

Timor-Leste



In Timor-Leste, The Asia Foundation works with local partners to advance citizens' rights and access to justice, strengthen civil society voices, develop economic growth opportunities, and safeguard women's rights. Current flagship programs focus on good governance, inclusive economic growth, and women's empowerment.

Project Highlights

Strengthening responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable groups

Trained 1,441 community-level security and justice actors in 2023 in legal education, mediation, prevention of violence against women and children, and disability inclusion to improve access to and the fairness of local security and justice mechanisms.

Supporting government with technical support and advocacy

In 2022, The Asia Foundation's Nabilan program provided key technical advice and support for the development of the 2022-2032 National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence in Timor-Leste.

Organizing and hosting national tourism events

In 2023, the Tourism Development Program organized Timor-Leste's first Tourism Short Film Festival, which was attended by over 200 domestic and international travel enthusiasts and premiered eight films promoting Timor-Leste under the theme of the country's official brand, "Explore the Undiscovered."

Bolstering tourism industry bodies

By working with industry associations, the Foundation has upskilled and provided marketing support to more than 200 participants from 50 tourism-related businesses in Dili, Aileu, and Maubisse, including women-led and women-owned businesses.

2023 Snapshot



More than 3,200 people surveyed in the 8th Tatoli! Public Perceptions Survey



Nabilan service providers reached 1,928 survivors of violence against women and children



543 attendees at the inaugural National Coffee Brewing (AeroPress) Competition



Flagship Initiatives



Tourism development

Since the first Survey of Travelers to Timor-Leste in 2014, the Foundation has supported the growth of tourism in Timor-Leste. Our Tourism Development Program builds on extensive research, strategies, policies, and relationships with the Timor-Leste Ministry of Tourism, donors, and the private sector. With support from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the program aims to uplift destination tourism in rural Aileu and Maubisse by supporting tourism operators, spurring tourism growth, and benefiting local communities by generating income from tourist spending.

Supporting good public policy

For over a decade, and with support from Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Foundation has supported evidence-based public policy in Timor-Leste. We work with civil society and government representatives committed to promoting evidence-based policymaking and we mentor individuals and organizations to conduct policy-relevant research. We partner with a network of local organizations to conduct the Tatoli! Public

Perceptions Survey. In 2023, the eighth annual survey interviewed a nationally representative sample of 3,754 adults across the country.

Violence against women and children prevention response

Timor-Leste has high rates of violence against women and children, with 59% of ever-partnered women having experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner. Our Nabilan Program is a long-term initiative to end violence against women and children, funded by Australian DFAT in collaboration with the Government of Timor-Leste. "Nabilan" means "bright" or "shining" in Tetun, reflecting the program's goals for the future of women and children. Nabilan has two pillars; its Services Pillar provides core funding and technical support to services providing shelter, safe houses, counseling, and legal support to survivors of violence. The Prevention Pillar funds partners and directly implements programs focusing on primary prevention of violence against women and children.

Advancing safety, security, and justice

Since Timor-Leste gained independence, the Foundation has supported establishing and strengthening Timorese security and justice institutions, including Timor-Leste's first legal aid organizations and the National Police of Timor-Leste, to build a Timorese model of community policing. The Foundation supports national surveys on safety, security, and justice. Our Community Security and Justice Program, supported by MFAT, aims to build inclusive and equitable access to security and justice services for women, youth, and marginalized groups, promoting community trust and social cohesion.

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives and expanding opportunities across Asia and the Pacific. Informed by decades of experience and deep local expertise, our work across the region is focused on good governance, women's empowerment and gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environment and climate action, and regional and international relations.