

National Report: Taiwan

International Legal Aid Group Conference 2025

Legal Aid Foundation, Taiwan

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Introduction

Amid the domestic and international turbulence of 2025, the Legal Aid Foundation of Taiwan has remained steadfast in its mission. Despite political instability in the new Parliament that has raised enormous concerns over potential budget cuts, LAF fortunately maintained its funding levels. It even expanded its service scope and launched some new services to reinforce legal assistance for diverse communities, following the surge of legislation and emergent social justice issues over the recent few years.

Some of the updates on new developments highlighted in this report include:

- To encourage greater participation by lawyers in the Citizen Judges System, a significant criminal justice reform, the LAF has increased the remuneration radix and expanded the three-lawyer defence rule for cases under this category (Section 2.2). Additionally, with approval and financial support from the Judicial Yuan, the LAF is actively preparing to establish a Criminal Defence Centre to strengthen legal resources for handling such cases (Section 2.1).
- Since mid-2023, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW)-commissioned programme has exempted recipients of disability benefits from means tests. This policy change has led to a doubling or even tripling of the MOHW programme's case volume over the past two years (Section 4.1, 4.2).
- To further advance housing justice, the LAF has been commissioned by the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) since 2024 to implement the Legal Aid Programme for Residential Tenancy Disputes through an administrative mandate. During the programme's initial phase, from August to December 31, 2024, a total of 2,145 intake calls were handled. Legal aid grants for document drafting and representation are anticipated to begin in autumn 2025 (Section 4.1, 9).
- In addition to the annual file reviews of LAF staff lawyers, in 2024, the LAF organised two separate panels to experiment with peer review for private legal aid lawyers in serious criminal defence and consumer debt cases. The primary goal is to establish standards for future peer reviews (Section 5).
- In response to Mental Health Act reforms, the LAF has officially undertaken a dedicated new sub-programme commissioned by the MOHW to support various aspects of the legislation. Efforts have been focused on strengthening service capacity to meet anticipated legal aid needs for compulsory hospitalisation and emergency placement proceedings (Section 9).
- Several major challenges faced by the LAF are summarised in the conclusion (Section 10).

This report follows the template given by the conference host to introduce different aspects of legal aid in Taiwan. To prevent repetition, we have summarised information that has already been given before, provided references to the previous ILAG national reports, and focused on new details regarding the most recent developments in the 2025 report.

1. Basic National and Organisational Figures

National information¹				
Name of country	Population (as of the end of 2024)	Gross domestic product (GDP) (preliminary statistics as of the end of 2024)	Poverty line and number of people below it	Number of Practising lawyers
Taiwan	23,400,220	US\$796.904 billion Per capita GDP is US\$34,040	In 2024, the lowest living index in different counties and cities varied from NT\$13,653 to \$19,649 per month, equivalent to approximately US\$425 to \$611, or between US\$14 to \$20 per person per day ² ; this applies to approximately 263,294 people nationwide, or roughly 1.13% of the total population ³	Approx. 12,744 ⁴
Legal aid organisation information (as of the end of 2024)				
Organisation name	Date of establishment	Total number of applications in 2024	Total number of grants of legal aid in 2024	Total number of refused grants of legal aid in 2024
Legal Aid Foundation (LAF)	1 July 2004	- Legal consultations: 119,547;	65,141 cases	28,723 cases

¹ USD to NTD conversion rate used in this table is 1 to 32.11 as the average conversion rate of 2024 .

² According to *the Public Assistance Act*, the lowest living index per person benchmark for the poverty line has different standards, depending on region. Taiwan Province, the six municipalities directly under the central government, and Fujian Province each have different standards. For more detail, please refer to the MOHW's website (Chinese version): <https://dep.mohw.gov.tw/dos/cp-5337-62357-113.html> (Accessed 21 April 2025)

³ If we add the number of those in middle-to-low-income households at the margin of the poverty line, that is, 266,419 people as of the end of 2024 (<https://dep.mohw.gov.tw/dos/cp-5337-62357-113.html> (Accessed 21 April 2025)) in households with earnings less than 1.5 times of the lowest living index per person per month, then the national number of those in low-income and middle-to-low-income households is approximately 529,713 people, or 2.26% of the population.

⁴ According to Article 11 Para. 1 of the recently amended *Attorney Regulation Act 2020*, those who wish to practice law may select only one local bar association to which they belong. This figure is the sum of the number of lawyers registered at each local bar association as of the end of April 2025. Please see the National Directory of Lawyers website built up by the MoJ: <https://lawyerbc.moj.gov.tw/> (Chinese version. 21 April 2025).

		- Applications for legal aid grants: 100,474		
Number of the staff workers	Number of attorneys supporting legal aid casework	government contributions to legal aid	2024 total legal aid expenditures	Government contributions as portion of total expenditures
349	4,814 (including 24 LAF staff attorneys)	- Sponsored by the Judicial Yuan: NT\$ 1,391,296,534 (equivalent to US\$43,329,073); - Programme revenues from other government departments: NT\$125,279,496 (equivalent to US\$3,901,573)	NT\$1,596,652,567 (equivalent to US\$49,724,465)	94.98%

2. Legal Aid Organisation / Authority

2.1 Organisation and Supervision

The LAF was established statutorily in July 2004 with an endowment from the Judicial Yuan, the highest judicial authority in Taiwan, in accordance with *the Legal Aid Act* promulgated in January 2004. It is a government-established, privately-run non-profit organisation. Employees of the LAF therefore are not civil servants. With comparatively more adequate government funding, the LAF has successfully expanded the scope of publicly funded legal services and ushered a new era of legal aid in Taiwan ever since.⁵

The main statutory functions and organisational structure of the LAF are detailed in *the Legal Aid Act*, which was most recently amended in 2015. The major amendments were detailed in the 2019 ILAG national report.⁶ The board of directors serve as the highest decision-making body and the chief executive officer is responsible for

⁵ For more details about the history of publicly-funded legal services in Taiwan and the Legal Aid Foundation, please see the LAF researcher, Chang, Y-S. (2019) 'Advancing Equal Access to Justice: An Introduction to the Legal Aid Foundation in Taiwan', paper presented at the 2019 International Conference on Legal Aid: The Spirit of Legal Aid and the Quality of Legal Aid Providers, hosted by the Korean Family Legal Service Centre, Seoul, 3 December 2019.

⁶ See pp.3-4 of the [2019 report](#).

managing and executing general affairs of the Foundation. In addition to the head office in Taipei dealing with organisation-wide affairs at policy level, the LAF has set up 22 branch offices across the country, including the offshore islands, to handle the daily operation of the frontline services. Moreover, to effectively address specialised legal issues, the LAF has sought to dedicate a portion of its staff attorney resources to focus on specific areas of casework. It first established the Legal Centre of Indigenous Peoples in Hualien in March 2018. Currently in 2025, it has also been actively preparing to establish a Criminal Defence Centre in order to meet the arising needs of cases subject to the newly enacted citizen judges procedure.

As of the end of 2024, there were 349 staff workers hired by the LAF. While around 25% of the staff members work in the head office, the rest of them work in the branches and other staff attorney centres. Over 72% (253) of them were female and about 28% (96) were male. The age groups of 20s, 30s, 40s and over 50s stood for 19.8%, 36.1%, 30.7% and 13.5% respectively. About 6% (21) of them were Taiwanese indigenous peoples and 0.57% (2) of them were persons with disabilities. While 21.77% (76) of them were non-legal professionals providing logistical and administrative support, the rest 78.22% (273) of them were professionals involving in the direct provision of legal aid services. In addition to the 24 casework staff attorneys, there were 26 other staff lawyers undertaking the managerial, policy and legal research jobs. The rest of them were paralegals (223), who were the main workforce supporting daily operations and serving as the crucial bridge between the legal aid clients and lawyers.

Supervision of the LAF is conducted internally by supervisors and externally by the Supervisory Committee set up by the Judicial Yuan as the competent authority. In addition, since over 90% of the legal aid funding is out of the government budget, LAF is subject to annual reviews by the Legislative Yuan (the Parliament) and the National Audit Office under the Control Yuan. The external supervision mainly focuses on the policy of organisational structure, use of funds and budget, the quality of legal aid, annual critical measures, etc. In the past few years, after the enactment and implementation of the *Foundations Act (2018)*, there has been more pressure placed on internal control and audit of the LAF. This has led to more in-depth and thorough reviews of the grant decisions in individual cases to review the appropriateness of the use of funds.

2.2 Service Delivery Model and Mixed Sources of Workforce

The LAF has adopted a clearing house or service intermediary model to deliver a wide range of legal aid services, such as legal aid grants for representation and minor assistance, advice, public legal education and law reform. By leveraging the workforce of in-house paralegals, the LAF and its branches work on planning and administration,

such as handling applications of legal aid grants, organising the advice clinics or arranging educational or outreach events. They then refer the cases to the lawyers or invite them to provide legal services to end clients.

For example, take the process of legal aid grant applications. Most of the legal aid applications are in-person services by default. Applicants have to visit the branch offices to file an application. The LAF paralegals would host the applicants, help check and collect the required documents (especially for the means test) and key in the data into the system at the counter. The applicants would then have a meeting with an external examiner (that can be judges, prosecutors, lawyers or law professors) where the applicants can explain the case details. Subsequently, an examining committee consisting of three examiners would be organised to discuss and make an assessment on whether to grant legal aid or not, with the administrative assistance by the paralegals throughout the assessment. Once the grant is approved, the paralegals would then proceed with case assignment, serving as matchmakers to identify, select and contact the candidate lawyers and check their willingness to undertake the case. After the case assignment, the paralegals also have to deal with all the legal aid administration work for each case such as appeals, change of lawyers, termination or revocation of the grants, case closure and claims of legal aid contributions, etc.

The LAF employs a mixed model for legal service delivery, which means the legal casework can be handled either by internal LAF's staff attorneys or external private lawyers. However, since the LAF first started its operation as a judicare system, private lawyers have always been the main workforce.

Private Lawyers

As of the end of 2024, 4,790 private lawyers had registered to undertake legal aid cases. Around 3,854 of them are still actively participating. In general, LAF requires private lawyers to have at least two years of legal practice before undertaking legal aid cases, save certain exceptions.

The remuneration paid to private lawyers for legal aid casework is usually a lump sum – a fixed fee for a case. It is decided by the Examining Committee when legal aid is granted, in accordance with the cap and floor range set by the LAF's Legal Aid Remuneration Regulation (hereinafter called 'the Remuneration Regulation'), depending upon the level of assistance (legal representation, minor assistance, or advice), the area of law (criminal, civil, family, or administrative law), and the type of proceedings (e.g., small claim, summary proceeding, ordinary proceeding of first and second instances). The remuneration of a general criminal or civil case is NT\$30,000 (around USD\$1,000) at most, which is a third to a half of the market price. Lawyers

may request a remuneration increase when a case is more complicated and time-consuming than normal. However, there is a NT\$10,000 cap, which means LAF can allow a maximum of 20 additional hours for each case. In principle, any working hours beyond this will not be paid.

The LAF had never undergone any comprehensive adjustment in lawyers' remuneration in its first 15 years. However, since the late 2010s, the calls for reasonable wage increases from the private legal aid lawyers have mounted, in order to reflect and cover inflation and their real costs. The LAF therefore worked hard on empirical research to identify the features of complicated and high-cost cases and reflected on private lawyers' willingness to undertake legal aid work. This led to remuneration increase proposals which were more evidence-based. Furthermore, the government's recent law reforms to introduce the justice initiatives such as the Grand Chambers, the Constitutional Court, and Citizen Judges have also pushed the government funder for LAF, the Judicial Yuan, to provide more financial incentives to private lawyers in more difficult and complicated cases.⁷ Such a differentiation strategy aims to encourage more lawyers to undertake these high-cost cases and ensure service quality. Since January 2023, a range of remuneration increase rules have come into effect, applying to cases that are complex, time-consuming, or subject to special proceedings such as citizen judge adjudication and certain complementary circumstances.

More recently, the rules governing lawyers' remuneration and case assignments have been amended again for cases involving citizen judge proceedings. To encourage more lawyers to specialise in this area of criminal defence, the remuneration radix has been increased from 1.5 times to 2 times the standard rate, rising from NT\$1,500 to NT\$2,000 per radix. As a result, the maximum remuneration for lawyers handling such cases can now reach up to NT\$100,000 per lawyer, per case. In addition to the original exception that allows three lawyers to be assigned to each defendant during trials at the first instance, this expanded three-lawyer defence rule can now also be applied to criminal investigations and trials at the second instance.

Staff Attorneys

As of the end of 2024, there were 24 staff attorneys recruited across Taiwan to undertake legal aid casework.⁸ Due to the very few numbers of posts, the LAF has

⁷ See pp.7,8, fn. 8-10 of the [2023 National Report](#).

⁸ The statutory cap on the number of LAF staff lawyers responsible for legal aid casework had been set at 30 prior to 2024. This limit was later increased to 45 in 2025 to establish the Criminal Defence Centre, which will handle cases under the newly enacted citizen judges procedure. However, due to budgetary constraints, there

limited the case types undertaken by staff attorneys in order to ensure better resource allocation and professional training. Although they handle only about 1.1 percent of cases, they are primarily responsible for the most complex and challenging ones—those involving major public interest, human rights, class actions, and high-profile matters concerning disadvantaged groups such as migrant workers, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, environmental victims, victims of natural or manmade disasters, etc.

3. Budget and Spending

3.1 Budget and Spending Figures for the Past Two Years

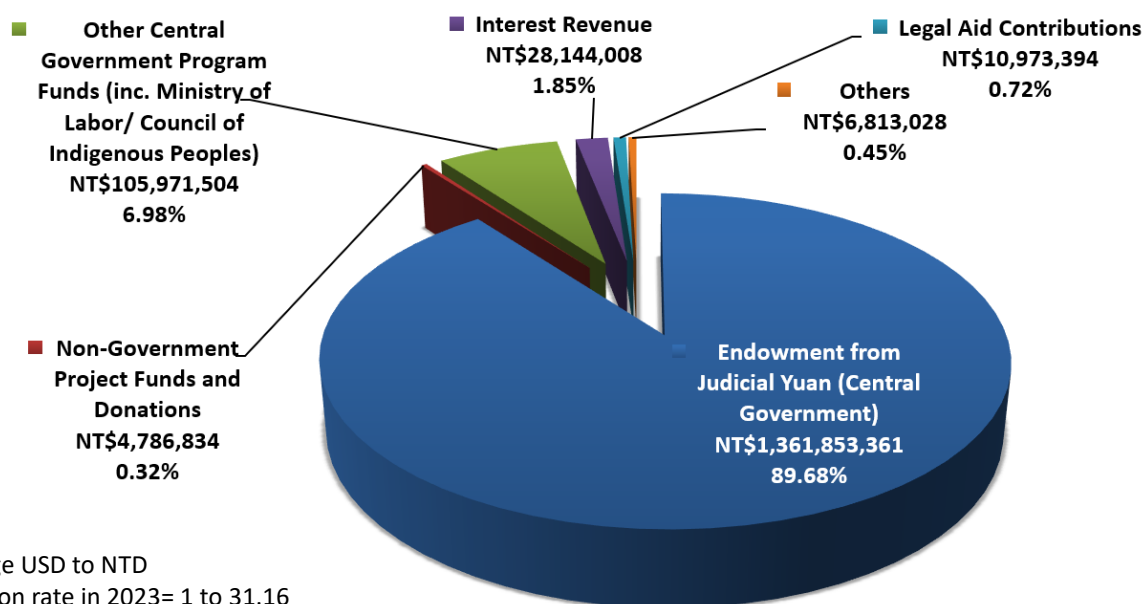
The budget/income and expenditure of legal aid in Taiwan in 2023 and 2024 are listed in Figures 1 to 4.

The main funding source is the Judicial Yuan of the central government, while the second is also funding from the central government but is provided by the Ministry of Labour (MOL), Council of Indigenous Peoples (CIP), the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) from their specific commissioned legal aid programmes for labourers, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and tenants.

Under a judicare-like system, about 72% of the expenditure has been the direct costs delivered for legal aid services, including the general legal aid funded by the Judicial Yuan and the commissioned special programmes for the past two years. These costs chiefly involve legal aid grant examination fees, lawyers' remuneration, and litigation costs. In terms of the Judicial Yuan funded lawyers' remuneration in 2024, which cost NT\$959,824,815 (around US\$29,891,773), 95.88% were for legal aid grants (NT\$920,235,615); 0.92% for face-to-face legal advice (NT\$8,862,500)⁹; 1.27% for telephone legal advice (NT\$12,162,300); and 1.93% for the Initial Interrogation Attorney Accompaniment Programme (NT\$18,564,400).

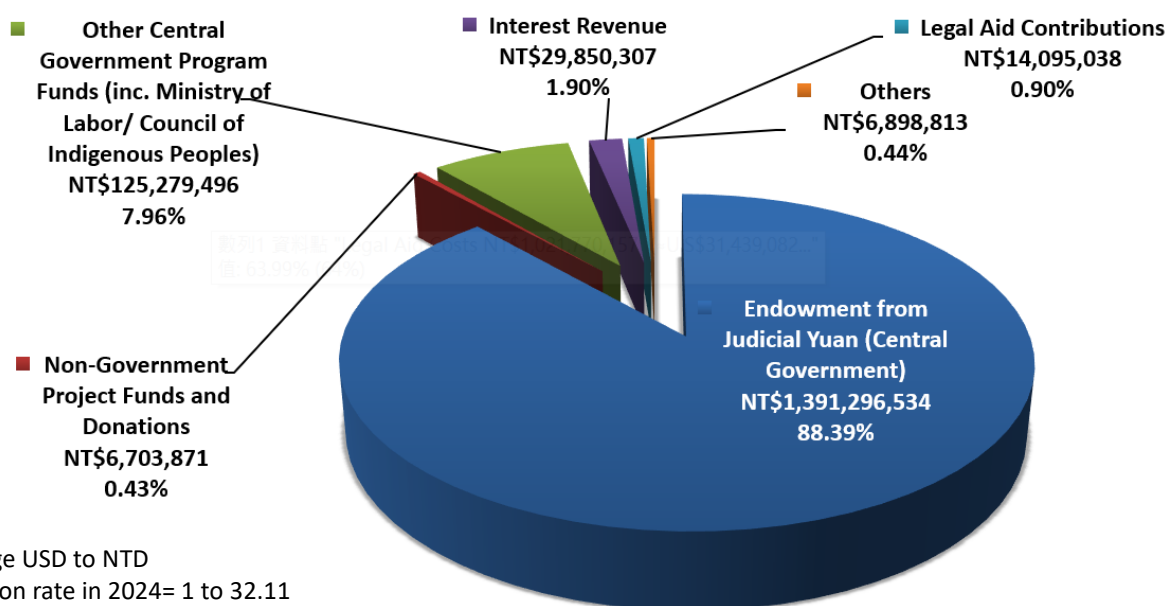
were only 25 posts allowed in 2025 and 24 posts were filled. The most recently opened posts were for the West Office of the LAF Legal Centre of Indigenous Peoples and the Penghu Branch in the offshore islands, aiming to safeguard the legal rights of the indigenous peoples and meet the legal needs of the remote areas.

⁹ However, it is worth noting that this figure only represented part of the funding spent on face-to-face legal advice, since the lawyers' remuneration of some service points were provided by the commissioned legal aid programme.



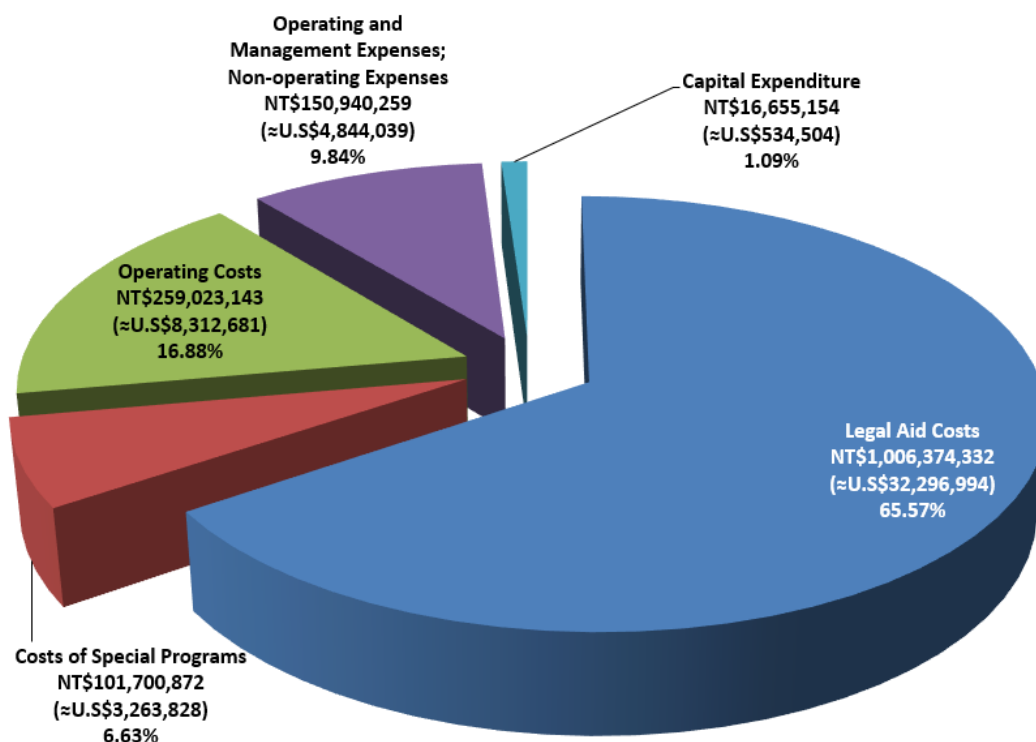
Total Income: NT\$1,518,542,129(≈US\$48,733,701)

Figure 1: Breakdown of LAF Total Income, 2023



Total Income: NT\$1,574,124,059(≈US\$49,022,861)

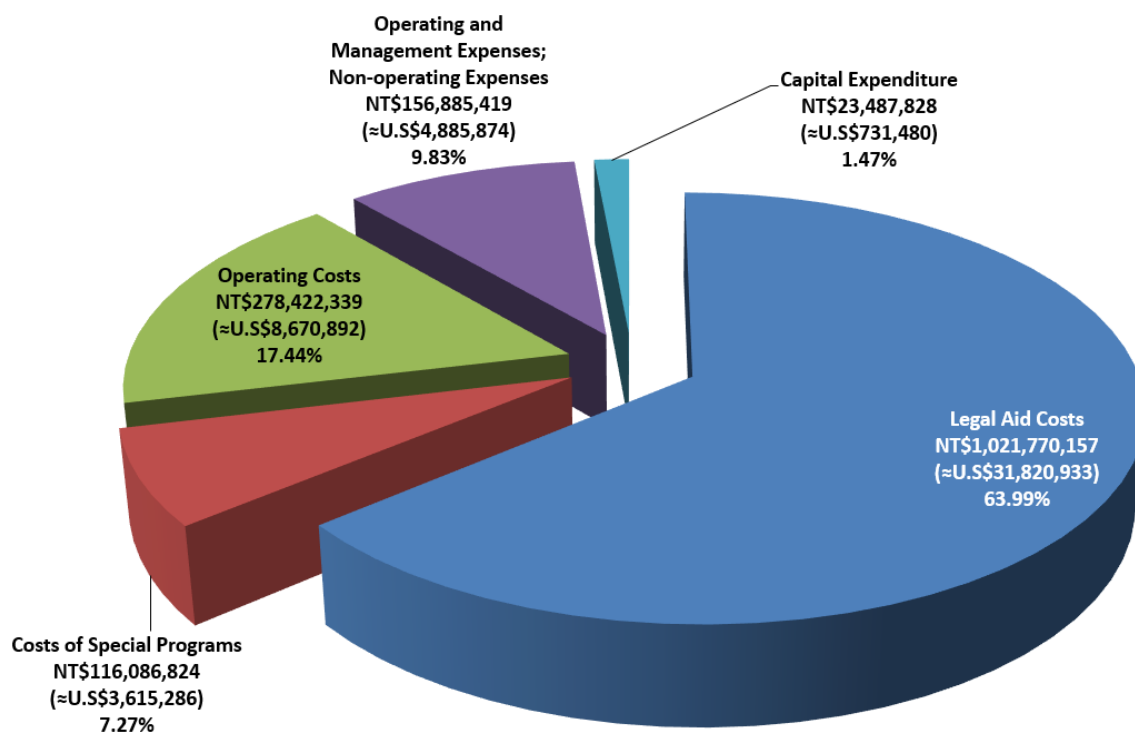
Figure 2: Breakdown of LAF Total Income, 2024



* Average USD to NTD
conversion rate in 2023
= 1 to 31.16

Total Expenditure: NT\$1,534,693,760 (≈ US\$49,252,046)

Figure 3: Breakdown of LAF Total Expenditures, 2023



* Average USD to NTD
conversion rate in 2024= 1 to 32.11

Total Expenditure: NT\$1,596,652,567 (≈ US\$49,724,465)

Figure 4: Breakdown of LAF Total Expenditures, 2024

3.2 A Mixture of Capped and Uncapped Budget

The budget from the Judicial Yuan of the central government is a mix of capped and uncapped types, depending on the account titles. While there is a statutory obligation for the state to provide legal aid funding, the account of legal aid costs (including court fees, lawyers' fees and other mandatory litigation costs) are demand led and therefore has an uncapped budget. However, the rest of the expenditure accounts (including operating costs, expenses, and capital expenditure) are capped with a general limit, though the budgets can be transferred between accounts.

The MOL, CIP, MOHW and MOI budgets for their specific legal aid programmes are similar. While the budgets for operation, management and capital expenditure are capped, the legal services costs are uncapped and led by demand.

3.3 Legal Aid Spending in the Past Ten Years

The amounts of legal aid spending in the past ten years are illustrated in Figure 5.

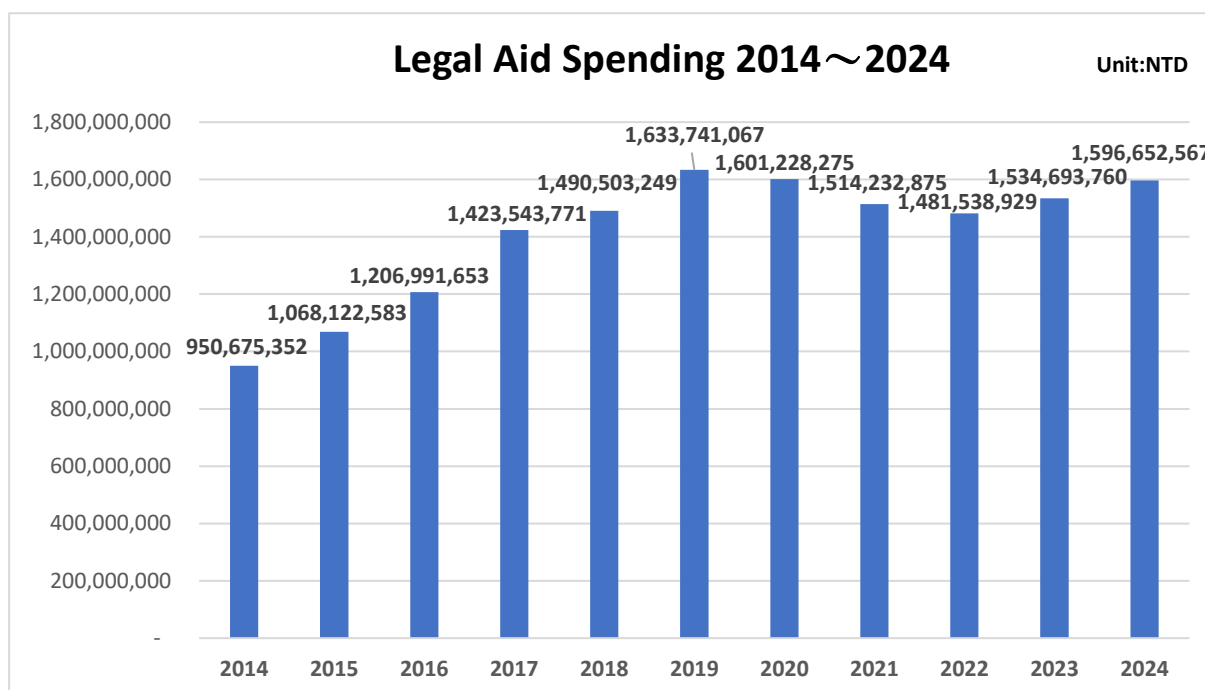


Figure 5: Total Legal Aid Spending in the Past Ten Years

As shown in Figure 5, although the level of the legal aid spending had first been increasing over the past decade, especially after the 2015 Amendment of *the Legal Aid Act*, this trend did not continue after 2020. The decrease in legal aid spending between 2020 and 2022 can be attributed to several factors, including the Judicial Yuan's austerity measures and its diversion of mandatory defence cases, stricter eligibility standards (means and merit tests) under both the MOL and CIP-

commissioned legal aid programmes, the significant impact of COVID-19 during approximately three months in the summer of 2021, and tighter internal compliance audits on legal aid applications, which led to declining approval rates.¹⁰

However, over the past two years, legal aid spending—which also reflects caseload levels to some extent—has reversed course and gradually increased again. Despite a slight decrease in the number of approved general legal aid cases, as shown in Figure 6 (the yellow line at the bottom), the overall rise in legal aid grant applications and legal consultations, a modest increase in commissioned legal aid cases, and the recently commissioned MOI program for tenants have all contributed to this upward trend.

4. Scope, Eligibility and Caseload

4.1 *Scope and Eligibility*

The LAF provides a comprehensive range of legal assistance including public legal education, legal advice, minor assistance (such as legal document drafting) and legal representation in mediation, settlement and litigation. Its service scope also covers a rather wide range of legal matters with only a few exceptions. As detailed in the previous ILAG national reports, most of the criminal, civil, family, and administrative cases can be assisted, unless the nature of the subjects are apparently irrelevant with social law or economically disadvantaged people (e.g. intellectual property claims) or the legal procedures involved is an extraordinary one (e.g. retrials).¹¹ An applicant in principle cannot obtain more than three legal aid grants for legal representation in a year unless his/her application was recognised by the Examination Committee and approved by the presidents of the branch.

While public legal education and legal advice are free services to the general public, the means and merits tests are applied to the applications of legal aid grants for minor assistance and legal representation. In order to make its means test compatible with the rising living standard, the LAF usually increases the disposable income thresholds of the means test for applicants living in different areas year by year.¹² Moreover, in order to facilitate the application procedure, some socially and economically disadvantaged groups can be exempted from the means test. For example, the recipients of low-income or middle-to-low-income benefits, families in hardship, debtors applying for consumer debt clearance, criminal defendants of the mandatory

¹⁰ For more details about the decreasing trend between 2020 and 2022, please see pp.13-14 of the [2023 ILAG national report](#).

¹¹ See pp.9-10 of the [2019 report](#); pp.254-256 of the [2021 report](#).

¹² In terms of the financial standard of the means test in 2022 and 2023, please see the following links:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Zxtbl6oQUm6XOG-7UHlaIPIIAAWYuY-r/view?usp=drive_link
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1scRvc4fGIrQlFPCfl7DjglWeYeizDVsw/view?usp=drive_link

defence cases, etc. The details of the standard and exemptions are listed in the previous ILAG national reports.¹³

Legal aid is also available to non-citizens as long as they reside legally within the Taiwanese border or they meet some exceptional conditions. For instance, they are victims or possible victims in human trafficking cases. Blue-collar foreign labourers and foreign spouses that are in financial difficulties can also be exempted from the means test.

In the past few years, the LAF has not made too many changes in terms of the criteria of service scope and eligibility of the general legal aid funded by the Judicial Yuan, except for the following adjustments:

- In order to better safeguard rights of the victims of crimes and follow the latest amendment of the 'Chapter of Participation in Proceedings by the Victim' in the Code of Criminal Procedure, in terms of legal representation in the court proceedings, LAF has expanded its service scope to cover victims of crimes that are eligible to apply for the above participation by law, on top of the original exceptional limit (i.e., victims with barriers to make a complete statement or those who suffer from sexual offence, human trafficking crimes and serious offences of which the defendants would carry at least three years of sentencing).
- For the better protection of human rights, the LAF specifies that mandatory defence cases undertaken by the LAF can be exempted from the above principle of 'three legal representation cases at most in a year'.
- In order to comply with the recent Constitutional Court Judgment No. 8 (2024) regarding the constitutionality of death penalty cases, the LAF is also planning to amend its regulations to include criminal investigations and third-instance trials of certain specified felony cases within the scope of mandatory defence. Currently, this is only acknowledged through a policy announcement and does not yet have legal binding force.

In terms of changes to eligibility and the scope of special legal aid programmes, the most significant is the relaxation of the MOHW-commissioned programme, which now exempts recipients of disability benefits from means tests. This policy change has clearly led to a doubling or even tripling of case volume since mid-2023.

Moreover, it is worth noting that since August 2024, the Ministry of Interior has commissioned the LAF to provide legal assistance to disadvantaged tenants. In its first

¹³ See pp.10-13 of the [2019 report](#); pp.256-259 of the [2021 report](#).

year, the MOI-commissioned programme will focus solely on legal advice services, with legal aid grant applications set to launch in autumn 2025. Unlike general legal aid and most other commissioned programmes, which thoroughly assess applicants' income and assets through means tests, the MOI-commissioned programme exclusively recognises tenants receiving housing benefits (rental subsidy) and supports them in resolving tenancy-related disputes with landlords.

4.2 Caseload and Case Types

As illustrated in Figure 6 and Table 1, and as stated earlier in section 3.3, the overall case number (220,021) has reached a peak again over the past two years. Legal consultations, legal aid applications, and grants have all seen significant increases. The rise in legal consultations primarily stems from new services introduced by the LAF Call Centre, including the telephone advice service for victims of crime (launched in February 2023), the video-conferencing advice service for gender equality issues and gender-related crimes (introduced in August 2023), and the MOI-commissioned housing telephone advice service for tenants (launched in August 2024).

The surge in legal aid applications and grants has largely been driven by a sharp increase in fraud and debt clearance cases. Commissioned programmes have contributed more to this growth than general legal aid. While case numbers for the MOL and CIP-commissioned programmes have gradually returned to their normal levels, the MOHW-commissioned programme has experienced an extraordinary surge due to the relaxation of means test criteria.

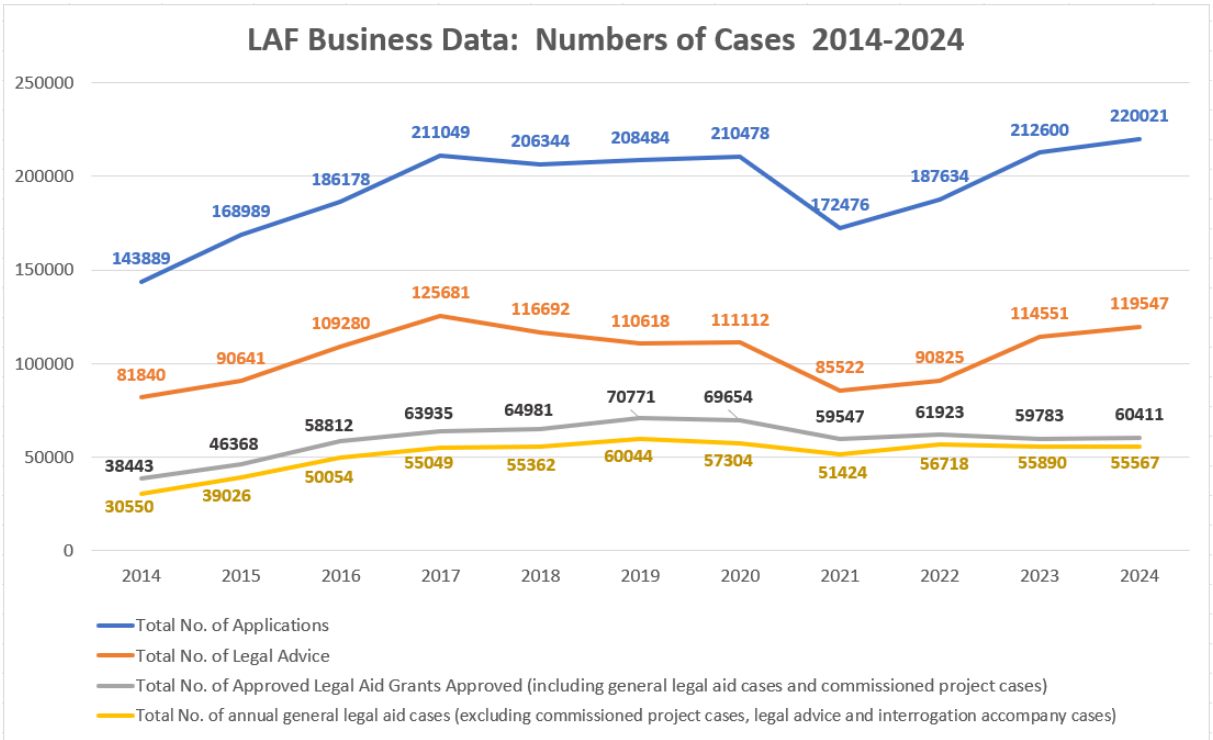


Figure 6: LAF Business Data: Number of Cases 2014-2024

Table 1: Annual Growth Rates of LAF's Cases 2019-2024

Item \ Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total number of annual applications	1.04%	0.96%	-18.06%	8.79%	13.31%	3.49%
Total number of annual legal advice	-5.21%	0.45%	-23.03%	6.20%	26.12%	4.36%
Total number of annual legal aid grants (including commissioned project cases, not including legal advice)	8.91%	-1.58%	-14.51%	3.99%	-3.46%	1.05%
Total number of annual general legal aid cases (excluding commissioned project cases, advice and interrogation accompany cases)	8.45%	-4.56%	-10.26%	10.29%	-1.46%	-0.58%

The case category of legal aid grants of general legal aid and commissioned programmes during 2023~2024 are illustrated respectively as Figure 7 and Figure 8.

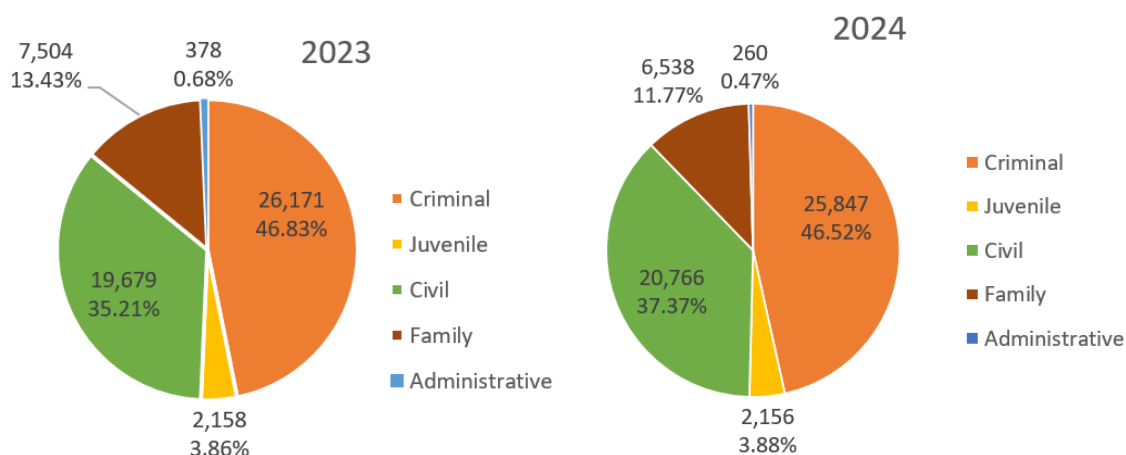


Figure 7: Case Types of General Legal Aid Grants 2023-2024

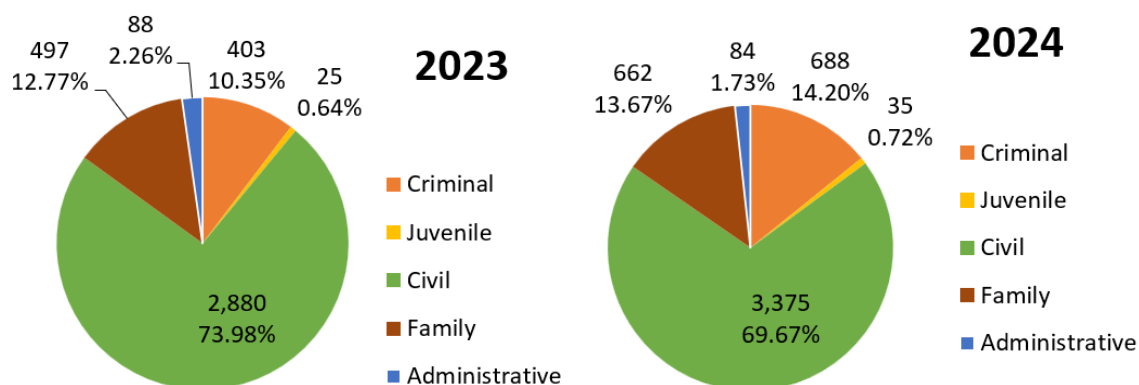


Figure 8: Case Types of Commissioned Legal Aid Grants 2023-2024

5. Quality Assurance

Since its inception, the LAF has developed its own step-by-step quality control system to ensure the quality of legal aid services.

On the one hand, in terms of processing legal aid applications and case management, the LAF continuously monitors and reviews the quality of frontline services provided by its employees through internal controls, bi-annual assessments, a complaint system and mystery shoppers (model clients).

On the other hand, the LAF must also ensure the quality of the legal services after legal aid is granted. In terms of the private lawyers that undertake the vast majority of legal aid cases, the LAF has employed multiple strategies and approaches to ensure their service quality. These include: 1) *ex-post* measures such as a complaint system, customer satisfaction surveys, feedback collected from the courts and prosecutors' offices, case-closure audits, the peer review mechanism (of limited scope); 2) *ex-ante* screening requirements for entry qualifications and case assignment; and 3) a wide range of continuous professional training courses. These have been detailed in the previous ILAG national reports.¹⁴

The LAF Complaint and Attorneys Evaluation Systems

Once a legal aid lawyer's conduct has been detected as suspicious through the multiple *ex-post* measures, the LAF would first proceed with the investigation of the complaint (whether the complaint is raised by legal aid clients or self-detected through various measures) by the LAF branches. The number of and results from complaint investigations against legal aid lawyers in the past few years are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Numbers and Results of the Complaints Investigation on Legal Aid Lawyers

Year	Disciplinary Actions			No Disciplinary Decisions	Withdrawals/ Case Merge	Under Investigation (at the end of the Year)	Total
	Suspension of Case Assignment and Transfer to the LAF Attorneys' Evaluation Committee	Suspension of Case Assignment	Asked for Improvement				
2020	10	38	27	49	9	20	153
2021	9	47	37	54	8	19	174
2022	11	54	51	74	21	27	238
2023	9	52	50	112	23	29	275
2024	6	25	31	113	23	18	216

Whenever the LAF branches suspend the investigated lawyer's right to receive case assignment and consider the circumstances of the violation to require termination of legal aid work or further disciplinary actions according to [the Attorney Regulation Act](#), they can transfer the case to the Legal Aid Attorneys' Evaluation Committee at the LAF head office. This committee involves a group of legal professionals including lawyers, a prosecutor representative, a judge representative, and law professors. After more in-depth and comprehensive investigation and a face-to-face hearing with the

¹⁴ See pp.16-19 of the [2019 report](#); pp.261-263 of the [2021 report](#).

investigated lawyer, the committee can make any of the following disciplinary decisions if required: 1) ask for improvement; 2) reduction or suspension of case assignment for three years at most; or 3) dismissal from legal aid work.

Wherever the investigated legal aid lawyer's misconduct is confirmed serious enough to have violated laws and ethics by the LAF Attorneys Evaluation Committee, the LAF will transfer the case to the national Attorney Disciplinary Commission and request disciplinary action in accordance with *the Attorney Regulation Act*. In the past few years, the LAF has strengthened its investigation into lawyers' service quality. The types and numbers of disciplinary actions for the legal aid lawyers are summarised in Table 3. In order to raise the legal aid lawyers' awareness about common mistakes, the LAF has also produced caution and training materials using case studies to clarify the disciplinary standards.

**Table 3: Types and Numbers of Disciplinary Actions
Made by the LAF Attorneys' Evaluation Committee**

Year	Ask for Improvements	Reduction of Case Assignment	Suspension of Case Assignment	Dismissal from legal aid work	Transfer to Attorney Disciplinary Commission
2020	7	0	11	9	6
2021	4	0	21	8	8
2022	3	0	22	3	4
2023	0	6	22	5	11
2024	4	0	11	10	7

Attempts at Peer Review

As for quality control for the casework staff attorneys, the mechanism of peer review has been applied since 2015. In the last quarter of each year, a staff attorney evaluation committee (including the deputy CEO and several external legal professionals) is organised. The committee members review the selected case files of each staff attorney and assess the quality of their services annually.

It is also worth noting that in 2024, the LAF organised two separate panels to experiment with peer review for private legal aid lawyers in the areas of serious criminal defence and consumer debt. The LAF has enlisted lawyers with a high number of cases in these fields to retrieve case files, which were then peer-reviewed by lawyers recognised as outstanding in their respective specialties. The primary goal is to establish standards for future peer reviews while also assessing the current professional practices of legal aid lawyers in these fields.

Interestingly, while the review committee for consumer debt cases has reached a consensus on review standards, the review committee for serious criminal defence appears to be struggling to formulate uniform criteria. This also reflects the lack of a consistent professional standard among Taiwanese lawyers in practice.

Training Courses

The LAF has consistently conducted training courses on various topics for its employees and legal aid lawyers to enhance their cultural sensitivity, awareness of disadvantaged groups, knowledge of legislative amendments, and professional skills. Online training, being cost-efficient, has gradually become the preferred choice for more legal professionals following COVID-19. The LAF has also become more proactive in recording lectures, encouraging speakers to be filmed and to authorize their content for training materials, thereby maximizing the benefits of repeated future use.

To accommodate diverse learning needs, the LAF offers training through multiple formats, including online sessions, on-site classes, and recorded videos, covering a wide range of legal education and training topics for lawyers. In 2023, a total of 68 training sessions were completed, increasing to 78 in 2024. The topics covered a wide range of subjects, including new types of consumer debt, housing disputes, the Condominium Administration Act, medical disputes, family law issues related to the rights of minors and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, labour law, citizen judge proceedings, protection of victims' rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the newly enacted Mental Health Act, restorative justice, cultural conflicts involving Indigenous peoples, legal issues arising from overstayed foreign nationals, and prison human rights.

6. Public Legal Education

On account of the disadvantaged groups' unawareness of legal rights and legal aid, the LAF has enthusiastically reached out to the public, especially the LAF's target clients, through a variety of public legal education events and promotional initiatives.

Each year, the LAF head office, its 22 branches, and the Legal Centre for Indigenous Peoples collectively hold over 1,500 promotional and public legal education events. The venues and contents of these events were detailed in the previous ILAG national reports.¹⁵ In both 2023 and 2024, the number of events increased to 1,826, returning to pre-COVID-19 levels. Currently, the greatest challenge for promotional and educational events lies in prisons and detention centres, where more conservative and

¹⁵ See pp.19-20 of the [2019 report](#); p.263 of the [2021 report](#).

stringent monitoring measures have been in place since the outbreak of COVID-19.

In addition to events, the LAF has employed very diverse approaches to promote legal aid and has introduced ways to access legal assistance. These have included printed multilingual leaflets and pamphlets, publications, video clips, multimedia advertisements, broadcasting programmes, official social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc. It has also combined a variety of self-developed innovative ways such as board games, comic books, and theatre plays to deliver campus and public legal education. More details have been described in the previous national reports.¹⁶

7. Alternative Sources of Legal Services

In addition to the comprehensive legal assistance provided by the LAF, Taiwan also has other small-scale publicly funded legal services. Most of these services primarily offer general legal advice, either face-to-face or via telephone, and are chiefly provided by local authorities. As for the specialist legal assistance targeting specific client groups or legal problems, most of them are more small-scaled and funded by government funding from the competent authorities. Some examples and details have been given in previous ILAG national reports.¹⁷

In recent years, as legal regulations have become more comprehensive across various emerging issues—and as legal assistance has, in some cases, become a statutory requirement—there has been a growing need for specialised legal services in these areas. These include transitional justice, workplace and school gender equality, sexual harassment, financial consumer disputes, and whistleblowing for public interest, amongst others. Some competent authorities have established legal advice services and, for eligible cases, even provide legal representation, either through in-house staff or by outsourcing to private lawyers or NGOs. A few have also approached the LAF to explore potential collaboration.

It is also worth noting that one of the other structured statutory organisations providing legal assistance alongside non-legal services is the Association for Victim Support (AVS). Following the major amendment to the Crime Victim Rights Protection Act, which was promulgated in February 2023 and became fully effective in January 2024, the AVS has expanded its organisational capacity to accommodate its broadened service scope. It has collaborated with over 200 private lawyers to offer legal consultations, document drafting, and legal representation.

¹⁶ See pp.20-21 of the [2019 report](#); p.264 of the [2021 report](#).

¹⁷ See pp.22-24 of the [2019 report](#); pp.265-266 of the [2021 report](#).

8. Holistic Legal Services

To better address the complex legal issues faced by LAF clients—often compounded by socio-economic, medical, and psychological factors—strengthening external partnerships, particularly with non-legal professionals, has always been a key development strategy for the LAF.

Several examples of holistic services that the LAF has engaged in have already been detailed in previous ILAG national reports. These services can be categorized into three main models: (1) the second-tier support model, (2) the one-stop shop model, and (3) the integrated services network model. Over the past two years, these three models have continued to evolve, fostering stronger collaboration between the LAF and its service partners to provide more comprehensive support for shared clients.

For example, some of the LAF's video-conferencing advice clinics have been set up in one-stop social and public service centres at the request of LAF's partners. These initiatives attempt to integrate elements of both the one-stop shop model and the second-tier support model. In addition to serving end clients, these services also aim to assist social workers and other community supporters by providing timely legal guidance.

Regarding the integrated services network model, the Consumer Debt Legal Aid Programme, LAF's collaborations with disabled persons' organisations (DPOs), and its partnership with the Association for Victim Support (AVS) have all been operating steadily. These efforts include regular liaison meetings for daily operations and strategic planning for law reform, cross-staff training, and routine cross-referrals in service delivery.

9. UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.3

Although Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations, it has actively embraced the spirit and agenda of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16.3: "Promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all." The Legal Aid Foundation (LAF) plays a crucial role in advancing this initiative in Taiwan. The following two examples highlight the LAF's key efforts in this regard over the past two years.

Reforms to the Mental Health Act

One of the most significant legal reforms in recent years affecting legal aid and its targeted clients has been the amendment of the *Mental Health Act*. Passed and promulgated in December 2022, this amendment is regarded as the most important

advancement in mental health law reform in the past 15 years. It was introduced to align with international human rights instruments—such as the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*—and to address calls for a stronger social safety net and enhanced human rights protections. The amendment was summarised in the *2023 ILAG Report*.¹⁸

While most provisions of the amendment took effect in December 2024, the chapter on compulsory community treatment and involuntary hospitalisation—which mandates designated psychiatric medical institutions to report cases to the competent authority and seek necessary legal assistance from the LAF—has yet to receive an official implementation date. Over the past two years, the LAF has been working to strengthen its service capacity to meet the anticipated legal aid needs for compulsory hospitalisation and emergency placement proceedings.

During this period, the LAF has actively participated in mental health law mock trials across various locations. Additionally, its branches in jurisdictions preparing to establish dedicated mental health courts have been recruiting lawyers interested in handling these cases and providing specialised training.

Since late 2024, the LAF has officially undertaken a new sub-programme commissioned by the *Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW)* to support aspects of the *Mental Health Act*. In preparation, the LAF head office has been developing referral procedures for hospitals and courts while enhancing its case management system to accommodate these functions.

However, preparations within the MOHW and the *Judicial Yuan's* court system—such as building mental health court infrastructure, compiling and training lay judge lists, and other related measures—remain incomplete. As a result, the official timeline for the implementation of compulsory community treatment and involuntary hospitalisation remains uncertain.

The MOI-Commissioned Programme: Safeguarding Housing Rights

Over the past decade, rapidly rising housing prices have significantly increased the rental burden, making it difficult for many families who rely on renting to maintain stable housing. Additionally, tenants continue to face weak legal protections and high rental costs. In response to these challenges, the *Rental Housing Market Development and Regulation Act* and its related regulations were enacted in 2018 to protect the right to adequate housing, create a robust and transparent rental market, safeguard the rights of both landlords and tenants, and support the development of the rental housing

¹⁸ See pp.23-24 of the [2023 ILAG Report](#).

service industry. Furthermore, the law authorises competent authorities to provide rental dispute resolution and advisory services, aiming to improve rental relationships and reduce conflicts.

To further advance housing justice, the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) commissioned the LAF in 2024 to implement the Legal Aid Programme for Residential Tenancy Disputes through an administrative mandate. Aligned with SDG 16.3, this programme moves toward professionalisation and specialisation, providing legal assistance for tenancy disputes and other legal issues arising from rental relationships. Given the ongoing modifications to the LAF's Case Management System, the programme was structured in two phases: telephone-based legal consultations were introduced first, followed by legal aid grants for document drafting and representation, which are anticipated to begin in autumn 2025. During the programme's initial phase, from August 1 to December 31, 2024, a total of 2,145 intake calls were handled, with security deposit disputes, early lease terminations, and property repairs being the most common concerns.

10. Conclusion: Challenges for the LAF

This report has summarised the recent developments of the LAF and the key topics it has been addressing. By presenting data and analysing underlying factors, it has offered insights into the environment and challenges the LAF faces. To conclude, this section will outline these challenges as well as potential future opportunities and directions for the organisation.

Over the past decade, numerous judicial and legal reforms have significantly impacted the legal aid system. More recently, legal reforms aimed at protecting citizens' rights have frequently drawn upon previous legislative examples, incorporating legal aid directly into legislation—some even explicitly naming the Legal Aid Foundation (LAF). As a result, various central government authorities have continued to explore the possibility of administrative commissions. This trend reflects the increasing specialisation of Taiwan's legal system and the strengthening of the rule of law in recent years.

In response to these developments—including new laws and commissioned programmes—the LAF has actively worked to adapt its legal aid regulations and operational procedures. These efforts include adjustments to lawyers' remuneration, continuous professional training on new legal reforms and commissioned programmes, recruitment of legal aid lawyers specialising in emerging areas, and revisions to case assignment policies. These initiatives aim to ensure that legal aid continues to function effectively and maintain high standards within the evolving legal landscape. However,

these reforms have also introduced, and will continue to bring, more complex cases into the legal aid system. Yet, the LAF's human resources have not grown proportionally with its expanding caseload. Additionally, all necessary adjustments must be completed before new initiatives take effect. As Taiwan transitions into a more 'law-thick' society, managing increasing legal aid demands while ensuring adequate resource allocation and quality assurance has become a growing challenge for the LAF, its staff, and legal aid lawyers.

Beyond the rising complexity and uncertainty in service delivery, heightened oversight from various government agencies—including the Judicial Yuan, the Legislative Yuan, and the National Audit Office under the Control Yuan—along with evolving legal requirements, has added pressure to internal management. This has led to an organisational culture that prioritises uniform legal compliance over flexibility and case-specific adjustments. However, communication gaps between the head and branch offices sometimes result in inconsistencies in legal interpretations and operational practices across branches. Establishing nationwide protocols that are both understandable and effective—while considering geographic, client, and case diversity without compromising the rights of disadvantaged clients—is a pressing challenge for the LAF. Overcoming these barriers requires significant time and effort to ensure alignment across the organisation.

Additionally, in February 2024, a nationwide rotation of executive secretaries, who manage branch offices, was implemented. This reform is intended to enhance dialogue among branch managers and staff, fostering a deeper understanding of regulations, as interpretations and implementations have traditionally varied between branches. However, it is undeniable that this transition has initially resulted in increased communication and management costs, requiring time for managers and staff to adapt. Despite these short-term challenges, this reform is expected to facilitate long-term experience-sharing within the foundation, refine discussions on regulatory frameworks, and ultimately strike a balance between legal compliance and the flexibility needed to meet individual case needs.

Finally, while the LAF celebrated its 20th anniversary in the summer of 2024, the organisation now faces challenges related to an aging workforce, outdated office spaces, and obsolete equipment. In 2024 and 2025, seven branches and even a small division of the head office have been carrying out office relocation plans, including site searches, procurement, refurbishment, and relocation. These administrative procedures are time-consuming and labour-intensive, requiring considerable effort from branch staff. Despite no significant increase in human resources, these challenges demand simultaneous efforts—advancing next-generation infrastructure while ensuring the continuity of daily operations.

This dilemma extends to the development of the Generation-3 new business management software systems. Although the LAF recognises the necessity of upgrading its systems to enhance quality and efficiency for staff, legal aid clients, and lawyers, insufficient resource investment risks leading to piecemeal functional upgrades rather than a comprehensive, systematic approach to planning and process reengineering.

As Taiwan continues to refine its legal framework, the LAF plays a critical role in ensuring equitable access to justice. While facing evolving legal demands, increasing complexity in legal aid application administration and casework, and resource limitations, the LAF remains committed to adapting, innovating, and improving its services. The challenges outlined above highlight both the difficulties and opportunities ahead—from legal system transformations to organisational shifts and technological advancements. It is hoped that, through continuous effort, the LAF can further strengthen its role as a cornerstone in safeguarding justice and protecting the rights of the most vulnerable members of society.