

TI IPP STRONGG IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

Citizens Holding Power to Account in Solomon Islands

Founded in 2003, Transparency Solomon Islands (TI Solomon Islands) 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 Solomon Islands aims to enhance accountable governance and public participation in anti-corruption. Through the *Citizens Holding Power to Account* project, the chapter advocates towards improving citizens' understanding of democratic processes, their political, legal and civil rights including the protection of civil society space, voice and activism against corrupt conduct and practice calling for anti-corruption reforms. The programme also supports the chapter's overall strategy by providing access to core funding supporting the chapter's on-going advocacy.

Project At A Glance

- Topics of focus:
Empowering communities through awareness raising on civic engagement and good governance & Leading a strong anti-corruption voice in the country.
- Project timeframe:
1 February 2020 – 31 December 2023
- Locations & project outreach:
Across the country, in both urban and rural areas.
- Budget: 821,709 EUR



*TI Solomon Islands conducts outreach and awareness activities on democratic principles and good governance
Picture: © Transparency Solomon Islands*

BACKGROUND

Solomon Islands' score in [Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index \(CPI\)](#) remains below 50 and has dropped by two points in the last year, from 44 in 2018 to 42 in 2019, which indicates high levels of perceived corruption in the public sector. Many public officials are alleged to have misused state resources, abused entrusted power and have faced charges of corruption. A few top-ranking officials were convicted under the "conflict of interest offense". Often aid funds and public service are too often seen as opportunities for personal gain by those in positions of entrusted power. The chapter empower citizens and help them raise their concerns regarding these widespread corrupt practices, TI Solomon Islands is the only Civil Society Organisation that reaches out to communities, inform them on their rights and give them the tools to engage in anti-corruption initiatives.

Objectives

1. Inform and empower people, including women, youth, and vulnerable groups, on their rights as citizens to demand accountability from their representatives and actively engage in anti-corruption initiatives.
2. Strengthen and expand national multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks working on anti-corruption.
3. Contribute to policy and legislative reforms with active input from an informed and influential civil society.
4. Strengthen the chapter's foundations to enhance its voice, agency, and access.

Main Activities

Activities under this project include:

- Conducting community **outreach and awareness activities** on democratic principles and processes.
- Providing **free legal advice** to victims and witnesses of corruption and any information required by clients.
- Launching public awareness **campaigns** on corruption-related issues.
- Strengthening and building **partnerships** with the media and other stakeholders to raise awareness and disseminate information on corruption-related issues at the local, national, and international levels, including grand corruption and cross-border corruption issues.
- Providing legal analysis and technical inputs on legislative reforms, particularly on right to information, electoral reforms, political parties integrity, and anti-corruption reforms. This **work on legislation** also includes advocacy around civil society space and protection of journalists.
- **Monitoring the implementation** of key anti-corruption mechanisms through the development of different tools and approaches.
- Enhancing TI Solomon Islands' capacity, sustainability, brand, and partnerships in line with the **chapter's overall strategy**.



Picture: © Transparency Solomon Islands

TI Solomon Islands' response to the COVID crisis

In the current pandemic context, the chapter actively monitors and comments on governance issues related to COVID, regularly calling for transparency and consistency in COVID-related policies, including on the emergency funds awarded to each MP to support the COVID response in their constituencies.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS & KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - 2022

Imposed travel restrictions were lifted around mid-year, allowing international and local travel and enabling Transparency Solomon Islands (TSI) to carry out its face-to-face outreach programmes. In 2022, TI Solomon Islands had to navigate an increasingly challenging political environment, but that did not stop the chapter from voicing its opposition to the new China – Solomon Islands Security Pact and the delay of national general elections. Furthermore, the chapter continued its election observation and community outreach activities.

Key achievements and activities in 2022 include:

- **Political advocacy**

TSI continued to advocate against the security pact with China. TSI organised a live radio broadcast panel discussion for the Youths for Democracy Network (YFDN) to share their views on the security pact, ensuring their voice and concerns were heard. Four Corners ABC, an Australian investigative journalism program, covered the radio panel and uploaded it to their YouTube account. The video has 410.000 views so far (March 2023). The radio broadcast panel discussion was broadcasted on the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Service (SIBC), the country's national radio broadcasting service and the only news service reaching all provinces in the country. Almost 90% of the country's population is based in rural areas with no access to a mobile network and relies on SIBC for their news. TSI also organised a live radio broadcast for the National Council of Women to express their views on the China - Solomon Islands security pact. Another organised SIBC live panel discussion by TSI was on the proposed extension of Parliament.



Four Corners ABC taping the live radio broadcast. Picture: © Transparency Solomon Islands

Advocacy on delaying national general elections: Parliament passed an amendment to the Supreme Law to delay the national general elections, extending the term of parliament from four to five years and allowing the ruling party to stay in power for longer. TSI made several submissions against the Bill to parliament and also cooperated with the YFDN, who submitted their own input to parliament, making it the only youth group to have made such a high-level submission to a Parliamentary Standing Select Committee. TSI also organised a citizens' petition against the Bill, showing the government the support from citizens against the Bill. However, the Bill was tabled in Parliament on 06/09/22, TSI carried out a citizens petition on 07/09/22, and the Bill was passed in Parliament on 08/09/22, bypassing parliamentary mechanisms. As a result of this accelerated policy process, the citizens' petition was not considered by the parliament, but its outcome will be part of TSI's continuous advocacy.

- **Election observation**

Transparency Solomon Islands engaged in several election observation activities throughout the year. In September, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission (SIEC) invited interested organisations to partake in election observation. TSI was the only organisation in Honiara responding to this call. Together with the YFDN, TSI observed the Malaita, West Kwaio Constituency By-Election and Ward 28 Provincial election. Additionally, after a brief observer induction by SIEC, TSI's nine-member team travelled to Malaita Province to observe the West Kwaio By-Election, covering five polling stations. The observation started from the opening of polls to the casting of votes, the close of polling and travelling from West Kwaio Constituency to the Provincial Headquarter to observe the counting of ballots and declaration of the winning candidate. In total, the team covered five polling stations, namely (1) Maa, (2) Kwailatu'u, (3) Bina 1, (4) Bina 2 and (5) Gwaidingale.



The Sunday Star reporting about TSI election observation activities. © The Sunday Star, 25 September 2022

- **Community Outreach**

Together with TSI, YFDN carried out a school and community outreach programme, reaching seven different schools and Tulagi Community in Ngella Province. During these events, TSI and YFDN advocated for good governance, informed youths about their legal rights and encouraged them to speak up on issues of national concern, such as the constitutional amendment extending the term of Parliament, the Solomon Islands Security Pact with China and corruption in the country. During the community outreach at the Tulagi Community in Ngella Province, YFDN and TSI conducted talks on corruption and its effects, citizens' rights and the importance of elections in holding power to account.



The CEO of TSI, Ruth Liloqula, addresses the pupils of Florence Young School. © TI Solomon Islands

- **Infrastructure Corruption Risk Assessment (ICRAT) pilot**

In collaboration with TI Australia, the chapter organised an online workshop to introduce the ICRAT tool to relevant project stakeholders from the government, such as the Solomon Islands Auditor General and the Under Secretary of the Infrastructure Department. Both indicated their support for the project.

- **Providing legal advice to citizens**

TSI provides ongoing free legal advice and support to clients, particularly aggrieved landowners whose natural resources have been subjected to illegal dealings, harvest and ongoing court battles with so-called developers (loggers and miners).

TEACHING THE TOOLS FOR CHANGE

To support young activists from across the country, TI Solomon Islands hosted a week-long Youth Democracy Camp in June 2022. As a result, 20 young people learnt about corruption, the state and the Constitution, legislation governing elections and political parties, and the role of civil society and the media in democracy. The chapter also invited speakers from several government institutions, providing a unique opportunity for young people to interact with government officials they would otherwise be unlikely to meet.

TI Solomon Islands provides ongoing guidance to camp participants, involving them in their community outreach work and supporting their coordination, including through their social media page. This led to Youth Democracy Camp participants forming the Youth for Democracy Network and successfully running their own outreach programme in seven schools and one community, sharing knowledge gained at the camps to communicate with other young people and their families about corruption, rights and national issues.

At the national level, network members voiced their concerns over a secretive security pact with China during a live radio discussion organised by Transparency Solomon Islands and played an important role as election observers when the country's Electoral Commission invited civil society to observe provincial elections. In addition, the network was the only youth group to make a submission to Parliament's Bills and Legislation Committee over the controversial Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2022.

Through the Youth Democracy Camp, an increasing percentage of young Solomon Islanders are coming together to take informed steps towards a transparent and accountable future for their country.

LOOKING AHEAD

Top priorities for TI Solomon Islands in 2023 include:

- Upscale the Youth for Democracy Camps and workshops.
- Outreach and awareness activities, promoting 'Holding Power to Account' in several provinces.
- Start implementing the ICRAT tool.
- Ongoing Clean Election Campaign and monitoring general election deferment.
- Ongoing media monitoring.
- Continue to be a voice for the protection of civil space and activism.



Community outreach in action. © Transparency Solomon Islands