

TI IPP STRONGG IN NEPAL

Social Accountability and Integrity in Nepal

Established in 1996, Transparency International Nepal (TI Nepal) is part of the Transparency International global coalition against corruption. The TI Movement brings together chapters operating in more than 100 countries worldwide with an international Secretariat based in Berlin, working towards a shared vision: a world free of corruption.

With support from the *TI Indo-Pacific Partnership for Strong, Transparent, Responsive & Open Networks for Good Governance (TI IPP STRONGG) 2020 – 2023*, TI Nepal aims to engage a wide range of anti-corruption actors, including citizens, civil society organisations, public institutions and private sector entities, to enhance accountable governance at all levels and in all sectors of society. Through its network of Affiliated Organizations and alliances with 19 civil society organizations, the chapter expects to reach 70 000 people under the *Together for Social Accountability and Integrity (T-SAI)* project.

Project At A Glance

- Topics of focus:
Citizen engagement through social accountability mechanisms & Transparency in public procurements.
- Project timeframe:
15 June 2020 – 31 August 2023
- Locations & project outreach:
Across up to 6 districts of Nepal, reaching about 70 000 people in total.
- Budget: 148,024 EUR



TI Nepal ALAC services provide free legal assistance to citizens / Picture: © Transparency International Nepal

BACKGROUND

In recent years, Nepal has improved its score in the [Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index \(CPI\)](#), rising from 27 points in 2015 to 34 in 2019. Nepal has made slight progress against some of the indicators relating to fundamental aspects of good governance, but its score on balance remains poor, and corruption remains a significant issue. The country suffers from rampant corruption in public service delivery, which prevents citizens, especially vulnerable people and communities, to benefit uninterruptedly from basic services in a fair and transparent manner. According to [Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer – Asia 2020 \(GCB\)](#), 58% of Nepalese citizens thought that corruption levels had increased in the 12 months prior to the survey.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Objectives

1. Increase anti-corruption awareness and social demand for accountability among diverse groups, particularly women and youth.
2. Promote integrity standards and good governance practices among civil society organisations and businesses.
3. Advocate for accountable governance in the public sector through civil society monitoring and policy change.

Main Activities

Activities under this project include:

- Reaching out to vulnerable groups through information sessions on public service delivery and **social accountability tools** such as public hearings and social audits. TI Nepal's helpdesks and ALAC provide **free legal advice** to victims and witnesses of corruption.
- Raising students' awareness on **anti-corruption values** as part of the curriculum and educational activities on various integrity issues.
- Improving **budget tracking** in the education sector through citizen engagement in budget monitoring.
- Encouraging businesses and NGOs to improve **internal governance standards and practices**.
- Conducting research and advocacy for policy change based on international commitments (SDGs, UNCAC) and supporting academic **research on the healthcare and disaster management sectors**. The experiences and views of victims of corruption, including in the context of the pandemic, will be collected.
- Leading public campaigns for transparency and accountability in **public procurement standards** for infrastructure investments and pandemic management.



TI Nepal supports people and communities that are typically not reached by public services and empower citizens by giving them the right tools to hold their leaders and institutions accountable.

TI Nepal's response to the COVID crisis

TI Nepal's helpdesks and Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) provide free legal advice on corruption-related grievances to citizens, including COVID-19 related complaints. The chapter is also incorporating their views into research and advocacy products to voice their concerns. TI Nepal's work on public procurements is essential in ensuring transparency in COVID-related procurements.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS & KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - 2022

In 2022, TI Nepal continued to raise awareness around corruption and integrity issues by engaging nearly 1,500 people from civil society, public institutions, and the private sector in anti-corruption initiatives. The chapter also called on the authorities to address citizens' grievances and advocated for transparency in public procurement and improvements in public service delivery. Key highlights for 2022 include:

- Coordination with high-level government officials, chief of service providers, women groups, prominent figures and stakeholders to discuss the development and implementation of policies prioritising and empowering women regarding service delivery. The chapter also initiated contact with women's organisations and members of a marginalised group to raise awareness, particularly around service delivery processes and existing laws.
- Engaging youth in anti-corruption initiatives. An essay contest on integrity and accountability was held among students of 14 districts, and veteran journalists and professors gave lectures to undergraduate and graduate students on integrity and accountability.
- Help desk and Mobile ALACs were conducted at ward offices, followed by public hearings to collect and address grievances on the spot as well as publicise ward offices plans and budget. The Dakshinkali Municipality ward 02 office immediately placed a missing citizen charter after TI Nepal's initiative.
- Discussions on using social accountability tools in 14 districts were held with the District Administration Office and public service providers. Many service providers placed missing tools after the discussion. The chapter also organised meetings with the provincial government to improve and effectively implement public procurement policies.



Public Hearing co-hosted by TI-Nepal and Dakshinkali Municipality Ward 02 office/ © Transparency International Nepal



Discussion on public procurement policies in coordination with the provincial government/ © Transparency International Nepal

- Inspected the ongoing reconstruction of school buildings and held meetings with concerned authorities and stakeholders to draw attention to identified issues. Listed discrepancies were forwarded to concerned authorities by letter.
- Interaction with the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry to discuss the code of conduct and encourage fair business practices and social responsibility. Moreover, the chapter met with affiliated organisations and CSOs to discuss governance and integrity at the regional level and encourage partnership and coalition for internal governance standards.
- Conducted interactive events with government representatives, experts and stakeholders on the issue of integrity, accountability and anti-corruption to mark major events like Anti-Corruption Day and TI Nepal's anniversary.

- Contracts signed and renewed with FM Radios and TV channels to broadcast awareness messages, Public Service Announcements on service delivery, and invite the public to report cases of irregularities or service delays.
- Information, education and communication materials were printed and distributed. TI Nepal also placed a hoarding board in a visible place displaying messages of social accountability and integrity and encouraging citizens to register complaints through the ALAC hotline.



Hoarding board displaying anti-corruption messages/ © TI Nepal

ENSURING TRANSPARENCY IN PUBLIC PROJECTS

TI Nepal has been broadcasting radio messages inviting citizens to report irregularities and delays in publicly funded projects. In 2022, the chapter received a complaint about the construction of the Banskarka Secondary School, Dhading, reporting that the contractor who undertook the project walked away without any hearing, stating the project had been completed. In addition, authorities were not disclosing relevant information about the project. Through correspondence with the principal, school management committee and ward chair, TI Nepal found out that the construction of the school was still incomplete. The chapter gathered necessary evidence and brought this to the attention of the Education Department of Rural Municipality office. The office followed up with the school, requesting relevant information such as the date of agreement for the project, allocated budget, copy of the work completion report, contact information of involved chiefs and other necessary details. TI Nepal also wrote a letter to the Education Development and Co-ordination Unit, which assured that they would solve the issue after discussing it with locals and concerned stakeholders. Later, TI Nepal contacted the chairperson of the School Management Committee and learned that the contractor had returned and started the remaining work. Moreover, the client who submitted the issue through the hotline called TI Nepal and expressed appreciation for the support provided throughout the process.

LOOKING AHEAD

Building on initiatives that were started in previous years of the project, in 2023, the chapter will:

- Continue the engagement with marginalised, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, as well as with women, pandemic victims, students, and youth. Liaise with relevant authorities to seek redressal.
- Co-ordinate with colleges and hold integrity lectures for the students and organise a speech contest.
- Continue the help desk and grievance collection and seek redressal, public hearings and social audits.
- Establish and promote public accountability at the district- and rural-level offices through billboards, information boards, and citizen charters, as well as on social media, the web, and digital media.
- Inspect ongoing school building construction and provide feedback based on observation.
- Interact with the provincial government on public procurement and disaster management.
- Engage with the federation, business community, and chamber of commerce to encourage fair business practices.
- Interact with NGOs to discuss the code of conduct and internal governance standards.
- Staff visits, discussions and sharing practices with other National Chapters.
- Offer internship opportunities and thesis support to university students.