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the overall impact of the project and document achievements and lessons learned, by:

1. Evaluating the impact and effectiveness of the project.

- Successes and enabling factors, including the impact on participants and communities, key contributing factors, achievement of outcomes and outputs, and the role of the partnership with IWDA in supporting achievements.
- Challenges, barriers, and risks, as well as how the program has addressed these and what needs to be done to address remaining challenges, barriers, and risks.

2. Assessing the extent to which the project and IWDA’s support has increased ALFeLa’s organisational capacity.

- ALFeLa’s organisational strengths, across program management and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, operational and financial systems, human resources, resource mobilization, and sustainability planning.
- Partnership with IWDA as a support to ALFeLa’s organisational capacity, specifically how IWDA’s model of support has contributed to ALFeLa’s organisational development and sustainability planning, and how IWDA’s support can/should be improved.

3. Identifying recommendations for ALFeLa and IWDA based on key findings.

- Recommendations to strengthen future project impact, ALFeLa and IWDA’s partnership, and enhance ALFeLa’s organisational capacity and sustainability.

This evaluation is a requirement of the grant received through the ANCP and will be used to inform future partnership approaches and programs between IWDA and ALFeLa. It will also be used by ALFeLa to inform future grant applications, and to plan for the sustainability of its activities.

Background

Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no Labarik (ALFeLa)

Asisténsia Legál ba Feto no Labarik (ALFeLa), meaning Legal Aid for Women and Children, is a feminist NGO established in 2012 and dedicated to advancing women and children’s access to justice in Timor-Leste through legal aid, education, and advocacy. ALFeLa is currently the only provider of free legal aid to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in Timor-Leste. ALFeLa also focuses on systemic change, including advocacy on effective law implementation and education for duty-bearers so they understand the law and their responsibilities to uphold it.

International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)

IWDA is an Australia-based feminist organisation, resourcing diverse women's rights and feminist organisations primarily in the Asia-Pacific, and contributing to global feminist movements to advance the vision of gender equality for all. IWDA has partnered with ALFeLa since 2013, focusing on strengthening women's access to justice.

Project Overview

The 'Protecting the rights of women and children affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Timor-Leste' project (2021-2025) focused on responding to and preventing violence against women and children through four intended outcomes:

Outcome 1	Improved access to the formal justice system for women and children survivors of domestic and gender-based violence through legal assistance and economic independence for women survivors. ALFeLa provided legal aid and legal assistance to ensure women and children were empowered to access the formal justice system, in cases of domestic violence, GBV and other civil law matters.
Outcome 2	Duty bearers have increased understanding of and ability to implement the laws that support women and children's rights. ALFeLa's delivered gender-responsive legal training to a range of duty-bearers, supported judicial and law enforcement actors to improve their support to GBV survivors, and collaborated with the GBV referral network.
Outcome 3	ALFeLa influences key stakeholders to uphold current laws and frameworks, and/or to introduce new or improved policies and laws that protect the rights of women and children through their advocacy activities. ALFeLa advocated to lawmakers for strengthened legislation and protection for women and girls, advised on policy implementation, and contributed to international accountability.
Outcome 4	ALFeLa has strengthened systems, processes, and capabilities to provide quality services to women and children. ALFeLa implemented service quality strengthening and organisational capacity strengthening initiatives, including through technical accompaniment from IWDA.

In line with the flexibility of the ANCP funding model, and IWDA's partnership approach focused on resourcing Majority World feminist organisations with core, flexible funding, this project was designed to complement ALFeLa's broader funding portfolio. All activities are therefore aligned with ALFeLa's strategic priorities, with this project contributing a portion of resourcing towards these, alongside external funding sources.

The total project investment from 2021-2025 was \$786,042 (AUD). Of this amount, ALFeLa directly received \$469,909 in total for activity implementation, personnel, and operations (60% of total investment). The remaining \$316,133 (40% of total investment) was held by IWDA and resourced IWDA's travel, program management and technical accompaniment personnel, as well as design, monitoring, and evaluation (DME).¹

¹ The ANCP funding model requires Australian NGOs such as IWDA to co-contribute a minimum of 20% towards all ANCP-funded projects. From 2021-25, IWDA co-contributed 26% towards this project. IWDA 'overmatched' its contribution to mitigate significant year-on-year funding decreases for ALFeLa.

Methodology

Principles

The evaluation was conducted by a team from IWDA, comprised of the Senior Program Manager-Quality, Timor-Leste Program Manager and Timor-Leste Program Coordinator. To ensure that this internally led modality was effective, meaningful and power-sensitive, the following principles were adopted.

Learning-oriented and future-focused framing

The team approached this evaluation as an opportunity for learning and reflection in order to strengthen future programming, not a judgement of ALFeLa's value. This framing was communicated upfront to all participants and throughout all evaluation activities. Key findings in this report have also been framed to inform actionable recommendations for ALFeLa and IWDA.

Participatory approach

In line with IWDA's feminist and decolonial values, the team aimed to promote co-ownership with ALFeLa at each stage of this evaluation. Terms of Reference and methodology design was led by IWDA with input from ALFeLa. Participant and stakeholder selection was led by ALFeLa with input from IWDA. The data validation and analysis workshop were designed by IWDA and co-facilitated by IWDA and ALFeLa. Report writing was led by IWDA with ongoing and final review from ALFeLa.

Ethics Review

The methodology and a risk matrix for this evaluation were reviewed and approved by IWDA's Ethics Committee to ensure credible and appropriate data collection. This Committee approves all externally-conducted research commissioned by IWDA. The Committee prioritised impartiality considerations when reviewing documents for this evaluation.

'Do no harm'

In line with a 'do no harm' approach grounded in safeguarding and ethical principles, no current clients of ALFeLa were included in data-collection activities. Some past clients were included as primary stakeholders (selected by ALFeLa based on the lowest risk of re-traumatisation from participation in this evaluation). Strict confidentiality and trauma-informed approaches were followed when engaging with these participants. Clear consent, confidentiality and anonymised and disaggregated data have also been applied to all participants.

Data Collection Methods

A mixed-method approach was adopted which incorporated the following qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to respond to evaluation questions:

Desk Review

The evaluation team completed a desk review of key organisational and program documents (see Annex 2 for the list of documents reviewed). This established an overview of the work done, key achievements, barriers, lesson learnt, areas for further improvement.

Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)

A semi-structured discussion was conducted with 20 ALFeLa staff in Dili with live Tetum translation provided by an interpreter. Staff were asked to respond to key questions to reflect on program achievements, barriers, learnings, and areas for improvement, as well as ALFeLa's organisational capacity and partnership with IWDA.

FGD Stakeholders	# of Participants
ALFeLa staff members, including management team and legal staff (from Dili and municipalities)	20 participants: 8 men, 12 women

Key Informant Interviews (KIs)

To gain deeper insight into project achievements, barriers, lessons learned and areas for further improvement, semi-structured interviews were conducted in Dili with the 18 key stakeholders and program participants, with live Tetum translation provided by an interpreter.

KII Stakeholders	Description of Stakeholders	# of Participants
Participants	Clients who have received legal aid from ALFeLa (closed cases)	7 (separate)
Government duty-bearers	KLATU (Commission to Combat Trafficking in Persons) Representative	1 (separate)
	Ministry of Social Solidarity & Inclusion (MSSI): Chief, Department of Child Protection; Section Chief, Department of Women's Protection	2 (joint)
Judicial duty-bearers	Judge, Dili District Tribunal	1 (separate)
	Office of General Prosecution: Prosecutors, Chief Secretary	3 (joint)
CSO Partners: GBV Referral	PRADET representative (counselling provider)	1 (separate)
Network Members	FOKUPERS representative (shelter/accommodation provider)	1 (separate)
CSO Partners: Inclusion	CODIVA representative (LGBTQIA+ inclusion advocate)	1 (separate)
	RHTO representatives (Organisation for People with Disabilities)	1 (separate)

Participatory Data-Validation and Sense-Making Workshop

The evaluation team facilitated a one-day workshop with 20 ALFeLa staff to complete joint analysis and validation of findings from the desk review, KIs and FGD, and identify recommendations.

Data-Validation Stakeholders	# of Participants
ALFeLa staff members, including management team and legal staff (from Dili and municipalities)	20 participants: 8 men, 12 women

Analytical Framework

The evaluation assessed the project's achievements, limitations, and areas for strengthening (Objective 1) against the project design and logical framework, including planned outcomes and outputs. To support impartiality and ensure findings are comparable within broader international development frameworks, the evaluation applied the following OECD DAC evaluation criteria:

1. **Impact:** the extent to the intervention generated significant positive or negative (intended or unintended) changes for individuals, communities, and systems.
2. **Effectiveness:** the extent to which intended outcomes and outputs were achieved.
3. **Coherence:** the compatibility and complementarity of the intervention with other initiatives, policies, and actors operating within the GBV sector and broader policy environment.
4. **Relevance:** the extent to which the intervention responded appropriately to the needs and priorities within the socio-cultural context of Timor-Leste.
5. **Sustainability:** the extent to which the benefits and outcomes of the intervention are likely to continue beyond the project period, and to which ALFeLa's organisational resilience and continuity was supported.

The evaluation also utilised baseline data to assess organisational capacity strengthening using IWDA's Organisational Capacity Strengthening Tool, as well as the quality and effectiveness of the partnership with IWDA through IWDA's Partnership Health Check Tool (Objective 2).

Limitations

Internal evaluation

Although conducting the evaluation internally brought benefits (strong contextual and program knowledge, practical understanding of funding and implementation environment), there were inherent limitations to this approach that must inform how findings are interpreted. Staff and delivery partners' awareness that a funder was conducting the evaluation may have limited openness, led to positive skewing of feedback, or influenced what was shared if questions were perceived as linked to future funding decisions. To mitigate this, IWDA positioned the review as a constructive exercise focused on learning rather than assessment. Additionally, given that IWDA has invested financial, strategic, and reputational capacity into this project, there is an inherent limitation regarding the evaluation team's perceived or actual bias towards positive findings. To mitigate this, consideration was given during evaluation team selection such that two of three members had limited pre-existing relationships with ALFeLa. The Senior Program Manager-Quality had not previously worked directly with ALFeLa, and the Timor-Leste Program Manager only worked with ALFeLa for two months prior to the evaluation.

Language barrier

The evaluation team did not have Tetum-language proficiency, and only one ALFeLa staff member had English-language proficiency, and majority of evaluation participants had limited English-language proficiency. Live interpretation was therefore provided throughout the data collection field trip, however although IWDA had planned for two translators to be present during all KIIs and FGDs, unexpected circumstances led to only one translator being available at a time. IWDA's reliance on translation meant that at times, responses provided did not appear to respond to questions asked without clarity on where in the translation process the misalignment occurred. Translation was also time-consuming, limiting extensive discussion and follow-up. Additionally, a single translator was insufficient for the large-group FGD with ALFeLa staff. The evaluation team adapted to this by providing translated questions for ALFeLa to discuss and document in detail in Tetum; key insights were then relayed to the evaluators via live translation with opportunity for live follow-up; and detailed comments were only translated and reviewed by the evaluators after the fact. This had unintended positive consequences: ALFeLa reported that Tetum discussions without frequent interruption for translation enabled more open and expressive team communication; and the evaluation team observed that ALFeLa took on a more active leadership role in staff reflection, challenging the power dynamic between IWDA as donor-evaluator and ALFeLa as recipient-participants. However, the language barrier also complicated the accuracy of information received and reported on by the evaluation team. In future, IWDA should ensure evaluators have sufficient Tetum proficiency or at least increased translation support.

Non-representative data

This project resourced a portion of ALFeLa's legal aid service delivery, training, and advocacy activities which varied year-on-year. Accordingly, participant numbers were reported on a pro rata basis (project participants calculated as the percentage of total/global participants reached annually by ALFeLa in line with the percentage of annual global costs that were covered by this project). Project participant numbers therefore do not reflect ALFeLa's organisational reach and impact. Global data (at the organisational level, not just this project) was made available for Outcome 1, so the evaluation includes analysis of project data in context of this. However, global data was not available for Outcomes 2-3, so participant numbers from this project should not be taken as representative of ALFeLa's organisational reach.

Missing stakeholders

The evaluation team intended to interview representatives from the National Police of Timor-Leste (PNTL), and in particular members of its Vulnerable Persons Unit (VPU). The VPU is a specialised unit within every district police station responsible for investigating crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse, and therefore a primary stakeholder and collaborator for ALFeLa under Outcomes 1-3. The evaluation team was unable to meet with VPU representatives during the data collection field trip due to unanticipated scheduling issues. While VPU perspectives have been incorporated into this report using data available in project narrative reports, it is important to note that VPU's comprehensive perspective is missing.

Findings: Outcome Achievement

Overall, the evaluation finds strong project performance against outcomes and improved women and girls' access to justice, increased duty-bearer ability, strengthened laws and policy processes. Organisational strengthening was also evident, although resourcing constraints threaten sustainability.

IMPACT STORY

A survivor's journey to justice for herself and her family

This client first connected with ALFeLa in July 2022. She described the process as very long, with repeated court delays caused by scheduling changes, including judges rotating across districts and frequent public holidays. Before coming to ALFeLa, she said she felt completely alone. She had little support or encouragement from those around her and did not know where to turn.

Through ALFeLa's support, she said she found not only legal assistance, but also motivation and emotional strength to continue. She spoke with appreciation about her ALFeLa lawyer, whom she described as consistently available, encouraging, and willing to stand beside her throughout the process. As she explained, when she goes through the legal process and looks to her side, someone is always there with her, cheering her on.

The client explained that she and her lawyer faced criticism from her husband and his family, who blamed the lawyer for making the situation more difficult. Despite this, she remained firm that she had chosen to seek support and that ALFeLa was helping her pursue justice. For her, the case was about dignity, truth, and the future of her three children. She wanted to make clear that her husband could not continue to mistreat them or avoid his responsibilities as a father.

Although the process has been difficult and time-consuming, she said she would continue until the end. She believed that many women might give up under similar circumstances, but she remained determined to seek justice for herself and her children. She said that without ALFeLa, she would not have known where to go, and that she did not believe she would have received the same quality of support elsewhere. She could not identify any ways ALFeLa could have improved its support but felt strongly that more women in Timor-Leste should know that organisations like ALFeLa exist, especially younger women and mothers facing hardship.

Looking ahead, she said she hopes to one day become a public speaker and advocate for other women on issues of justice, drawing on her own experience to encourage them not to give up.

Outcome 1: Improved access to the formal justice system for women and children survivors of domestic and gender-based violence through legal assistance and economic independence for women survivors.

Outcome status: **Achieved**

The evaluation confirms that the project significantly improved access to the formal justice system for women, children, and other marginalised groups in Timor-Leste. Multiple data sources, including the client database, desk review, stakeholder interviews and client feedback, demonstrate that the project addressed key financial, geographic, and social barriers to justice. Survivors reported improved experiences engaging with justice institutions, and stakeholders consistently affirmed that legal assistance provided by ALFeLa enabled access to justice for those who would otherwise be excluded.

From an OECD-DAC perspective, progress against Outcome 1 demonstrates strong relevance and effectiveness. The project responded directly to the main barriers women, children and other marginalised groups faced in accessing justice, including cost, remoteness, limited awareness and social exclusion, and the evidence indicates that it substantially improved access to the formal justice system. The findings also suggest some adaptive efficiency, particularly in ALFeLa's ability to scale services during COVID-19 and refine its case selection approach in response to capacity constraints. There are also signs of broader positive effects, including improved survivor confidence, safer engagement with justice institutions, and increased willingness to report violence. However, the extent to which these gains can be sustained remains uncertain, given funding pressures and wider structural constraints within the justice system that remain beyond the project's control.

Table 1. Summary of Key Output Achievements – Outcome 1: Access to Justice

Legal Aid service delivery & reach	
Global client reach	2,812 clients supported in total , including 2,124 adult women, 633 girls under 18, 53 boys under 18 and 2 gender-diverse adults.
Project client reach	499 clients supported through this ANCP project. 76 from January-June 2021, 135 in 2021-22 (peak due to Covid pandemic), followed by decline to 106 in 2022-23, 75 in 2023-24, and increase to 107 in 2024-25.
Case Resolution	741 cases closed in this project period.
Dimensions of strengthened access to justice	
Socio-economic accessibility	All services provided free of charge, including legal advice, representation, transport, accommodation, and meals. 60% of total clients unemployed, 11% lacked formal education.
Rural and remote accessibility	71% of total clients located rurally or remotely (outside Dili). Staff presence maintained in all municipalities.
Inclusive access for vulnerable groups	77 total clients with disabilities (3% of total). Two total gender-diverse clients
Safe access for women & children	ALFeLa support linked to improved comfort and psychosocial safety for women and children.

Service Delivery and Reach

ALFeLa supported a total of 2,812 clients at the organisational level from 2020-2025. Of these, 499 clients were supported through this project, representing an average 18% of the caseload. The client group included 2,124 adult women, 633 girls under 18, 53 boys under 18 and two gender-diverse adults. A total of 741 cases have been closed, reflecting meaningful progress through the justice process for these clients.

As illustrated in Table 3, ALFeLa consistently exceeded project targets and demonstrated strong responsiveness during periods of heightened need – for example, service delivery increased by approximately 70% during the COVID-19 period, indicating flexibility and capacity to scale services in response to demand.

Table 3. Number of clients supported by ALFeLa's legal aid and assistance services.

Financial Year	Project Target	Project Actual	Actual vs Target	Global Actual
2020-2021 (6 months, Jan-June)	65	76	+17%	381
2021-2022	120	135	+13%	678
2022-2023	100	106	+6%	622
2023-2024	70	75	+7%	537
2024-2025	70	107	+53%	584
Total	425	499	+17%	2812

A general year-on-year decline in service delivery reach is also illustrated in Table 3. At the project level, numbers declined and then increased in 2024-25, largely due to the loss of external funding resulting in an increase in the portion of costs covered by the project (18% in 2024-25 compared to 14% in the previous year). At the global (organisational) level, a more consistent and gradual decline is evident.

This can be attributed to some positive and negative factors. On the positive front, ALFeLa adopted a focus on quality over quantity in response to a ‘case file audit’ provided as part of The Asia Foundation’s technical support under an external program. ALFeLa reports that prior to this, its service delivery involved registering all women and children who sought support, including those seeking counselling or short-term support with no interest in seeking formal justice. Since the audit, and acknowledging ALFeLa’s limited capacity, this approach has shifted to prioritising women and children who seek justice. This enabled ALFeLa to target support within their mandate and the project outcome of increasing access to the formal justice system.

On the negative front, ALFeLa’s client numbers also declined due to diminishing staff resourcing. External funding losses led to the termination of paralegal staff contracts in 7 municipalities. This limited ALFeLa’s capacity to respond to cases, especially in these municipalities. ALFeLa continued to mitigate this by prioritising high need cases, however limited resourcing ultimately contributed to a decline in case numbers.

Stakeholders consistently reported that ALFeLa’s legal assistance services enabled women and children who would otherwise face exclusion to access the formal justice system.

Decreased Financial Barriers to Justice

The project addressed financial barriers that prevent survivors from pursuing justice. All services were provided free of charge, including legal advice, court representation, accommodation, meals, and transport. This was identified by multiple stakeholders as a critical enabler of access to justice for low-income survivors for whom cost is a primary deterrent. While explicit low-income data was not available, proxy employment and education indicators suggest that the majority of clients were economically marginalised: 60% were unemployed, and 11% of adult clients had not completed formal education.

Additionally, ALFeLa coordinated with the MSSl to secure basic needs allowances for low-income clients. In 2021-22 alone, 22 clients received this support, and ALFeLa reported that the MSSl consistently approved their requests. Stakeholders noted that knowledge of free services has encouraged more people to seek justice, reducing delays previously caused by lack of money, transport, or language support.

CASE STUDY Decreased financial barriers to justice

Case Details: A young woman with a disability survived GBV perpetrated by a family member. Despite threats from the perpetrator, she reported to the police who immediately contacted ALFeLa in 2023-24.

ALFeLa’s Support: LFeLa represented the survivor in all diligence and court proceedings and sourced a ‘basic needs’ stipend from MSSl given her low-income status.

Case Outcome: The perpetrator was sentenced to prison, and the client received civil compensation. This is a significant achievement given that there are significant barriers to justice for people with disability. An Organisation for People with Disability (OPD) stakeholder remarked that perpetrators are rarely held accountable in this way, and compensation is rarely granted to survivors, let alone survivors with disability.

Survivor’s Feedback: “[The client] thanked ALFeLa and the referral networks that helped her, she informed her family that before she was thinking that [the perpetrator] would continue to [commit GBV against] her and others because it is hard for people like her to access justice, but the referral network and ALFeLa have really helped [her] and her community.”

Decreased Geographic Barriers to Justice

The project significantly improved geographic access to justice. ALFeLa maintained staff presence across all municipalities and accompanied clients to courts in Dili, Suai, Oecusse, and Baucau. 71% of ALFeLa's clients were in rural areas, demonstrating strong rural outreach.

Stakeholders highlighted that rural communities often have limited awareness of legal rights and procedures. ALFeLa's presence in these areas has helped address this gap, enabling women and girls to understand how to access justice. However, delivery of services in remote areas continues to be challenged by poor rural infrastructure and limited transport capacity among government counterparts, particularly the Ministry of Social Solidarity and Inclusion (MSSI).

Inclusive Access for Vulnerable Groups: People with Disability

ALFeLa supported 77 clients with disabilities over four years. These included individuals with intellectual, physical, communication, psychosocial, visual, and hearing disabilities.² Although overall reach remains low, the impact of this support was significant.

Case studies included successful prosecutions of sexual assault and harassment against survivors with intellectual, physical, and hearing disabilities, which resulted in civil compensation and criminal sentences for offenders. Case studies also demonstrate that ALFeLa has supported clients to access reasonable accommodations, including sign language interpretation. These cases indicate that when ALFeLa has supported clients with disabilities, it has increased their ability to access meaningful justice.

However, the proportion of clients with disabilities supported by ALFeLa remained low (3% of total clients). ALFeLa's OPD partner RHTO explained that there are significant broader structural barriers which prevent survivors with disabilities from reporting violence, particularly those unable to leave their homes. RHTO therefore suggested that the low numbers are not entirely indicative of ALFeLa's inability to support people with disability, but rather this broader context. Increasing support to survivors with disabilities must therefore be predicated by increased collective effort across legal, disability, shelter, and government actors to address underlying structural barriers faced by people with disabilities.

While ALFeLa is seen as proactive and willing to work with specialist organisations, RHTO suggested that there is scope for more formalised and sustained collaboration, including joint training, stronger referral pathways, shared community outreach, and more coordinated advocacy to government and justice actors. As one stakeholder shared, *"ALFeLa opened the door for legal support but we are all there to push through the process."*

CASE STUDY Increased Access for People with Disabilities

Case Details: A deaf woman who survived GBV sought legal action through ALFeLa in 2024-25.

ALFeLa's Support: ALFeLa and RHTO submitted an application to allow sign-language interpretation at all proceedings (provided by RHTO) and supported this woman to access sign-language training.

Case Outcome: The perpetrator was sentenced to prison, and the client received civil compensation.

Survivor's Feedback: **"Thank you very much to the brothers and sisters of ALFeLa, sisters of RHTO and the leaders in court, and to all of you who have been accompanying me. it was a miracle for me".**

Inclusive Access for Vulnerable Groups: LGBTQI+ People

While ALFeLa does not explicitly collect LGBTQI-disaggregated data, there are records of two gender-diverse clients supported through this project. CODIVA, an LGBTQI organisation that works with ALFeLa noted that the limited representation of LGBTQI+ individuals in ALFeLa's monitoring data, particularly in relation to participation in community workshops, trainings and public events, does not reflect the reality on the ground.

² See Annex 1 for quantitative breakdown of clients with disability by type of disability.

As one representative explained, “They are there, but they are not going to share their sexual orientation openly with everyone ... but they are there.” This underscores the persistent barriers to visibility and disclosure faced by LGBTQI individuals in public settings, even when safe spaces are intended.

ALFeLa does not only work with women and children but also LGBTQI people. Most members of the LGBTQI community know about CODIVA and hear about ALFeLa. If a community member gets violence, they go to ALFeLa, or CODIVA, or [a] judge.

CSO Stakeholder

Importantly, ALFeLa’s role extends beyond direct service provision to LGBTQI+ individuals. The organisation is recognised as a strong ally to LGBTQI-focused organisations, particularly CODIVA. Stakeholders reported that ALFeLa consistently uses its institutional voice to advocate alongside CODIVA and to support their inclusion in multi-agency spaces. This includes challenging instances where CODIVA may be marginalised or spoken over due to its openly inclusive mandate. Through this solidarity, ALFeLa contributes not only to individual rights, but also to strengthening the broader ecosystem of LGBTQI support services in Timor-Leste.

The project operates in a challenging legal context where LGBTQI rights are inconsistently recognised in law. Despite this, ALFeLa’s inclusive practice and advocacy contribute to increased access to justice for LGBTQI people, although broader legal reform remains necessary.

Improved Survivors’ Experience of Justice System

The evaluation found strong evidence that ALFeLa’s survivor-centred, trauma-informed approach has significantly improved the quality of engagement for women and children with the formal justice system. Clients and stakeholders consistently identified several core strengths:

- Trauma-informed, client-centred approaches.
- Creation of psychologically safe environments.
- Preparation and debriefing for police, prosecution, and court processes.
- Responsive communication and proactive follow-up.

ALFeLa played a critical role in creating a safe, supportive environment for both child and women survivors as they engaged with formal justice processes. All clients interviewed named this as a core focus of ALFeLa’s mission, and that without ALFeLa mothers in particular would struggle to access support.

For women, ALFeLa provided psychosocial support and demystified the legal process which enabled increased comfort and confidence in navigating the justice system. Prosecutors shared those women who approached them directly often appeared anxious or emotionally distressed, sometimes expressing anger or speaking at length due to unresolved trauma. In contrast, prosecutors found that women who were accompanied and prepared by ALFeLa seemed better supported emotionally and practically and communicated more calmly and clearly with prosecutors.

For children, ALFeLa provided age-appropriate care and preparation, accompaniment to legal appointments, and assistance with administrative procedures. While child clients were not interviewed in line with ‘do no harm considerations’, prosecutors noted that ALFeLa demonstrated a strong understanding of how to communicate with children, in contrast to some other government departments where child-sensitive approaches are less developed. As a result, children who were supported by ALFeLa prior to engaging with prosecutors appeared less fearful, more secure, and more willing to share their experiences, having already been informed about the process and what to expect.

ALFeLa’s support went beyond legal representation. Staff accompanied survivors through the entire justice process; from initial reporting to court, while also coordinating with shelters, families, and authorities. They provided transport, prepare documentation, explained complex procedures in accessible ways and ensured continuity of support even when clients were placed in safe houses.

Survivors described ALFeLa as highly responsive, clear, and consistent, reducing both emotional and administrative burdens, particularly for those with caregiving responsibilities or health concerns. Survivors shared that ALFeLa did not “give up”, in some cases pursuing innovative mechanisms such as CEDAW complaints. Coordination with referral partners such as Fokupers, PRADET and MSSI further strengthened outcomes (See Outcome 2).

SURVIVOR VOICES

I did not have to do it all alone.

“Everything was handled by ALFeLa. I did not have to manage all the administration and follow-up alone. When there was a problem, I could text them. Sometimes I got confused about the case, and the lawyers at ALFeLa explained everything very clearly.”

I learned that I have rights.

“Before I came to ALFeLa, I did not feel safe at home, and I did not know that I had rights as a woman and a mother. After getting support from ALFeLa, I learned about my rights, the legal process, and where to go if I need help. Now I feel safer because I know my rights and I know where to seek support.”

It is about our dignity.

“It is about our dignity as human beings and as women. I am seeking justice for myself and my three children. By setting my boundaries, and with ALFeLa’s support, I was able to make those boundaries clear and tell him not to cross them.”

When I look to my side, someone is there.

“Before I came to know ALFeLa, I felt alone. I had no one to rely on, support me, or motivate me. But when I found ALFeLa, I realised I was not alone, and I found the motivation to keep going. When I go through this legal process, I look to my side and someone is always there with me, cheering me on.”

Without ALFeLa, I may have given up.

“If ALFeLa was not here, I might have been in a much worse condition. There was no other organisation like this to help me, motivate me, and advise me on the legal process, especially as a mother.”

Now I will tell other women.

“When I was confused, I really appreciated that someone showed me how to claim my rights. *Now I will tell other women how to claim theirs.*”

Increasing Awareness and Willingness to Seek Justice

The project has contributed to a notable shift in community awareness and attitudes. Multiple stakeholders shared that ALFeLa is often the first point of contact for survivors. Clients shared that they went to ALFeLa instead of the police because they thought the police would ask questions that made them uncomfortable. Multiple stakeholders also described that ALFeLa has a strong reputation with the broader community and is known as the organisation to go to in cases of violence against women and children.

Stakeholders also described a gradual cultural shift away from resolving violence solely “within the family” towards recognition of women and children’s rights under law. Community members increasingly know how to refer cases, and women and girls report greater confidence to report violence. Survivors also helped spread awareness by sharing their experiences within communities, indicating strong impact sustainability.

It is not like before – because of the culture, men were the only ones that got justice. ALFeLa has worked in the community. Women now think that as human beings we can also get our rights and seek justice.

Duty-bearers

Challenges, Gaps and Learning

Despite strong achievements, several challenges persist. Limited awareness of legal processes continues in rural areas, as well as ongoing reluctance to report violence due to economic dependency, fear of retaliation, and social norms. Structural barriers also persist, including weak law enforcement, inconsistent sentencing, and victim-blaming by some authorities. For vulnerable groups including LGBTQIA+ people and survivors with disabilities, legal and practical barriers to accessing justice remain. These challenges are largely beyond the direct control of the project, but they underscore the continued relevance and necessity of ALFeLa's work.

Outcome 2: Duty bearers have increased understanding of and ability to implement the laws that support women and children's rights.

Outcome Status: **Achieved**

This evaluation finds that ALFeLa has made a strong and sustained contribution to strengthening duty-bearer understanding of laws and procedures that protect women and children in Timor-Leste. Through a combination of large-scale training, hands-on case support, and close coordination with justice and protection actors, ALFeLa has increased their role as a trusted and integral part of the GBV response system. While the strongest evidence relates to increased awareness, knowledge, and system efficiency, there are also early indications that ALFeLa's engagement is influencing how duty-bearers prioritise and manage GBV cases, particularly when ALFeLa is directly involved.

From an OECD-DAC perspective, progress towards Outcome 2 demonstrates strong relevance, effectiveness, and coherence. The project responded directly to clear gaps in duty-bearer knowledge, case handling capacity and referral coordination, and the evidence indicates that it made a substantial contribution to improved understanding of laws and procedures protecting women and children. The findings also suggest gains in efficiency, particularly through ALFeLa's support with documentation, transport, case follow-up and coordination across the GBV response system. Coherence is a particular strength, as ALFeLa's role is closely embedded within broader justice and protection processes and is widely recognised by other actors as complementary and necessary. However, evidence of strengthened duty-bearer implementation in practice remains more limited than evidence of increased knowledge and system support, and these gains continue to be constrained by broader weaknesses in the justice system.

Table 4. Summary of Key Output Achievements – Outcome 2: Duty-Bearer Understanding & Ability

Increased understanding of laws	
Training for judicial, law enforcement, government, and civil society stakeholders	59 training and workshop activities delivered across all 13 municipalities - planned training targets exceeded (where provided).
	Increased intersectionality of training program over time, with explicit inclusion of people with disabilities and LGBTQI+ people.
	Evidence of participants' increased knowledge and understanding with links to increased referrals to ALFeLa.
Increased ability to implement laws	
Case handling	Increased efficiency and reduced delays in justice process through transport support, case documentation, and monitoring.
Referral network coordination	Strengthened referral network coordination through regular monitoring responsive legal support, transport, and documentation.

Increased Understanding Through Training and Awareness

There is strong evidence of the reach and adaptability of ALFeLa's training program, with some evidence that this has had a positive effect on duty-bearers' knowledge and attitudes. Through this project, ALFeLa delivered 59 training and workshop activities across all 13 municipalities.

ALFeLa's training program reached a broad and diverse group of stakeholders. Training participants included judicial stakeholders (prosecutors, judges); law enforcement stakeholders (national police, police investigative unit, vulnerable persons unit); government stakeholders (MSSI, municipal government representatives and gender focal points, *suco* (village) chiefs); civil society and religious groups (NGOs, church groups); youth stakeholders (high school students, university students, youth groups); and intersectional groups (people with disability groups, LGBTQIA+ groups). This wide reach reflects a deliberate strategy to strengthen understanding not only among formal duty-bearers, but also among community leaders and groups who play an important role in prevention, reporting, and referral. Additionally, over time, training content has increasingly incorporated intersectional perspectives, explicitly including people with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ communities.

ALFeLa's training curriculum is comprehensive and adaptable. The core curriculum covered ten core topics related to the justice system, violence against women and children, domestic and sexual violence, child abuse, public crimes, case processing, sentencing, and monitoring, alongside specialised training on the Law Against Human Trafficking. Importantly, ALFeLa adapted its training content to suit different audiences and requests – for example, focusing on legislative provisions and case handling for police and prosecutors, referral pathways for municipal officials and *suco* leaders, or basic rights and reporting mechanisms for community groups. This adaptability contributed to strong engagement and practical relevance.

Stakeholder and desk review evidence suggests that ALFeLa's trainings had a positive effect on knowledge and attitudes. For example, 72% of participants in 2020-21 reported an increased understanding of relevant laws and processes. Stakeholders also reported that community-level training has helped reduce stigma around domestic violence, encouraged reporting, and improved *suco* leaders' understanding of the limits of mediation and the importance of referral to formal services.

ALFeLa also monitored the effectiveness of VPU training by assessing how police applied their learning throughout the referral process. This included examining how survivors of GBV were treated, how cases were referred to the referral network, and how investigations were conducted in line with legal requirements.

One notable outcome was the receipt of 20 GBV case referrals in 2022-23 following training delivered to municipal government representatives, indicating a direct link between awareness-raising and increased use of legal pathways.

Increased Efficiency and Capability in Case Handling

Beyond training, ALFeLa played a critical role in strengthening the operational capacity of duty-bearers through direct case support, which improved efficiency and reduced delays in the justice process.

The average time taken to close a case supported by ALFeLa during this project period was 435 days (14 months). While systematic data on average GBV case duration in Timor-Leste is not available, multiple duty-bearers noted that without ALFeLa, cases could take more than two years (24 months) to progress or even stall entirely. Prosecutors stated that they rely on ALFeLa's documentation and monitoring, and that delays would increase significantly in ALFeLa's absence. This suggests that ALFeLa enabled a reduction in case duration of 10 months on average during this project period.

Transport support was another critical contribution. Many survivors, particularly those in remote municipalities, face significant barriers to accessing police, lawyers, and courts in Dili. This project contributed resourcing which enabled ALFeLa to travel directly to survivors' homes, transport them to police or court, and accompany them through investigations, allowing cases to move forward more quickly than would otherwise be possible. Prosecutors and child protection authorities consistently described ALFeLa as "working fast" and "pushing the process forward," noting that cases supported by ALFeLa were less likely to be delayed.

ALFeLa's transport support has been valuable in helping duty-bearers and other actors move cases forward, particularly where survivors face major access barriers. However, this support falls outside ALFeLa's core legal

aid function and places additional pressure on staff time and organisational resources. In practice, the lawyers are often required to fill transport and logistical gaps that should sit with other parts of the system. There is a risk that duty-bearers come to rely on ALFeLa's responsiveness rather than strengthening their own capacity to meet these responsibilities. ALFeLa has raised this concern with relevant actors and will continue to provide transport support where necessary, while prioritising its core legal aid work.

ALFeLa goes to the victims, have their own money to transport the victims, write the report and case chronology – they bring victims to the prosecutor, transport victims to court from shelter house, and accompany victims to court.

ALFeLa works quicker than the police to bring the victims to the police to do the investigations. Because ALFeLa have their own car and gas – they can go straight to the victim's house.

Duty-bearers

Judicial stakeholders also reported that they place particular importance on GBV cases where ALFeLa provides legal assistance, as case files are more complete, survivors are better supported, and follow-up is more consistent. Judges also reported directly contacting ALFeLa when cases reveal more severe abuse or neglect than initially apparent, requesting additional support for clients. ALFeLa's online database further contributed to system strengthening by providing case data to government institutions through MSSl and SEll, supporting planning and resource allocation.

Referral Coordination and System Strengthening

The evaluation finds that ALFeLa has strengthened coordination within the referral network, improving communication, trust, and role clarity among service providers. ALFeLa actively participated in referral network meetings, provided regular case updates, and is widely regarded as reliable in monitoring cases over time.

Civil society partners in the referral network such as FOKUPERS highlighted ALFeLa's role in tracking legal cases and providing information that police often do not share, as well as supporting risk assessments and safe reintegration of survivors into their communities. ALFeLa has also supported survivors to access extended safehouse stays, up to five years in some severe cases, well beyond standard operating procedure (SOP) limits.

As mentioned above, child protection authorities, prosecutors and judges also shared that they routinely seek and benefit from ALFeLa's support. Across interviews, when asked what the impact on the justice system would be if ALFeLa did not exist, duty-bearers and referral partners consistently stated that the justice system would be significantly weakened without ALFeLa, describing their impact as overwhelmingly positive and essential.

Table 5. GBV Referral Network Partner and Duty-Bearer Feedback

Civil Society Partners (FOKUPERS)	"Sometimes we do not get updates from the police, but ALFeLa keeps track of the case and provides [us with] follow up information... ALFeLa has strong coordination and communication with other stakeholders in the referral network."
Government (MSSl)	"When we see that a case is a [GBV] crime we will look for ALFeLa to accompany the victims... MSSl and ALFeLa work together, communicate, and provide case updates. ALFeLa have really supported us, and ALFeLa always completes what is missing from the government."
Prosecutors	"ALFeLa really helps us when they write case reports to present to the court... ALFeLa makes [our] work easier."
Judge	"If I see a case that [is] more severe, I immediately call ALFeLa to ask for more support."

Challenges, Gaps, and Learning

Despite these achievements, several limitations exist. While training outputs and participation are well documented, pre/post measures of learning and knowledge gains were not consistently repeated. Although there are strong reports on training content that equipped duty-bearers with “knowledge”, there is limited evidence of an increase in duty-bearer’s “implementation” abilities. This is largely due to a lack of implementation-related indicators in the project design. As a result, most evidence of impact on practice remains anecdotal, inferred from improved coordination and efficiency when ALFeLa is involved, rather than systematically measured.

Additionally, like Outcome 1, structural constraints in the justice system (shortages of judges and lawyers, heavy caseloads, and limited resources) continue to cause delays, with serious implications for survivor safety. Stakeholders noted that court scheduling delays are sometimes worsened by the rotation of judges across districts and by the high number of public holidays, which can result in postponed hearings and slower case progression. Stakeholders also noted that perpetrators may remain free for extended periods after reporting, and that GBV cases are not always prioritised due to workload pressures. While ALFeLa mitigates some of these challenges through advocacy, accompaniment, and coordination, these systemic issues remain largely beyond its control.

Outcome 3: ALFeLa influences key stakeholders to uphold current laws and frameworks, and/or to introduce new or improved policies and laws that protect the rights of women and children through their advocacy activities.

Outcome status: **Achieved**

The evaluation finds that ALFeLa has played a highly significant and effective role in influencing legal and policy frameworks related to gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, and human trafficking in Timor-Leste. ALFeLa’s successful and effective advocacy under this outcome was underpinned by its dual role as both a service provider and a legal advocacy organisation. By working with GBV survivors through its legal aid function, and engaging in community education and awareness raising activities, ALFeLa had ongoing and dynamic knowledge of insight into the ground-level experiences and realities of women, girls, and their community. Additionally, ALFeLa’s empirical and case data strengthened their credibility as an advisor to government and judicial stakeholders on policy implementation. This enabled ALFeLa to influence relevant, practical, and evidence-informed policy design and implementation. Additionally, ALFeLa’s public awareness raising, and community engagement initiatives enabled community-level implementation of laws and policies. Compared to the way this outcome was articulated in the project design, advocacy achievements under Outcome 3 are substantial and, in several areas, exceed original expectations.

From an OECD-DAC perspective, Outcome 3 demonstrates strong relevance, effectiveness, coherence, and emerging impact. ALFeLa’s advocacy was grounded in its service delivery experience, legal expertise and direct knowledge of the barriers faced by women, children, and survivors of violence, which made its contributions highly relevant to policy and legal reform processes. The evidence indicates that ALFeLa was effective in influencing key laws, policy frameworks, procedural tools, and accountability mechanisms, and that its role was coherent with the work of government, justice institutions, civil society partners and international human rights processes. There are also credible signs of broader impact, particularly where ALFeLa’s contributions helped shape legislative reform, implementation frameworks and public understanding of rights and reporting pathways. However, the strength and sustainability of these advocacy gains are harder to assess systematically because the outcome design lacked clear process indicators, milestones, and stronger methods for tracking contribution over time.

Table 6. Summary of Key Output Achievements – Outcome 3: Influence on Laws & Policies

Evidence-informed and rights-based advocacy & policy contributions	
Legal Reform	Introduction of <i>Protection Law for Children and Youth in Danger</i> (2023). Advocacy for revised <i>Timor-Leste Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Law Against Domestic Violence, Civil Code, and Civil Procedure Code</i> .
Policy Implementation Frameworks	National Action Plan against Gender Based Violence (NAP-GBV) (2022-32). National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons (NAP-PCTP) (2026-2030). National Action Plan for the Protection Law for Children and Youth in Danger (NAP-CP) (2023).
Procedural Tools	Statute of Public Prosecution Service. Manual on the Investigation of Gender-Based Violence Crimes by the Public Prosecution of Timor-Leste (2024).
International Accountability	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).
Public awareness raising and socialisation of laws	
Media engagement	Links between public awareness campaigns to increased awareness and GBV reporting.
Public campaigns	Increased youth awareness, knowledge and confidence to report GBV through 16 Days of Activism campaigns.

Evidence-informed advocacy and policy contribution grounded in service delivery

A key enabling factor for policy influence was ALFeLa's use of empirical and case data to strengthen their credibility as an advisor to government and judicial stakeholders on policy implementation. This enabled ALFeLa to influence relevant, practical, and context-informed policy design and implementation across the following thematic areas.

Gender-based violence

ALFeLa contributed the development and validation of the *National Action Plan against Gender-Based Violence (NAP-GBV) (2022-32)*. ALFeLa utilized their empirical knowledge and experience to ensure relevance under the NAP-GBV's Access to Justice Pillar. As an implementing partner of the NAP-GBV, ALFeLa regularly reported against its objectives, generating regular insights into strengths and gaps in the Plan's implementation. Additionally, ALFeLa provided input to the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SSEI) on successes and challenges in the implementation of the *Law Against Domestic Violence (LADV)*, particularly regarding awareness raising and prevention activities. The NAP-GBV and LADV are the primary legal instruments for the prevention and response to gender-based violence in Timor-Leste. ALFeLa's influence on the development, implementation, and reporting of these instruments has ensured that these instruments are relevant and effective in ensuring access to justice and protecting women and girls.

Anti-Human Trafficking

ALFeLa joined the *Commission Against Human Trafficking (KLATU)* in 2021 and contributed to the development of the *National Action Plan to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons (NAP-PCTP) (2026-2030)*. ALFeLa's experience in working directly with survivors has led them to play a significant role in this Commission. Project reports state that as a KLATU Commissioner, ALFeLa's Director accompanied 21 human trafficking survivors on their repatriation to Timor-Leste from Portugal in 2024. ALFeLa's Director was specifically requested on this trip to provide legal counselling to the survivors and psychosocial support, and advocate for their legal needs. This is an example of ALFeLa's direct influence on Timor-Leste's anti-human trafficking policy implementation, and its unique role in operationalizing survivor-centric principles in this work.

International Accountability

ALFeLa's case data was used to inform Timor-Leste's Fourth Periodic State Report on the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* in 2023. CEDAW is a key international mechanism for holding the Timor-Leste government accountable to its obligations to protect women and girls. ALFeLa was invited to attend the reporting session in Geneva, evidencing their reputation and influence as a CSO in the international human rights arena. Additionally, ALFeLa advised the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SSEI) on how the CEDAW Committee's recommendations could be prioritized and implemented. This illustrates an example of ALFeLa's direct influence on the Timor-Leste government's protection of women and girls, especially survivors of gender-based violence.

Rights-based legal advocacy and contribution to policy reform

Another significant enabling factor for policy influence was ALFeLa's technical and specialized legal focus, which strengthened independent and collaborative advocacy, resulted in policy reform and legislative tool developments which emphasise the rights of GBV survivors, as evidenced by the following outputs.

Law Reform

ALFeLa (along with CSOs including JSMP and FOKUPERS) advocated for improved legislative instruments, including the *Timor-Leste Penal Code*, *Criminal Procedure Code*, *Law Against Domestic Violence*, *Civil Code*, and *Civil Procedure Code*. ALFeLa's unique contribution to advocacy submissions, recommendations and analyses for these instruments was underpinned by their knowledge of the legislative landscape of Timor-Leste, in conjunction with their feminist principles and analysis. Judicial stakeholders confirmed that ALFeLa "really help[ed]" in advocating for law reform, in particular improvements to the LADV.³ They also noted that ALFeLa played an important role in "socializing the laws". This demonstrates ALFeLa's influence on rights-based law reform.

Procedural Tools

ALFeLa contributed to the revision of the *Statute of Public Prosecution Service*. The revised Statute has an explicit rights-based focus, stating that the Public Prosecution is responsible for defending and promoting the rights and interests of women and children.⁴ ALFeLa further collaborated with the ADB and Office of General Prosecution to develop a *Manual on the Investigation of Gender-Based Violence Crimes by the Public Prosecution of Timor-Leste (2024)*.⁵ ALFeLa's contributions to this manual focus on embedding rights-based and survivor-centric principles throughout prosecutorial processes. Prosecutors confirmed that the revised *Statute* along with this *Manual* have helped them prosecute gender-based violence cases. They reported that the manual provides "helpful, specialized guidance on [their] roles and responsibilities in cases of gender-based violence". This illustrates ALFeLa's influence on rights-based procedural reform.

New Laws & Implementation Frameworks

ALFeLa contributed to the development of Timor-Leste's first child protection law, the '*Protection Law for Children and Youth in Danger*' (2023).⁶ The National Parliament requested that ALFeLa support the law's drafting process by providing legal opinions and analysis and attending meetings. ALFeLa was also invited to join the Steering Committee responsible for the *National Action Plan (NAP-CP)* for the implementation of this law. ALFeLa provided de-identified case data to inform legislative provisions and implementation strategies related

³ Review of LADV is ongoing, pending parliamentary approval. ALFeLa and key stakeholders presented draft revisions to the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion (SSEI) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) in January 2026. Ministerial approval is anticipated by June 2026, with a parliamentary vote anticipated by December 2026.

⁴ See Footnote 5, p.xi

⁵ Timor Leste Office of General Prosecution & Asian Development Bank (2024). *Manual on Investigation of Gender-Based Violence Offenses for the Timor-Leste Public Prosecution Service*. <https://lpr.adb.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/ENG%20Final%20Handbook%20-%20Web%20Version.pdf>

⁶ Timor-Leste, Law No. 6/2023. (2023, March 1). *Law for the protection of children and young people in danger*. <https://lpr.adb.org/sites/default/files/resource/%5Bnid%5D/timor-leste-law-english-child-protection-law-english.pdf>
See also United Nations in Timor-Leste. (2023, June 19). *Timor-Leste approves law for protection of children and youths in danger*. <https://timorleste.un.org/en/237069-timor-leste-approves-law-protection-children-and-youths-danger>.

to child abandonment and regulating the adoption of minors. The MSSI recognized ALFeLa's contribution to the development and passing of the law and its role in the NAP-CP Steering Committee. This illustrates ALFeLa's end-to-end influence on policy development and implementation, underpinned by its legal expertise and rights-based principles.

Public Awareness Raising and Socialisation of Laws

ALFeLa's public awareness raising activities also contributed to the effectiveness of this outcome, by extending beyond duty-bearer advocacy to support community-level implementation of laws and policies. Through targeted awareness-raising and socialisation activities, ALFeLa strengthened community members' understanding of their rights and of pathways to justice, strengthening their capacity to apply gender-based violence prevention and response frameworks in practice. This integrated approach improved the likelihood that existing laws would be understood, accessed, and upheld at the community level.

ALFeLa leveraged several various public information platforms, including radio and television talk shows, social media, posters, brochures, and public events, to disseminate information about GBV and trafficking laws, survivor rights, and referral pathways. While systematic measurement of the impact of these activities is limited, given that they primarily involve large-scale public dissemination, there is consistent anecdotal evidence linking ALFeLa's public engagement to increased awareness and reporting. For example, in 2022-23, ALFeLa received four requests for training on gender-based violence and the law following a radio program (from municipal government, a municipal CSO and two youth/student groups).

Social media campaigns, particularly during the 16 Days of Activism, further amplified reach. Video campaigns published on Facebook in 2022 and 2023 received 1,500 and 500 views respectively and were recognised by the Ministry of Justice, reinforcing ALFeLa's role as a credible source of legal information.

CASE STUDY

16 Days of Activism and Youth Engagement

ALFeLa's approach to youth engagement during the 16 Days of Activism illustrates the organisation's evolving and strategic advocacy practice. From small-scale social media activities in 2021, ALFeLa expanded its approach in 2022 by partnering with youth groups to deliver awareness events. In 2023 and 2024, this collaboration scaled significantly through integration with a three-day Night Market event, reaching over a thousand people and engaging artists, volunteers, and youth leaders in delivering messages on preventing GBV.

Youth participants reported feeling honoured to work with ALFeLa. Community members, including students and young leaders, demonstrated increased confidence in speaking out against sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH). In 2024, the event was publicly acknowledged by the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion as one of the most impactful 16 Days celebrations in Dili.

Challenges, Gaps, and Learning

The evaluation notes that although advocacy achievements under Outcome 3 are strong, sustained, and well evidenced in narrative form, weaknesses in outcome design and reporting limit the ability to systematically track advocacy progress. Planned outputs were framed at too high a level (e.g. "Commissions and NAPs are implemented and resourced"), lacked clear process indicators (such as number of submissions, consultations, or technical inputs), and did not include measurable milestones. Systematic measurement of the impact of awareness activities was also challenging, given their focus on broad public dissemination.

Future phases of the program would benefit from clearer targets, stronger indicators, and practical measurement tools. For example, collecting data on referral sources may create stronger evidence for the link between public awareness raising campaigns and increased referrals. There is also an opportunity for ALFeLa to share advocacy strategies and learnings with civil society partners to strengthen collective advocacy, and civil society mechanisms for holding duty-bearers accountable.

Outcome 4: ALFeLa has strengthened systems, processes, and capabilities to provide quality services to women and children.

Outcome status: **Achieved**

The evaluation finds that ALFeLa has substantially strengthened its organisational systems and operational capacity over the life of the project, despite ongoing resource constraints. This is evident in comparing IWDA's due diligence and organisational capacity assessments at the start of the evaluation period with the most recent assessment. Stronger service delivery systems, more responsive stakeholder engagement, improved governance, and increased credibility with judicial actors and partners helped ALFeLa maintain service quality during a period of rising demand and declining funding. However, ongoing challenges in financial sustainability, staffing, and resource mobilisation continue to pose risks to sustaining and building on these gains.

From an OECD-DAC perspective, progress towards Outcome 4 demonstrates moderate to strong effectiveness, with important gains in organisational systems, governance, MEL, human resourcing, strategic planning, and service quality over the life of the project. The findings also suggest improvements in operational effectiveness, as these strengthened systems helped ALFeLa maintain responsive and credible service delivery despite rising demand and reduced funding. There are also signs of positive organisational impact, including increased credibility with judicial stakeholders, stronger partnerships, and an enhanced profile at local, national, and international levels. However, sustainability remains the main constraint. Continued funding declines, reduced staffing, limited resource mobilisation capacity, and broader system pressures create substantial risks to maintaining and building on these gains over time.

Table 7. Summary of Key Output Achievements – Outcome 4: Organisational Capacity

Organisational capacity: IWDA Baseline, Midline and Endline assessments	
Strengthened to, or maintained as strong	5 out of 7 indicators: Program management, MEL, human resourcing, governance and leadership, and strategic planning.
Partially strengthened, with areas for improvement	1 out of 7 indicators: Financial management.
Requires strengthening	1 out of 7 indicators: Resource mobilisation, significant external challenges.
Systems, service quality, and external standing	
Internal systems, processes and capabilities	Strong internal values, with aligned staff and practice Qualified and committed staff, with capacity-building pathways and opportunities Strong governance (perceived internally/externally), with majority women leadership across staff and board Strengthened policies and procedures
Service quality, credibility, and external standing	Reputation as a reliable, professional, and survivor-centred organisation. Service delivery is widely recognised as effective, dependable, and responsive. Strong credibility with judicial stakeholders Increased local, national, and international profile

Organisational Capacity Strengthening

IWDA conducted Organisational Capacity Assessments (using its own tool) with ALFeLa in 2020, 2023, and 2025. These Assessments covering seven areas of organisational strength and risk. A high-level summary (see Table 8) indicates that ALFeLa's organisational capacity strengthened significantly over the course of the

project, particularly between 2020 and 2023. Program management and strategic planning remained strong, while MEL, human resources, governance and leadership, and financial management improved over time. Resource mobilisation showed some improvement but remains the weakest area and has since declined due to a combination of external funding losses and internal capacity constraints.

Table 8. Summary of Organisational Capacity Assessments

Organisational Capacity Indicators	Progress Summary	Baseline 2020	Midline 2023	Endline 2025
Program Management	Maintained strong			
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	Strengthened			
Financial systems and management	Strengthened, with areas for improvement			
Human Resources	Strengthened			
Governance and Leadership	Strengthened			
Strategic Planning	Maintained strong			
Resourcing and Resource Mobilisation	Partially strengthened but needs further strengthening			

critical risk(s) to organisational operation and sustainability.

mostly strong with moderate risk(s) and areas for improvement

strong with no significant risks

Program Management & MEL

Program management has remained strong and MEL has improved through staff capacity building and support from IWDA. Staff engaged in more regular reflection and learning processes, producing stronger project reports.

Systems, Finance & Operations

The evaluation finds clear improvements in ALFeLa's financial and operational systems. ALFeLa has transitioned to online accounting software, strengthened budgeting and global budgeting practices, and improved reconciliation across multiple income accounts. The organisation uses online banking, maintains an asset register, and monitors assets appropriately. IWDA's Program and Finance staff reported a clear improvement in ALFeLa's financial management throughout this project and noted financial reporting and spend management as key areas that have been strengthened.

Technical Capacity & Human Resources

The evaluation finds that ALFeLa has maintained a high level of professional legal capacity. Legal staff have university qualifications, and five staff are certified by Centre for Legal and Judicial Training (CFJJ). Both ALFeLa and its stakeholders report that the quality of legal analysis has improved over time. Staff have access to ongoing training and professional development opportunities, and the organisation demonstrates strong internal values of collaboration and unity. However, staffing levels have declined in recent years due to funding losses, resulting in fewer legal and program staff and no dedicated communications officer.

Governance, Leadership & Strategy

ALFeLa's governance is regarded both internally and externally as a key strength. ALFeLa's Board and leadership are majority women, reinforcing alignment with its mission to advance women's and children's rights. ALFeLa has also improved governance with clear reporting structures, regular management meetings and a stable board. The internal promotion of a new female director in 2022 also reflects internal career progression. ALFeLa's current Strategic Plan (2022-27) is strong, undergoes regular and consistent reviews, and informs programs and activities. ALFeLa has also strengthened internal policies and procedures, including safeguarding, human resources, and operations.

Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability

Although ALFeLa increased and diversified its income from 2020-2023 with support from IWDA, resourcing has diminished since 2023, hindering ALFeLa's operational capacity and ability to sustain itself into the future. While ALFeLa continues to pursue funding opportunities, the broader resourcing context limits the extent to which organisational capacity strengthening alone can enable its sustainability and impact.

Resource constraints within this project

Annual budget allocations for ALFeLa under this project declined by approximately 47% between the 2020-21 and 2024-25 financial years, with an average annual reduction of 24%.⁷ To sustain project delivery, ALFeLa increased the proportion of the budget dedicated to service delivery while significantly reducing core and organisational capacity funding. This enabled continuity of legal aid but at the expense of investments in staff development, MEL, organisational development, and communications. For example, capacity strengthening costs fell to as low as 1–2% of total expenditure in financial year 2023-24, limiting ALFeLa's ability to consolidate and expand organisational systems.

External resource constraints

ALFeLa is one of many CSOs in Timor-Leste operating in an increasingly resource-constrained environment. International donor funding to civil society has sharply declined in the post-independence period and the current resource environment is dominated by short-term project-based grants that are prone to funding gaps and sudden withdrawals.⁸ In addition, government funding to civil society has significantly declined in recent years. ALFeLa has been directly and significantly impacted by this context and is experiencing critical resourcing gaps due to diminished government funding, as well as the loss of international funding as several multilateral programs have ended without extension (including EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, and UN-KOICA Together for Equality). If this trend continues, resourcing will become a critical challenge for sustainability of civil society prevention of and response to gender-based violence.

Reputation, Trust, and Service Delivery Quality

ALFeLa's institutional profile has increased at local, national, and international levels. ALFeLa is well known among referral network members, community leaders, judicial actors, and government institutions, and is widely regarded as reliable, professional, and survivor-centred. Its participation in regional forums, including ASEAN, further strengthened its credibility and advocacy reach. ALFeLa also played an important role in linking survivors to support, including basic needs assistance from MSSSI, demonstrating effective coordination. ALFeLa's advocacy letters to courts and prosecutors were reported to receive priority consideration, reflecting the organisation's credibility and quality of its legal analysis. This strong relationship between ALFeLa and judicial actors enabled more efficient case progression and improved survivor experiences.

ALFeLa's service delivery is widely recognised by stakeholders as effective and responsive. 10 out of the 11 referral network partners and duty-bearers interviewed highlighted ALFeLa's strong case monitoring and follow-up, noting that ALFeLa is often the most reliable actors in tracking GBV cases through the justice system. Stakeholders reported being able to contact ALFeLa at any time, including outside working hours, and receiving timely and practical support. Communication from ALFeLa offices in other municipalities was described as consistent and clear, reinforcing ALFeLa's role as a dependable partner across geographic locations.

I can call ALFeLa 24 hours [a day] and they will support me.

Whenever we need legal assistance, we call ALFeLa, and they will come.

Duty-bearers

⁷ IWDA notes this decline is due to its own diminishing income, and not an indication of ALFeLa or the project's performance.

⁸ European Union System for an Enabling Environment for Civil Society (EU SEE). (2025). *Timor-Leste country focus report*. Hivos. <https://eusee.hivos.org/document/timor-leste-country-focus-report/>

While most stakeholders described ALFeLa as highly responsive, one referral partner noted that communication could be strengthened, referring to instances where staff were not able to answer phone calls immediately. This appears to reflect capacity constraints rather than a broader weakness in ALFeLa's approach, but it suggests some limits to responsiveness under pressure.

Challenges, Gaps, and Learning

The evaluation finds that Outcome 4 has largely been achieved, with strong evidence that ALFeLa has strengthened its strategy, governance, MEL, finance, and operations, enabling it to deliver trusted and responsive services to women and children in very difficult conditions. However, because planned outputs did not clearly define how stronger systems would be measured, reporting relied mostly on qualitative evidence rather than formal indicators. While the Organisational Capacity Assessment helped address this gap, future project design should include clearer baseline, midline, and endline measures linked directly to outcomes.

ALFeLa's organisational capacity is also affected by wider systemic and contextual challenges discussed throughout this report, including the continued rise in GBV cases, weak rural infrastructure and limited transport, shortages of judges and lawyers that cause long delays, national political turnover, traditional systems that can affect how cases are addressed, and socio-economic pressures that discourage survivors from reporting. Additionally, resource constraints pose a critical threat to ALFeLa's organisational sustainability, which limits the ability to progress under this outcome, as discussed in the next section.

Partnership with IWDA

IWDA's Support to ALFeLa

IWDA supported ALFeLa's organisational capacity and sustainability, most notably through flexible funding, financial strengthening, and resource mobilisation. This was enabled by a strong and maintained partnership between IWDA and ALFeLa.

Flexible Funding

IWDA's flexibility with funding allocation through this project is highly valued by ALFeLa. This flexibility is also enabled by the ANCP funding mechanism, which affords IWDA high autonomy over its funding allocation, and enables IWDA to afford the same autonomy to ALFeLa. ALFeLa has held autonomy over annual budget design under the broad umbrella of their strategic plan and the project design. This enabled them to reprogram funding in response to dynamic contexts, for example during the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, this flexibility enabled ALFeLa to utilise project funding to advance components of their strategic plan that were not covered by external funding sources, including 16 Days of Activism campaigning, capacity-building and annual reporting. For example, this project resourced 46% of ALFeLa's advocacy expenses in 2023, despite contributing only 14% of their global budget.

Although annual funding allocations from IWDA have decreased, as discussed in the Sustainability section, the ongoing flexibility has ultimately enabled ALFeLa to have ownership over their work, and to advance their strategic priorities.

IWDA should continue to uphold this flexibility. Future phases of this project could benefit from ensuring the design is closely aligned to ALFeLa's strategic plan and priorities, especially those that are not resourced or difficult to resource under external funding.

Financial Strengthening

Finance management at the organisational level is complex, as ALFeLa manages a high number of donors and income streams, each providing small to moderate funding amounts, across multiple bank accounts. This complexity has led to challenges with donor, project, and bank reconciliations.

IWDA supported ALFeLa to overcome these challenges by strengthening reconciliation practices. In 2023 and 2024, IWDA's Finance Business Partners visited ALFeLa to provide in-country support. The 2023 visit focused on strengthening ALFeLa's financial record keeping, accounting and reconciliation practices across donors and bank accounts. IWDA's Finance Business Partner supported ALFeLa to complete bank reconciliations, track movement between accounts when tranches were delayed, record 'hidden' bank fees and track exchange rate gains and losses. The 2024 visit followed up on these areas and focused on troubleshooting any issues that had emerged since the previous trip. Following the 2024 visit, IWDA's Finance Business Partner provided a general assessment that ALFeLa had improved their practice and processes, and a high confidence rating, meaning that future trips were not required.

In addition to this support, IWDA's Programs Team worked closely with ALFeLa to monitor and strengthen financial reporting through quarterly acquittals. IWDA identified five concerns with acquittal reporting (relating to reconciliation, record keeping, and spend management) and tracked progress against these at each quarterly interval from 2023 to 2025. As of the most recent acquittal, all five concerns had been addressed. The program team finds that ALFeLa's current financial management practice is strong and has significantly improved. ALFeLa's finance staff and management team confirmed that this support has been beneficial and enabled them to "improve [their] systems and processes".

IWDA should continue to invest in and support ALFeLa's financial management capacity. Where possible, IWDA should explore engagement with ALFeLa's other donors to coordinate capacity-building support, identify streamlining opportunities, and mitigate the impacts of delayed tranche release.

Resource Mobilisation

ALFeLa values the technical support provided by IWDA for resource mobilisation, which ranged from reference letters to joint funding applications. Most notably, IWDA supported ALFeLa to apply for external funding opportunities to both philanthropic and institutional donors. IWDA shared opportunities with ALFeLa, assisted with writing and reviewing applications, and on some occasions submitted ALFeLa's applications on their behalf when ALFeLa faced internet connectivity challenges. IWDA's support contributed to ALFeLa successfully securing funding from *Women's Fund Asia* in 2022, and *Plan International* in 2025: all funds were secured directly for ALFeLa, with no financial allocation to IWDA.

This support has been critical for ALFeLa's organisational sustainability. ALFeLa actively pursues funding opportunities and demonstrates strong commitment to resource mobilisation, regularly scanning for calls and engaging with key stakeholders. However, capacity constraints limit success: only one staff member has English proficiency, making it difficult to prepare complex and competitive grant applications. In addition, many philanthropic and institutional donors use sophisticated application systems and processes that are challenging to navigate due to language and technology barriers. IWDA has played an important role in helping to bridge these gaps. However, there is scope for IWDA to further strengthen support, particularly by leveraging its networks and relationships to raise ALFeLa's profile with funders.

There have also been limitations to IWDA's support with resource mobilisation. There are several instances in which IWDA's support (through proposal development, application writing and reference letters) did not lead to successful outcomes for ALFeLa. In some cases, joint proposals for both IWDA and ALFeLa were rejected since IWDA does not have a country office in Timor-Leste. In other cases, IWDA was unable to dedicate significant resourcing (in terms of staff time and technical expertise) to meaningfully support strong and competitive applications. As IWDA itself faces increasing funding insecurity, it is also increasingly limited in its ability to guarantee long-term and ongoing resourcing for ALFeLa.

Given that resource mobilisation is both the biggest challenge ALFeLa faces, and the most significant way in which IWDA has added-value for ALFeLa as an organisation, IWDA should strongly consider investing in increased resource mobilisation support for ALFeLa.

Partnership Health

IWDA and ALFeLa maintained a strong and healthy partnership throughout this project. IWDA and ALFeLa completed biennial Partnership ‘Health Checks’ which involved joint reflection against IWDA’s six partnership principles: Equality, Power-Sensitivity, Integrity, Do No Harm, Inclusivity, Relevance. In both 2023 and 2025, both partners collectively assessed the partnership as strong across all six principles.

The partnership reviews identified the following key strengths.

- **Joint decision-making and participatory processes:** “IWDA and ALFeLa agree that there is joint decision-making, and that ALFeLa leads on activity planning and budgeting. Both partners are actively involved in meetings, reporting and reflection.” (2025)
- **Collective care:** “IWDA supports ALFeLa’s staff wellbeing.” (2025)
- **Open and respectful communication and listening:** “ALFeLa noted that IWDA is open and support’s ALFeLa’s priorities... when facing emergency issues ALFeLa speaks to donors; IWDA is open to listen, and this is good.” (2023)
- **Learning and accompaniment:** “ALFeLa shared that IWDA provides opportunities to organisations to develop their own policies, based on requirements from donors. This is a process of learning and helps increase confidence.” (2023)

The partnership reviews also identified the following key gaps.

- **Language Barrier:** “ALFeLa has a lot of ideas but sometimes it is hard to describe these in English. “[We] have a lot to share, but it is difficult to convert our reflections into English and into donor-facing report template.” (2025)
- **Self and collective care:** Both partners recognise the need for self and collective care, but there were limited opportunities to apply or implement this in the partnership. (2023)

Both partners identified that the language barrier limits engagement and communication, since ALFeLa has only one staff member with English-language proficiency and IWDA’s program staff do not have Tetum-language proficiency. IWDA’s project management tools/templates are also in English. This placed a high workload on ALFeLa’s English-speaking program manager, limited IWDA’s ability to engage with other staff, and limited opportunities for growth and adaptation. Although IWDA engaged translators for meetings and visits with ALFeLa, this barrier limited informal, day-to-day communication and timely discussion of routine matters. Translators were also engaged to support reporting in earlier years, but this was not sustained due to declining funding. This made written narrative reporting difficult for ALFeLa. To address this, IWDA and ALFeLa agreed to trial an alternative reporting practice largely involving translated oral reflection sessions (instead of written narrative reporting) facilitated by IWDA. It will also be beneficial for IWDA to invest in strengthening its Tetum proficiency, and for ALFeLa to do the same for English.

Additionally, strengthening self and collective care is critical, given the sensitive context in which ALFeLa operates. To address this, both partners agreed to incorporate more self and collective care activities. This will require some creativity, due to limited resourcing, but can be incorporated into meetings and monitoring visits.

Decolonising IWDA’s Development Practice

IWDA is committed to decolonising its partnership practice under its strategic plan and [Decolonial Framework and Strategy](#). The *4S Framework* (*‘Step Up, Stand With, Step Back, Sit With’*)⁹ guides IWDA in operationalising this commitment in its partnerships with Majority World organisations. For this evaluation, ALFeLa used this *Framework* to reflect on the extent to which IWDA has decolonised its model of support (see Table 9).

⁹ “Step Up, Stand With, Step Back” is an adaptation of the framework proposed by Shirley Walters and Shauna Butterwick in their 2017 publication *Moves to Decolonise Solidarity Through Feminist Popular Education*. IWDA added “Sit with” based on feedback provided by Alfred Deakin Professor and Chair in Race Relations, Yin Paradies. See Footnote 9. See also IWDA’s *2025-2035 Strategic Plan*, p.5. <https://iwda.org.au/assets/files/IWDA-Strategic-Plan-2025-2035.pdf>

Table 9. ALFeLa's reflections on IWDA's decolonial approach during this project through the 4S Framework.

4S Commitments	How did IWDA demonstrate this?	What can IWDA strengthen?
STEP UP and use our power to leverage resources and access for women's rights organisations and make meaningful contributions to feminist movements.	Secured and provided funding for ALFeLa through this ANCP project. Supported ALFeLa with resource mobilisation, especially through proposal writing and reference letters. Supported capacity-building for woman leaders within ALFeLa. Promoted ALFeLa at the international level.	Advocate for funding for ALFeLa, including from the Australian and Timor-Leste Governments. Support ALFeLa's organisational sustainability, especially through resource mobilisation. Connect ALFeLa to convening, conference and engagement opportunities. Support ALFeLa to develop an organisational Theory of Change.
STAND WITH feminist movements in solidarity, amplifying Majority World actors.	Campaigned with ALFeLa for gender equality, and especially against gender-based violence. Supported ALFeLa during the Covid-19 response. Facilitated meetings between ALFeLa, donors and development partners.	Maintain 'solid' relationship with ALFeLa. Continue campaigning for gender equality, and against gender-based violence.
STEP BACK when others are better placed to lead.	Connected ALFeLa with opportunities to apply for its own, external funding. Strengthened ALFeLa's confidence in their leadership	Support women's leadership in Timor-Leste, within and beyond ALFeLa.
SIT WITH complexity, embrace collective learning, and take the time to listen and discern.	Reflected with ALFeLa on program delivery, challenges and learnings. 'Sat together' with ALFeLa to find solutions when ALFeLa faced funding losses, including budget decreases from IWDA and this project.	Continue joint reflection and learning activities. Continue supporting ALFeLa, even if funding is no longer available.

There is a clear theme of resource mobilisation, indicating that this has been and should continue to be a critical way in which IWDA can support ALFeLa through the partnership. It is important that IWDA continue to 'sit with' ALFeLa as they face increasing uncertainty over funding and resourcing. IWDA should also continue and increase efforts to mobilise resources with and for ALFeLa by leveraging its connections and influence within the sector. This also presents a key insight for IWDA: that decolonising its development practice must involve, if not prioritise, mobilising resources for its Majority World partners such as ALFeLa. Outside of resource mobilisation, IWDA's relationship-focused approach, and its own advocacy for gender equality emerged as a key strength, which should be continued. IWDA should also support ALFeLa to develop an organisational Theory of Change to strengthen their strategic capability.

Recommendations

Programmatic, Advocacy & MEL

1. ALFeLa can strengthen high-level advocacy for increased government investment in the justice system (judges, lawyers, facilities, and transport) and civil society.
2. ALFeLa can strengthen advocacy for law reform in collaboration with key stakeholders, particularly regarding the rights of and protections for women, girls, people with disabilities and the LGBTIQ+ community.
3. ALFeLa can continue and expand focus on increasing community awareness of the legal system and access to justice pathways, particularly in rural areas and on anti-human trafficking. However, the evaluation notes that gaps in community awareness reflect a wider weakness in the justice and protection system, and ALFeLa should not be expected to carry this role alone.
4. In future program designs, ALFeLa and IWDA should develop a MEL Framework and Plan with SMART outcomes and outputs, clear indicators and targets, and systematic monitoring and reporting (e.g. case outcomes, client satisfaction, follow-up on training impact)

Organisational Capacity & Partnership

5. ALFeLa can invest in staff English-language¹⁰ skills and ability to increase access to funding and development opportunities.
6. IWDA can invest in staff Tetum-language skills and abilities to decrease barriers to communication with ALFeLa and strengthen relationships with broader ALFeLa staff. At a minimum, IWDA should ensure sufficient resourcing for ongoing and regular translation.
7. ALFeLa can invest in staff wellbeing, including through stress management. IWDA can support ALFeLa by creating and facilitating regular opportunities for self- and collective-care, drawing upon feminist principles and practices.
8. With technical support from IWDA, ALFeLa can develop an organisational Theory of Change.
9. With technical support from IWDA, ALFeLa can strengthen communications by establishing a website and strengthening social media presence.
10. ALFeLa can prioritise resource mobilisation by continuing to actively pursue diverse funding opportunities (including in consortium with other CSOs and from new sources such as philanthropy). IWDA can strengthen technical resource mobilisation support for ALFeLa through scoping, proposal development and application writing. IWDA can also connect ALFeLa to networking, convening, and relationship-building opportunities with other CSOs and donors.
11. IWDA can increase advocacy to the Australian Government for increased core and flexible funding to ALFeLa and Timorese civil society more broadly.

¹⁰ The evaluation team notes in line with IWDA's Decolonial Framework, the expectation and requirement that staff from Majority World NGOs such as ALFeLa are proficient in English is deeply rooted in colonial legacies and Eurocentric language hierarchy. This recommendation does not intend to perpetuate this harmful legacy. However, it is balanced with the reality of the current international development and funding landscape which is largely inaccessible to speakers of languages other than English. Investing in English language skills will ideally strengthen ALFeLa's ability to mobilise resources and contribute to organisational sustainability. However, it is imperative that international NGOs like IWDA advocate for the dismantling of English-language hierarchies through greater multilingual capacity among donors, expanded language accessibility in funding mechanisms, and increased investment in translation resources.

Conclusion

This evaluation finds that the *‘Protecting the rights of women and children affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Timor-Leste’* project made a strong contribution to improving access to justice for women and children’s survivors of domestic and gender-based violence in Timor-Leste. Across the evaluation period, ALFeLa delivered effective legal aid, strengthened duty-bearer knowledge and coordination, contributed to important law and policy processes, and maintained trusted, survivor-centred services in a highly constrained operating environment. Overall, the project performed strongly against its intended outcomes, with the clearest achievements seen in service delivery, training, and advocacy.

A key strength of the project was ALFeLa’s ability to combine direct legal assistance with broader systems-strengthening and advocacy work. This enabled the organisation not only to support individual survivors to access justice, but also to influence the institutions, procedures, and legal frameworks that shape that access. The evaluation found that ALFeLa is widely regarded as credible, responsive, and effective by clients, judicial stakeholders, government actors, and civil society partners. These strengths were reinforced by a partnership with IWDA that provided flexible funding and practical support for organisational development, including financial strengthening and resource mobilisation. Although this evaluation did not include a formal value-for-money analysis, the findings suggest good value from a simple operating model with limited overhead costs, combined with ALFeLa’s ability to generate multiple levels of results through the same delivery approach.

The evaluation also confirms that progress continues to be constrained by wider structural barriers beyond the project’s control. These include weak implementation of laws, shortages of judges and lawyers, long case delays, limited transport and infrastructure, and socio-cultural norms that discourage reporting. Marginalised groups, including people with disabilities and LGBTQI people, continue to face additional legal, social, and practical barriers to accessing justice.

Sustainability remains the most significant risk going forward. While ALFeLa has strengthened important organisational systems and maintained high-quality services, continued funding pressures, staffing constraints, and limited resource mobilisation capacity create clear risks to sustaining and building on these gains. Future support should therefore focus not only on maintaining legal aid, training, and advocacy, but also on protecting core organisational capacity, strengthening sustainability, and improving results frameworks to better capture outcome-level change. ‘

Overall, the evaluation finds that ALFeLa remains a critical actor in advancing justice for women and children in Timor-Leste, and that continued investment in its work is justified to consolidate the gains already achieved and support longer-term systemic change.

Annex 1: Client Data (Outcome 1)

Life of Project: Disaggregated by age, gender and disability.

Category	# of clients (this project)	# of clients (global)
Total clients supported	409	2,812
Adult women	376	2,124
<i>Women with disabilities</i>	14	77
Girls (under 18)	112	633
Boys (under 18)	9	53
Gender-diverse adults	N/A	2

Annual Client Reach

Financial Year	# of clients (global)
2020-21	381
2021-22	678
2022-23	622
2023-24	537
2024-25	584
Total	2,812

Type of Disability (Life of Project)

Type of Disability	% of clients with disability
Physical disability	26% of clients with disability
Intellectual disability	32%
Communication disability	16%
Psychosocial disability	14%
Visual impairment	8%
Deaf or hard of hearing	4%

Cases Duration and Client Satisfaction

Number of cases closed during project period	741
Average case duration (# of days from intake interview to case outcome)	435
Clients satisfied with case outcome	Out of 7 seven clients interviewed, all 3 clients whose cases are closed are satisfied with the outcome. 4 clients' cases are still pending a final judgement.
Clients satisfied with ALFeLa's support	All 7 clients interviewed expressed that they were happy with the support they received from ALFeLa

Geographic & Economic Accessibility

Group experiencing barriers to accessing justice	% of clients (global)
Rural clients (located outside Dili)	71%
Clients without employment	60%
Adult clients without formal education	11%

Annex 2: List of Documents Reviewed

Project documents:

‘Protecting the rights of women and children affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Timor-Leste’

#	Author, Document	Year(s)
1-5	ALFeLa, Annual Proposals	2020-2021 2021-2022 2022-2023 2023-2024 2024-2025
6-10	IWDA, Annual ANCP Development Plans (AdPlans)	
11-15	ALFeLa & IWDA, Annual MEL Plans	
16-20	ALFeLa, Annual Budgets	
21-25	IWDA & ALFeLa, Annual Risk Assessments	
26-30	ALFeLa, Annual Narrative Reports	
31-35	IWDA, Annual ANCP Performance Reports	

Organisational and partnership-related documents:

#	Author, Document	Year(s)
36	ALFeLa Strategic Plan (2022-27)	-
37-39	IWDA, Timor-Leste Trip Reports	2023 2024 2025
40-41	ALFeLa & IWDA, Partnership ‘Health Check’ Reviews (IWDA tool)	2023 2025
42-44	ALFeLa & IWDA, Organisational Capacity Assessment of ALFeLa (IWDA tool)	2020 2023 2025

Past evaluations & IWDA documents:

#	Author, Document	Year(s)
45	Gender Equality & Inclusion Hub, <i>Women’s Action for Voice and Empowerment (WAVE)</i> Endline Program Evaluation (2021). IWDA resourced ALFeLa’s work through the WAVE program prior to this ANCP project.	2016-2020
46	IWDA, Decolonial Framework & Strategy (2024)	