



TOWARDS TRANSPARENCY



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

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About Towards Transparency

Towards Transparency (TT) is a Vietnamese nonprofit consultancy company founded in 2008 to contribute to the prevention of and fight against corruption. In March 2009, TT became the official National Contact of Transparency International (TI). TT promotes concrete solutions to improve transparency, accountability and integrity, with a particular focus on strengthening the voice and participation of wider society in anti-corruption efforts. Grounded by evidence from research and internationally recognized practices and tools, TT supports partners to adapt these resources to Vietnam's context and its national anti-corruption strategy. TT undertakes its work in partnership and cooperation with diverse stakeholders including government agencies, civil society, the businesses community and media.

Our Approach

Research and evidence-based advocacy: Conducted in 2019, we publicly launched the Vietnam Corruption Barometer (VCB) in January 2020. Key messages and recommendations of this and the Youth Integrity Survey 2019 were cited in over 70 news article and by other organizations such as UNDP.

Professionalism: Based on clear mission and values, with the benefits of being a member of TI global movement, TT continues to perform its work with a professional and constructive approach, widely recognized by the Vietnamese authorities, donors and partners.

Sustainability: TT remains focused on areas of long-term impact (e.g. youth engagement, ensuring national legislation meets international standards, media empowerment, open government and promotion of business integrity).

Collaboration: TT proactively engages with a wide range of stakeholders and partners from public, private and civil society sectors to achieve long-term sustainable and collective impact.

Our Mission: To reduce corruption in Vietnam by increasing demand and promoting measures for transparency, accountability and integrity in government, business and civil society at large.

Our Vision: A Vietnam free of corruption where people enjoy social justice, accountability and transparency in all aspects of life.

Our Supporters



Ambasáid na hÉireann | Vítneam
Embassy of Ireland | Vietnam
Đại sứ quán Ireland | Việt Nam



Federal Foreign Office



DENMARK IN VIETNAM
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
of the Czech Republic



Embassy of Finland
Hanoi



EUROPEAN UNION

FOREWORD

Towards Transparency's (TT) vision is a Vietnam free of corruption where people enjoy social justice, accountability and transparency in all aspects of society. We reflect on this vision daily in our work at TT. Small steps of that long journey are made each year with the help from those who support us and work side by side with us, namely young people, teachers and academics, journalists, government ministries, embassies in Hanoi and governments abroad.

In the area of anti-corruption, and in the context of the 13th National Party Congress' preparation, we could name 2020 the year of consolidation. Indeed, new high-profile corruption cases were brought to court. The key anti-corruption legal documents, notably the 2019 Anti-Corruption Law and the 2018 Law on Access to Information (LAI) were being implemented. For its part, TT kept reinforcing its constructive engagement with Vietnamese authorities, specifically the Government Inspectorate (GI), the Party Central Committee's Commission for Internal Affairs (CCIA), and Ho Chi Minh (HCM) National Academy of Politics.

TT's leading position as a non-profit organization on anti-corruption in Vietnam was reinforced in 2020 through the following key achievements:

- **Wider support for culture of integrity amongst Vietnamese Youth** through partnering with Thai Binh Duong University in Nha Trang, allowing TT to increase its outreach to youth in the South and South Central parts of Vietnam.
- **Increased involvement of CSOs in promoting open government** through advocating transparency, accountability and civic engagement.
- **Increased journalists' awareness and understanding of the *Right to Information*** as an effective tool to fight corruption.
- **Increased communication efforts**, through diverse campaigns, news articles, exclusive interviews by national news agencies, presentations in public anti-corruption events.
- Design, consultation and adoption of **TT's new 5-year Strategy, 2021-2025: Engaging change-makers.**

Our work in 2020 has been made possible by financial support from the Embassies of Finland, Ireland, Denmark, as well as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Germany and Czech Republic, Transparency International Secretariat (TI-S) and the new comer-the EU. We are grateful for this support in such a challenging environment for civil society funding.

In line with our new strategy 2021-2025, we see many opportunities for continued engagement and impact in 3 strategic and interlinked areas: Anti-corruption Legislation & Enforcement, Citizens' Engagement, and Business Integrity. We also see TT's role as an advocate, knowledge builder and facilitator, and co-creator of anti-corruption solutions.

Together, let's continue our work towards a Vietnam of integrity and transparency.



Nguyễn Thị Kiều Viễn

Executive Director
Towards Transparency

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

2020 IN NUMBERS

1,000,000

People reached by
our messages on Facebook

105

Youths attended the
Vietnam Integrity School (VIS)

2,000

Journalists, reporters and
government officials trained
with the materials we compiled

5

Youth initiatives
supported by TT

2 in 7

Recommendations for Decree
130/2020 on asset and income
control adopted



ANTI-CORRUPTION LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY

Engaging the Media in anti-corruption

Right to Information (RTI) is not only a fundamental human right but also an important instrument for media to fight corruption. December 2020 marks the successful completion of TT's 2 year project on "Empowering the media's role for effective anti-corruption in Vietnam" despite various challenges, especially the impacts of COVID-19 and a lack of authorities' cooperation. The project has achieved the set objective of improving the capacity of journalists and the media to access information and to cope with challenges, including legal challenges while reporting corruption. Through documenting and distributing knowledge on RTI and freedom of expression, the project has raised awareness of journalists, CSOs and public officials about RTI.

Through developing and publishing handbooks and providing trainings to journalists, we have contributed to strengthening capacity of the media that would, in the long term, help increase the demand for transparency and accountability, and reduce corruption in Vietnam. The RTI knowledge has been shared widely via different channels (especially workshops and trainings conducted by local experts engaged in this project) to more than 2,000 local journalists and government officials while members of civil society have been "inspired to use new instruments in monitoring the enforcement of the Law on Access to Information in Vietnam" (External Media Project Evaluation Report, 2020). In 2020, TT also run a mini communication campaign on the occasion of International Day for Universal Access to Information (28/9), which reached 10.660 people and engaged 1,280 people with 29 shares of posts and 235 reactions.

Lesson learnt: TT's successes in the Media Project are attributed to the valuable support and cooperation of our international and local partners as well as the resilience, flexibility and creativity of TT's staff. Meanwhile, the challenges in this project provide us with a chance to review the project approach so as to make appropriate adjustments in the future when TT will continue working with the media to response to the local needs.



ANTI-CORRUPTION LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY

Provide inputs into the implementation and enforcement of the 2018 Law on Anti-corruption:

- Continued from earlier efforts, in 2020, TT provided our inputs into the government draft decree on controlling asset and income of persons holding titles and powers in agencies, organizations and entities. Appreciated by Government Inspectorate- the key government drafting agency, 2 out of 7 TT's recommendations were adopted into the final draft version of the Decree, approved by the government on October 30, 2020 and came into force as of December 20, 2020.
- TT co-hosted together with the National University of Hanoi's School of Law and the University College Cork (Ireland) **a two-day international online expert conference on Asset Recovery in Anti-corruption**. The event drew the participation of around 100 national and international scholars and experts; representatives of Vietnamese anti-corruption agencies; the Embassies of France and of the Czech Republic, and a number of international organizations, among others in Hanoi. TT's role as an anti-corruption knowledge facilitator has been highly appreciated by the National University of Hanoi's School of Law. Specifically, TT mobilized the participation of 5 international experts, from and outside the TI movement to share their experiences at the event.



YOUTH INTEGRITY

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Despite a challenging year under the impacts of COVID-19, our youth integrity activities flourished, educating and empowering hundreds of young people to take action to build a culture of integrity in Vietnam.

The 5th and 6th Vietnam Integrity School (VIS-2020)

The annual VIS brings young people together across Vietnam to learn about and practice integrity, exchange ideas, and discuss what they can do to make changes. For the very first time this year, we brought VIS to the Center of Vietnam through partnering with Thai Binh Duong University in Nha Trang. Together with the Northern VIS in Hanoi, the two 5-day courses were successfully organized with the participation of 105 youths coming from 23 cities and provinces, and 18 lecturers and guest speakers with well-known expertise in different fields.

The number of applicants increased by 50% this year, showing the youth's increasing demand to study integrity and their strong interest in VIS. After VIS, the participants reported improvement in their awareness and understanding of corruption and integrity, and said they would share learned knowledge with people in their circle.



YOUTH INTEGRITY

VIS Grant for youth to take actions

VIS Grant's goal is to support youth initiatives in promoting integrity in Vietnam, enabling VIS graduates to apply what they learnt from VIS in reality and to engage other youths in the movement.



KẾT QUẢ KHẢO SÁT
LIÊM CHÍNH HỌC ĐƯỜNG
Địa điểm: Trường THCS Dương Liễu



The 5 projects funded under VIS Grant this year were implemented professionally and meaningfully by 5 teams of VIS alumni and their young friends, proving youth's motivation and capability to lead action and make changes. The 5 projects focused on improving youth's leadership skills, promoting academic integrity in campus, educating integrity for secondary students, medical students, and college students in general. These youth initiatives initiated some impact across the country, as 2 took place in the North, 2 in the Central of Vietnam, and 1 in the South.

More resourced mobilized for enhanced impacts of Youth Integrity programme

The end of 2020 saw the expansion of TT's Youth Integrity programme with newly committed funding from EU (EUR330,000/3 years) and Embassy of Demark in Hanoi (EUR80,000/1 year).

Lesson learnt: Youth's demand for integrity education is on the rise, given by the high increase in VIS applications each year. This drives us to seek solutions to make innovative integrity education accessible to more young people. That's why in the years to come, with increased resources, we will be able to expand the outreach of VIS, conduct Youth Integrity Survey, produce an innovative Integrity Teaching Guide and organize Training-for-Trainers to facilitate more effective integrity courses outside of VIS.

OPEN GOVERNMENT

December 2020 marked the successful completion of TT's 2-year project funded by the Embassy of Finland: "*Promoting Open Government Partnership – OGP as an Innovative Approach to Fighting Corruption in Vietnam*". Indeed, an outside evaluation found the **project's achievements highly commendable** and "**a good value for money**". Significant results were achieved at both policy and behavior levels. TT's contribution to the government draft decree 130 on control assets and income helps Vietnam to become "closer" to international definition of Open Government (as Disclosure of public officials' assets and income constitutes one of the 4 OGP membership eligibility criteria).

The project's achievements are "highly commendable" and "a good value for money"



From their side, communities now better understand the importance of open governance for anti-corruption works and why they should advocate for transparency, accountability, and civic engagement. The workshop targeting CSOs and media's representatives fueled meaningful debates and discussions on the future of public governance in Vietnam and how to make a transition from "closed" to "open" governance. TT also co-hosted with the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics (HCMA) a seminar to share the insights the State-led delegation's members to the OGP Global Summit and their actual works, attended by more than 50 public officials.

Within just one month (October 2020), TT's online communication campaign reached nearly 500,000 online viewers, doubled the number of fanpage followers into nearly 2,000 and attracted 6,000 visits to the OGP knowledge hub. The OGP Vietnam fanpage on Facebook and the knowledge hub were regularly updated and became reference sources for experts, activists, and citizens on open governance.

Lesson learnt: 1/ The approach of using OGP as an innovative mechanism for AC proved to be the right choice in the current anti-corruption context when the role of citizens is not fully maximized. Open Governance is not only about anti-corruption, but also about a broader governance objective, including improved public service delivery to benefit citizens. In that regard, Open governance is an important umbrella to mobilize the participation of multi-stakeholders, including CSOs with related interests (ranging from citizens engagement, to transparency and accountability, etc.) to work together with TT in a CSOs coalition on Open governance – a precondition for anti-corruption to be successful. 2/ The core funding approach that TT benefited from the Embassy of Finland has helped TT to develop a strong and sustainable organization.

PROMOTING THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ANTI-CORRUPTION

On September 2020, TT and the Institute for Social Development Studies (ISDS) signed a partnership agreement to implement the Project “Promoting the role of women in anti-corruption in Vietnam”, 2020- 2023. The project aimed at building evidence and collecting data on gender and corruption in Vietnam, raising public awareness on the impacts of corruption on women and the role of women in fighting corruption. Through the project’s activities, TT and ISDS wish to contribute to enhancing gender equality and the effectiveness of anti-corruption work in Vietnam. The first project activity is underway to study gendered aspects of corruption, exploring views, experiences, and attitudes of men and women regarding corruption, and how they cope with corruption. The study key findings will tentatively be ready in Q2 of 2021.



BUSINESS INTEGRITY

In 2020, despite a lack of dedicated funding for Business Integrity interventions, TT's experts continued to be invited to share their views and expertise in various business integrity events organized nationally, such as the Training of Trainers workshop on Business Integrity organized by VCCI.

Our view is that Vietnam entered a new era of business integrity, thanks to two elements that over time will undoubtedly contribute to changing companies' mindset as regards corruption. First, the 2018 Anti-Corruption law, entered into force in July 2019, now covers corruption in the private sector and recommends setting-up code of conduct and internal control mechanisms. In spite of efforts from organizations such as VCCI, it seems however that Vietnamese companies still strive to implement these recommendations.

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In 2020, via 4 training/sharing workshops, we helped almost 250 participants understand the importance of Business Integrity.

Second, the implementation of free trade agreements such as the Europe-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) or the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), together with increasingly stricter international anti-corruption regulations (FCPA, UK Bribery Act, Sapin II Law) represent both a challenge for exporting business to set up robust anti-corruption programs, and an opportunity for TT to support them in doing so.



OUTREACH

To overcome the unprecedented disruption by the pandemic, TT decided to step up its communication efforts. Through engaging campaigns and unique information, we successfully reached over 1,000,000 people on Facebook with messages and impact stories. Our website continued to serve as a leading source of anti-corruption reference in Vietnam, including tools, research, policy analyses, and newsletters updated regularly. In 2020, we received over 41,000 users and 70,000 views on our website. Additionally, our key training materials were adopted and widely disseminated by some specialized institutions (such as [Vietnam Journalists' Association](#)).

Besides being consulted by many other organizations and government agencies, TT's views on anti-corruption and related topics were featured exclusively by various Vietnamese news agencies and magazines. In the coming year, we will keep expanding our outreach through exploring new approaches such as engaging our active youth network in co-creating communication messages and activities. TT's ultimate communication goal is to turn "Integrity" into a value to be embraced and practiced by wider society.



KEY CHALLENGES

TT's 2020 activities were strongly aligned with the political momentum of the Communist Party and State of Vietnam before the National Party Congress, which notably managed to consolidate public trust in the political regime, through a well-recognized efficient and successful handling of the Covid pandemic as well as new crack-downs on high-profile corruption cases.

Nevertheless, **externally**, TT faced continued challenges, as corruption and anti-corruption remain a sensitive topic in Vietnam. Particularly:

- We faced difficulties in organizing events, e.g. securing partners' interest in the workshop on Open Government at the last moment; TT's public launching of the 2019 Vietnam Corruption Barometer was only secured after open and constructively repeated conversations with concerned authorities;

► The lesson we learnt (over the years) when organizing public events, is the importance for TT to be open, persistent and build trust with concerned authorities.

- Unsuccessful experiments to operate under its NGO structure (CENSOGOR)[1] forced TT to revert to its original legal structure as a not-for-profit consultancy company, implying an extra 10% VAT cost for the donors;

► TT will put effort into maintaining strong accountable relationships with key partners and funders and will consider to close down CENSOGOR permanently. We will continue engage prospective funders and TT's advisory board to identify future program opportunities.

[1] Centre for Social Governance Research (CENSOGOR) was established in 2015 as an NGO offshoot of the TI Vietnam Programme, 2016-2019.

- Like many other organizations, Covid-19 pandemic situation forced TT's team to spend extensive time and energy to adapt its work plan and come up with alternatives. For many trainings (e.g. for journalists) we had to move from onsite to online and hybrid.

Internally, continuous mobilization of funding sources to further TT's AC work while ensuring timely delivery of its project commitments constitutes a huge challenge for a small team. Positively, however, 2020 saw some good results, especially in securing for the very first time from the EU some important funding to support TT's youth integrity work for the next 3 years.

OUR PLANS FOR 2021

TT's organizational objective is to continue developing as an organization that is professional, sustainable and serves as a leading point of reference on anti-corruption in Vietnam. The year 2021 will be the first implementing year of **TT's Vietnam strategy 2021-2025**, focusing on 3 strategic and interlinked areas: Anti-corruption Legislation & Enforcement, Citizens' Engagement, and Business Integrity.

ANTI-CORRUPTION LEGISLATION AND ADVOCACY

- Advocate for increased transparency and accountability in the public sector, especially through promoting open government.
- Mobilize financial resource to kick start Climate Finance and Action in Vietnam to increase transparency and integrity: To conduct an Integrity Risks Assessment to map climate finance for enhanced stakeholders' understanding of the roles and accountability arrangements for public, private and civil society actors receiving, coordinating, implementing and overseeing climate finance and actions.
- Provide inputs into the national implementation of LAI, SDGs, and other relevant anti-corruption documents, e.g. Strategy 2030.

CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT

Youth Integrity

- Conduct the 4th Youth Integrity Survey (YIS-2021) to understand young people's understanding of integrity, their concrete experiences and the challenges they face in exercising their values in daily life.
- Organize the 7th and 8th Vietnam Integrity School (VIS) to train a further 100-110 youths across Vietnam on AC and integrity by empowering VIS alumni.
- Co-create a Reference Manual on teaching integrity and AC for formal and informal teachers in Vietnam. We will engage youths and relevant stakeholders in a participatory and consultative process for production of the such teaching manual.
- Empower young people to implement their initiatives under VIS Grant to promote integrity and contribute to building an integrity culture in Vietnam.
- Facilitate a Learning Exchange in Europe for young integrity leaders to attend TI's Transparency School and exchange knowledge and experience with European youths on integrity.

Women Program

- Increase evidence and knowledge base on the gendered aspects of corruption, including the link between corruption and women in Vietnam.
- Raise awareness of corruption's impacts on women and women's role in anti-corruption.
- Co-create with our local partner (ISDS) follow-up actions aiming at promoting the role of women in anti-corruption in Vietnam.



CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT

Media Program

- Build capacity for the Media and CSOs to exercise the right to information.
- Strengthen the implementation of the Law on Access to Information (LAI) and open data policy & practice: TT will conduct an assessment of Vietnam's implementation of the Law on Access to Information (LAI), in line with its SDG commitments (Global SDG 16.10/Vietnam SDG 16.9).

Business Integrity

- Encourage companies to do business with integrity through providing integrity awareness raising and anti-corruption trainings.



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

| Donor | Project | Total Funding | Budget spent in 2020 | Budget planned for 2021 | Program Area |
|---|---|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| The Embassy of Finland in Vietnam² | Promoting Open Government Partnership (OGP) as an Innovative Approach to Fighting Corruption in Vietnam (2019-2020) | 150,000 € | 81,707 € | | Open Government Partnership (OGP) |
| Irish Aid | Empowering Youth in Promoting Integrity in Vietnam (2018-2021) | 430,000 € | 110,000 € | 100,000 € | Youth Integrity |
| Federal Foreign Office of Germany | Empowering the media's role for effective AC (2019-2020) | 200,000 € | 101,714 € | 4,135 € | Law and Advocacy |
| | Empowering the media and civil society in AC (2021-2023) | 300,000 € | | 98,112 € | Media, Law & Advocacy |
| TI IPP STRONGG Program (DFAT & MFAT/ TI-S) | Promote the role of women in anti-corruption in Vietnam (2020-2023) | 150,000 € | 18,767 € | 56,346 € | Gendered aspects of corruption |
| MOFA of Czech Republic | Mobilization of Civil Society for Fighting Corruption in Vietnam, MOBS (2020) | 18,000 € | 18,000 € | | OGP |
| | Engaging the Media in AC (2021-2022) | 40,000 € | | 20,000 € | Media & OGP |
| The European Union | LIFT VIETNAM (Youth Leaders of Integrity for a more Transparent Vietnam) (2020-2023) | 300,000 € | 3,600 € | 150,000 € | Youth Integrity |
| Embassy of Denmark | Empowering the Vietnamese Youth to Fight Corruption (2021) | 80,000 € | 1,000 € | 79,000 € | Youth Integrity |
| Total | | 1,668,000 € | 334,788 € | 507,593 € | |

[2] The Embassy of Finland in Vietnam provides TT with a core funding approach with project instrument.

