

TI IPP STRONGG IN SRI LANKA

Supporting Good Governance in Sri Lanka

Transparency International Sri Lanka (TI Sri Lanka) has started its operations in 2002. The chapter is part of the Transparency International global coalition against corruption that brings together chapters operating in more than 100 countries worldwide with an international Secretariat based in Berlin.


With support from the *TI Indo-Pacific Partnership for Strong, Transparent, Responsive & Open Networks for Good Governance (TI IPP STRONGG) 2020 – 2023*, TI Sri Lanka is enhancing social demand for accountable governance by citizens, particularly women, youth, and vulnerable groups. The chapter also focuses on strengthening national anti-corruption practices, guidelines, legislation, mechanisms, and institutions. The project interventions as demand-side approaches will result in greater demand for accountability at all levels, across varying segments in the Sri Lankan society, and contribute to strengthening the role of TISL as a mobilizer, social convener, and agenda setter in anti-corruption and good governance.

Project At A Glance

- Topics of focus:
Citizen engagement through social accountability mechanisms & Improved institutional accountability.
- Project timeframe:
1 December 2020 – 31 August 2023
- Locations & project outreach:
Across the country, both in urban and rural areas.
- Budget: 149,896 EUR



Transparency Sri Lanka
Non-profit organisation

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BACKGROUND

Due to political and economic instability that resulted in up and down progress regarding anti-corruption efforts, Sri Lanka's score in [Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index \(CPI\)](#) has remained stagnant in the last years (at 38 points since 2017). Results from [Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer – Asia 2020 \(GCB\)](#) indicate that 8 out of 10 people in Sri Lanka think that corruption levels have either increased (52%) or stayed the same (26%) in the 12 months prior to the survey. According to [TI Sri Lanka's 2019 Corruption Barometer](#), a quarter of respondents find it acceptable to pay bribes to obtain or expedite certain public services. However, TI Sri Lanka has been successful in sizing opportunities to improve the country's governance through advocating for and championing recent anti-corruption legislation, including the Right to Information (RTI), and engaging citizens in powerful social accountability initiatives.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Objectives

1. Strengthen citizens' voice for accountability.
2. Enhance institutional capacity in championing accountability and good governance, both domestically and internationally.
3. Strengthen and develop laws and policies to address anti-corruption at all levels of government with the input of civil society.

Main Activities

Activities under this project include:

- **Further expanding TI Sri Lanka's outreach across the country and engaging citizens in social accountability and educational activities.** The chapter reaches out to women, youth, and vulnerable communities including plantation workers, fishing villages, and internally displaced groups, through targeted mobile clinics and campaigns. This includes disseminating messages that encourage citizens to seek free legal advice from TI Sri Lanka's Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre and helping them to find redress for their grievances. In order to strengthen youth's civic participation, the chapter also develops and promotes an interactive anti-corruption game and enables young people's participation in discussions on good governance values.
- **Advocating for greater accountability of government procurement**, particularly on large infrastructure projects, as well as **increasing engagement on Public Interest Litigation**, and topics including risks associated with **cross-border corruption**.
- **Continuing to champion RTI and other anti-corruption laws.** RTI related activities include widening TI Sri Lanka's RTI Hub network through expanding its partnerships with civil society organisations.
- **Strengthening anti-corruption institutions and mechanisms**, by offering trainings to police officers on key governance tools such as the Victims and Witness Protection framework.



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TI Sri Lanka's response to the COVID crisis

Throughout this project, TI Sri Lanka's Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre services are being catered to address specific issues relating to COVID-19, especially towards vulnerable groups, where communities are disproportionately affected by the pandemic and its impact. In addition, the RTI hub network will help citizens to use RTI as a tool in both accessing information to hold government authorities accountable, and receiving information on any livelihood assistance provided by the government. Advocacy interventions under this project will also go to add to TISL's advocacy on the need to have transparent and accountable mechanisms set up to manage the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS & KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - 2022

In 2022, Sri Lanka faced a major economic and political crisis leading to widespread street protests and unrest. While this impacted the work of Transparency International Sri Lanka, mostly due to a lack of fuel and high inflation, it also led to an increased public interest in anti-corruption work. Citizens started to pay close attention to anti-corruption mechanisms and the negative impacts of corruption on society, resulting in a higher public profile for the chapter's Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC) team and their work. Besides this, TI Sri Lanka also conducted awareness-raising sessions in several remote communities and continued to assist micro-finance victims.

Key highlights in 2022 include:

- **ALAC work**

Transparency International Sri Lanka's ALACs have been effectively running throughout the year. Though constraints were high, primarily due to the lack of fuel in the country and the resulting near-total collapse of public transportation, the chapter's ALAC managed to receive 629 walk-in clients. Cases focused on citizens demanding governmental accountability and included clients who did not receive their legal state pension or were overcharged on government loans. Furthermore, TI Sri Lanka held mobile ALAC clinics throughout the country and followed up with relevant authorities on citizens' complaints about the [Uma Oya project](#), which affects land and water resources, damages the environment, and violates human rights.

Building multi-stakeholder partnerships and networks



Presenting ways of getting involved with TI Sri Lanka's work to the Colombo Lawyer Network
© Picture: TI Sri Lanka

In 2022, TI Sri Lanka built and enhanced its partnerships with multiple actors. The ALAC team partnered with the BAR Association of Sri Lanka and strengthened their connection with the Colombo Lawyer Network, holding workshops to inform them of the work of TI Sri Lanka. This close cooperation will build up the legal capacity of the ALAC and enhance services provided to clients. In addition, TI Sri Lanka started working together with the People's Alliance for Right to Land (PARL), offering combined legal mobile clinics.

The ALAC team also commenced actively working with the Right to Information (RTI) hubs in all districts on raising awareness, strengthening the capacity of the RTI hub coordinators and assisting the RTI hubs in addressing emerging issues in their areas. The chapter conducted an anti-bribery and corruption training for RTI hub representatives and successfully conducted a virtual discussion with RTI Hub partners to assess areas where close collaboration is possible.

- **Assisting micro-finance victims**

TI Sri Lanka continued its work on assisting victims of micro-financing loans. This ranged from supporting victims in their legal matters to working with the Additional Directors of the Legal Aid Commission in all country districts. The chapter also met with the Central Bank, which supervises all micro-finance institutes, to discuss the plight of the micro-finance victims and present solutions to policy issues in this sector while also advocating for penalties for micro-finance institutes.



Talking to micro-finance victims in Kantale.
© Picture: TI Sri Lanka

- **Building the capacity of public officials**

The chapter also continued to collaborate with local authorities to enhance public officials' knowledge of anti-corruption and governance issues through dedicated capacity-building sessions in Matara, Akuessa, and Eravur-Batticalao. During these interactive discussions, participants increased their awareness of Right to Information, anti-bribery and corruption (ABC) issues.



Building the capacity of public officials in Eravur - Batticalao © Picture: TI Sri Lanka



An awareness-raising workshop in Polonnaruwa. © Picture: TI Sri Lanka

- **Awareness-raising sessions**

TI Sri Lanka conducted several awareness-raising sessions throughout the country, covering issues related to corruption, the right to information, and micro-finance, as well as land issues related to temporary entitlements which were received from citizens in war-affected areas. Of the awareness-raising sessions and learning workshops, 80% have been conducted in remote locations where communities have limited access to information and movement.

- **Internal capacity building**

TI Sri Lanka is committed to continued learning for all its staff and thus conducted an all-staff capacity-building workshop on anti-corruption in its office in Colombo in March 2022. Through this programme, the ALAC was able to enhance the staff member's knowledge of anti-corruption, bribery, and sextortion through role plays and group activities. Furthermore, as TI SL has zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the workplace, the ALAC was given detailed information on sexual harassment in the workplace. More than 42 members participated in the programme.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2023, TI Sri Lanka will:

- Continue to work with the RTI Hub network and build connections with other grassroots organisations, including "Vilindu" and PARL Network.
- Develop a youth integrity song and popularise it by partnering with schools and youth networks.
- Engage with marginalised communities, including persons with disabilities, indigenous people, women and young people through ALAC walk-ins and mobile clinics.
- Establish a TI Sri Lanka branch in the Kandy District.
- Expand TI Sri Lanka's network of lawyers.
- Continue the domestic public interest litigation through the ALACs.