

Consultancy for a benchmark study on tools for the management of legal aid actions

- **Project: Benchmark study for the implementation of a digital tool for the management of legal aid at ASF and its partners**
- **Application deadline: 1st of August 2025**
- **Start: 14th of August 2025**

1. Our organisation

Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) is an international NGO, headquartered in Brussels, whose objective is to contribute to the achievement of a just and equitable society, in which the law serves the most vulnerable groups. ASF has permanent missions in Tunisia, DRC, CAR, Uganda, Niger and Morocco. ASF aims to promote access to justice and guarantee the protection of human rights, particularly for people in vulnerable situations. ASF seeks to empower rights-holders by setting up accessible legal aid services, to enable quality care to be provided by legal aid providers, and to advocate for a legal environment that respects national and international standards.

2. Presentation of the project

Legal aid represents a central pillar of ASF's work and is integrated in the majority of its projects (which touch on such varied themes as transitional justice, preventive detention, the protection of human rights defenders, business & human rights, and the protection of the human rights of vulnerable populations). It does so through various mechanisms such as legal advice, legal clinics, and judicial or extra-judicial assistance. ASF carries out its legal aid activities in close collaboration with local actors, in particular specialised lawyers, paralegals and civil society organisations.

Despite the strategic importance of these interventions, the current system for managing legal aid remains largely manual and unstructured. It is based on a three-stage process: lawyers or civil society actors fill in paper forms for each consultation, the data is then entered manually into Excel or equivalent files, then compiled by hand for monitoring, analysis or reporting purposes. This approach gives rise to a number of major difficulties: data is often incomplete or scattered, a limited usability of the information collected, it is impossible to ensure structured qualitative monitoring of legal work, and the administrative workload on the teams is heavy, to the detriment of substantive work. These constraints compromise both operational efficiency and the quality of the services provided.

Faced with the limitations of the manual system, some ASF offices have tried to overcome these constraints by adopting the KoboToolbox software, an open source tool for creating customised forms for data collection. However, this solution also has significant limitations. The tool is not designed for this type of activity. It cannot be used to track a legal file over time, nor can it be updated. In addition, the widespread adoption of Kobo remains hampered by a persistent digital divide within the teams and certain local partners, as well as a reluctance to use new digital tools, limiting its scope as a cross-disciplinary solution.

At present, ASF teams have two complementary needs in terms of digital tools. The study will need to determine whether it is feasible to have a single tool capable of covering these two functions or whether it will be necessary to adopt two separate tools:

1. Monitoring legal aid as a project activity (project management, Monitoring & Evaluation - M&E):

Ability to collect, centralise and analyse data relating to legal aid activities carried out within the framework of projects (for example: number of consultations, type of disputes handled, profile of beneficiaries, places of intervention, etc.).

The tool must facilitate the reporting to head office, donors and other partners, and enable the monitoring of performance or results indicators included in the logical frameworks of the projects

The tool must enable longitudinal monitoring of the beneficiary's path, enabling qualitative monitoring of the files (in particular, diligence of care), and possibly generate documents or reports specific to each case.

2. Individual monitoring of legal cases (Legal Case Management)

The aim here is to ensure detailed and scalable management of each legal case, enabling lawyers and ASF to monitor the history of interventions, case documents, deadlines, hearings, judicial or extra-judicial decisions, and any information relevant to the proper handling of the beneficiary's case.

The study will thus have to examine whether a single tool can integrate both a macro dimension (overall monitoring of activities) and a micro dimension (individual case management), or whether these two needs call for separate but interoperable technological solutions.

The present study is supported by the D4D (Digital for Development) Fund, set up by ngo-federatie, ACODEV and Fiabel to support their member organisations in digital innovation for development. The D4D Fund supports initiatives to design, test, implement or scale-up innovative digital solutions, focusing on a number of key principles such as understanding the existing ecosystem, re-using and improving existing solutions, involving users in the design, inclusion, sustainability, ethical data management, etc.

3. Objectives of the consultancy

3.1 General objective of the consultancy

The objective of the consultancy is to carry out a comparative study (benchmarking) to guide ASF in selecting or designing a digital or hybrid legal aid management tool adapted to the needs of ASF and its partners in the various countries where ASF carries out legal aid activities (DRC, Morocco, Tunisia, CAR, etc.). This study will lay the solid foundations for a sustainable solution in the management of legal aid, by remedying the limitations of the current system based on manual and non-interoperable processes.

The expected results of the study are:

- A detailed analysis of the needs of the ASF teams and partners, taking into account the operational realities (including the digital divide) and the different contexts in which ASF and its partners deploy legal aid, as well as the different modalities through which legal aid is undertaken by ASF and its partners
- An in-depth review and comparison of the tools currently in use, both internally within ASF and externally in the sector
- A detailed mapping of the relevant digital and hybrid solutions available on the market
- Concrete, operational recommendations
- Recommendations specifically adapted to ASF's needs and context

3.2 Specific objectives of the consultancy

- Take stock of the different ways in which ASF provides legal aid. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the diversity of internal practices in order to be able to make realistic and appropriate recommendations in terms of digital tools, which take into account the specificities and real needs of the field. To analyse, within ASF, the tools currently used internally to monitor legal aid, by carrying out a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- To identify existing external digital solutions (benchmark), their strengths, limitations, costs, accessibility, interoperability with other tools already used within ASF and technical requirements
- Make clear recommendations on the most appropriate options for ASF: in-house development, adaptation of an existing tool or hybrid solution
- Propose a realistic transition plan to the future solution, taking into account sustainability, data security and digital inclusion

4. Proposed methodological approach

The consultants will propose a work plan that needs to include at least three complementary phases, articulated around a participative and comparative approach, and oriented towards formulating concrete recommendations:

Phase 1 – Internal Analysis (SWOT)

This first stage aims to draw up a detailed inventory of the tools, methods and practices currently used by ASF to monitor legal aid in its various offices, with particular attention paid to the realities on the ground.

The consultant will:

- **Produce an overview of the form that legal aid and judicial assistance takes** in the various ASF projects (types of services, profiles of service providers, intervention formats, temporality of monitoring, links with other services, etc.) in order to formulate realistic and relevant recommendations.
- A **mapping of existing tools** (manual, digital or hybrid), documenting their actual use, frequency of use, the actors involved, the constraints and associated needs;
- A **SWOT analysis** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) to assess the relevance, limitations and prospects for development of these tools, by comparing them with operational requirements and feedback from teams in the field;
- **Targeted interviews** with users (legal experts, lawyers, project managers, M&E/IT teams) in order to integrate their experiences, expectations and possible reluctance.

Phase 2 – External benchmark

This phase will involve identifying and analysing existing digital or hybrid tools outside of ASF that are already being used in similar contexts, in particular:

- Law firms, legal clinics, bar associations, specialist NGOs, or legal advice and legal aid structures;
- Open source, commercially licensed or customised legal case management tools

The analysis should focus on:

- The **proposed functionalities** (case management, qualitative monitoring, integration with other systems, data security, etc.);

- The **acquisition, training and maintenance costs**, as well as the associated technical requirements;
- The **accessibility** of the tool for teams and partners with a diverse digital profile;
- The **tool's adaptability** to ASF's intervention contexts and the conditions for sustainability.

Phase 3 – Drawing up a guidance document

Based on the findings of the first two phases, the consultant will produce a **guidance document** setting out the main options for ASF, taking into account internal needs, realities on the ground, technical capabilities and D4D principles.

This phase will also include a **presentation of the results** to the ASF teams for collective validation of the recommendations.

5. Provisional calendar

The consultancy will cover a period of 5 months:

- Month 1: Recruitment and framing of the study
- Month 2 : Internal SWOT analysis
- Month 3 : External benchmark
- Month 4: Drafting of recommendations and scenario(s)
- Month 5: Presentation of results and final validation

6. Deliverables

1. A **guidance document** that included:

- An overview of the forms of legal aid and judicial assistance
- A cartography of existing tools
- The results of the SWOT analysis and the interviews
- An external benchmark of relevant digital (or hybrid) tools
- Substantiated recommendations on the main options available to ASF

2. **Monthly follow-up meetings** will be organised with the ASF team in charge of the present study in order to ensure food collaboration and dialogue

3. A **final restitution** of the results of the study

7. Desired profile for the consultant(s)

- Proven experience in conducting comparative or benchmarking studies in the development or legal aid sector.
- Good knowledge of legal aid and legal case management tools and of the challenges of digitalisation in NGOs.
- Proven skills in collecting, analysing and summarising qualitative and quantitative data.
- Ability to produce clear, usable and decision-oriented deliverables.
- Field experience, particularly in Central Africa, is an advantage.
- Fluency (oral and written) in French and English required.

8. Desired profile for the consultant(s)

Applications must be sent in English (or French) with the subject heading: '**Consultant: benchmarking study legal aid tool**'

No later than: 1st August 2025

To the following addresses: tlerosier@asf.be and adandoy@asf.be

Each application must include:

- A **CV** of the consultant or team of consultants
- A **covering letter** (max. 1 page)
- An **extract from a relevant publication or report** (max. 10 pages)
- A **technical and methodological proposal**
- A **financial proposal**

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

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