

MISSION

SUPPORT THE COLLECTIVE EFFORT TO ERADICATE CORRUPTION IN ORDER TO BUILD A FUTURE SRI LANKA WHICH IS PEACEFUL, EQUITABLE AND JUST

VISION

A NATION THAT UPHOLDS INTEGRITY

PURPOSE

CONTRIBUTE TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING OF CORRUPTION, STRENGTHEN ANTI-CORRUPTION STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Sri Lanka has witnessed significant change in 2019. The Easter Sunday bombings and its resultant death and destruction highlighted our national vulnerabilities, which led to the return to a state of emergency and the reemergence of sectarian violence and communalism. The bombings had a profound effect on national political discourse leading up to the presidential elections of November. The clear failings within the previous government have stoked support towards the repeal of the 19th amendment to the Constitution. This indicates a challenge to independent checks and balances, which are cornerstones to accountable governance.

The status of ongoing corruption investigations and the shrinking of civil society space will inevitably be better understood in 2020. Irrespective of political change, TISL's work continues unabated with our focus remaining on the plight of people who face challenges from corruption and poor governance.

TISL's leadership in the Open Government space, ranging from championing citizen's right to information, to being convenors of civil society for the Open Government Partnership continues. Similarly, the commitment to "Name and Fame" honest public officials through the Integrity Icon 2019 has highlighted TISL's continued commitment to recognise those public servants whose efforts frequently go unrecognized.

The work of the Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres based in Vavuniya, Matara and Colombo have also ensured that TISL reaches and coordinates with citizens from around the country with work ranging from anti-corruption focused legal advice to ambitious community level collective action in the appellate courts.

The team at TISL led by Executive Director Asoka Obeyesekere continues to engage with a wide range of stakeholders. This is exemplified by the work being done on new cutting-edge areas such as that on proceeds of crime and victims and witness protection. A testament to the teams resilience is the ability for staff to grow within the organisation, which has ensured limited disruption with the turnover of staff. It has also been encouraging to see staff members receiving prestigious accolades and scholarships, which will enhance the capacity of the organisation into the future. I wish to acknowledge the role of the Executive Director in mentoring and facilitating the development of the young team, which continues to demonstrate creative

excellence in outlook and approach under his visionary leadership.

I wish to acknowledge with thanks the services rendered by the Board of Directors, with particular thanks to Mr. K.W. Janaranjana and Mr. Gehan Gunatilleke who left the Board after several years of dedicated service. I am also encouraged by 10 new members joining the TISL membership, which will add further to TISL's knowledge and resource pool, equipping us to tackle the challenges of the future.

Looking ahead TISL foresees many changes that will challenge and strengthen us in new ways. Through this all, TISL remains resolute in its commitment to engaging with the people and our partners in combating corruption in all its forms.

S.C.C. Elankovan
Chairperson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

2019 has witnessed TISL deepening its engagement across its diverse anti-corruption and governance mandate. This has ranged from launching pioneering Politically Exposed Person (PEP) online registers to broadening legal aid mobile clinics and RTI hubs to ensure more citizens have protection from corruption and avenues for recourse when facing injustice.

TISL continues to champion emerging governance issues, ranging from alleged multi-billion dollar money laundering schemes in infrastructure investment to pursuing cases in the appellate courts to ensure that citizen's right to information is protected.

The Integrity Icon Sri Lanka has moved from strength to strength, highlighting the significant value that derives from public participation, with winners having a sense of a public mandate, having been selected by the public themselves. Similarly, the historic unilateral publication of asset declarations by a cross-party group of MPs has underscored that there are those who want to shift the political culture and that TISL has been able to convene and support such progressive steps. This is an important space that TISL occupies in supporting and recognising those who seek to serve with integrity, which looks to challenge the proliferating culture of shaming, admonishment and pedaling a despair narrative.

Our Advocacy and Legal Advice Centres (ALAC) also continue to explore new areas such as microfinance exploitation and land rights issues, the latter which continues to be the most prevalent source of ALAC complaints. Likewise the ambitious RTI platform which TISL has occupied is now spread across an entire network of civil society organisations which seek to support citizens on exercising their Right to Information.

Looking ahead there will also be challenges. Government commitment to drive the Open Government Partnership agenda with the collaboration of civil society appears to be diminishing. Similarly bottlenecks in the RTI Commission and the appellate courts also raise concerns over timely justice. Even issues such as sexual bribery remain at large and frequently unmentioned. This underscores the reason why TISL must remain resolute in pushing its mandate, as it is only through the abrasive spirit of perseverance and challenging that long-lasting change is forged.

Going forward TISL will continue to work closely with journalists, with a continued commitment to journalism fellowships, which see young journalists mentored by experienced senior journalists who aid the development of corruption and governance underpinned stories. Similarly TISL will continue to be a repository of knowledge on key technical areas of anti-corruption ranging from work done on the creation of a legislative framework for administering proceeds of crime to understanding and engaging on the shortfalls in Sri Lankan compliance with UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) obligations.

It is this range of experience from policy advocacy all the way to citizen level legal representation which sets TISL

apart. This has been enabled by a gifted young team of staff, who continue to grow in ability. This has seen many staff take leadership of their work in the public media space and has also witnessed staff being given international scholarships and opportunities to build their subject expertise to once again come and serve TISL and take forward its mandate.

Whilst there is a concern that civic space may shrink, following trends seen both regionally and globally, TISL remains steadfast in its commitment to stand against corruption and take the difficult steps to lead by example. Together with the management of TISL, I would like to thank all our members and other stakeholders for their resounding support and I look forward to collaborating closely in 2020.

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**DID WE STOP
CORRUPTION?**

1.1 PPPR

During the 2020 Parliamentary Elections, the Protection of Public Property (PPP) team recorded a total of 180 cases and managed to verify 161 cases.

The PPP team working together with 25 District observers and another 160 Electoral observers were able to stop several misuses of public property from taking place during the election.

The PPP team received a complaint from observers on the 7th of July 2020 that the Chairperson of the Road Passenger Transport Authority (RPTA) had appointed several individuals as Timekeepers with the intention of making them permanent employees. Following the complaint made to the ECSL, the appointment letters were immediately cancelled.

School Principals are executive staff who lack the right to engage in any political activities during their period of service. However, on 26th July 2020 the PPPR was informed by an observer that the Principals of Pitawalgamuwa College and Pathramulla College were participating in a political meeting held in the Mulatiyana Pradeshiya Sabha Auditorium which was organized by candidate Dullas Alahapperuma and Sarath de Alwis. The PPP team made a complaint immediately to the Matara Election Dispute Resolution Unit, and the meeting was stopped by the police.



