



# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2019

“The Sustainable Development Goals and the Human Rights system are mutually reinforcing:

While the latter ensures the binding stamp and, most importantly, monitoring and accountability mechanisms, the Sustainable Development Goals give visibility to the rights and put in evidence the needed indivisible approach to all the multiple aspects of human rights – in addition to integrating “people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership” for the achievement of sustainable development.

When analyzed through the lenses of existing human rights instruments, many targets of the Sustainable Development Goals are transformed from a goal or aspiration into immediate rights.

In this sense, the implementation of the SDGs can be much more effective if guided by a human rights-approach”

**DIANOVA INTERNATIONAL**

***Statement to the Human Rights Council intersessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation  
on human rights and the 2030 Agenda***

Cover photos:

LST field researchers

People's Alliance for Right to Land – PARL

Vikalpa Sri Lanka

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## Who we are and what we do

The Law & Society Trust (LST) is a not-for-profit organisation engaged in legal research, advocacy and human rights documentation.

The late Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam founded the Law & Society Trust in 1982 in Colombo, Sri Lanka under the Trust Ordinance. LST was subsequently incorporated in 1992 under the Companies Act No. 17 of 1982 and given Registration No. N(A) 211. LST has since re-registered as required by law under the new Companies Act No.07 of 2007.

LST's goals are the promotion of legal reforms for access to justice, judicial enforcement of rights, and public accountability.

LST aims to use rights-based strategies in order to promote and protect human rights, enhance public accountability and strengthen respect for the rule of law.

LST has built strong networks across communities by implementing effective programmes and engaging in human rights advocacy. LST's advocacy is based on sound research and LST operates to expand democratic spaces wherever they exist. It does so by strengthening institutions, promoting equal access and upholding good governance through the practice of honesty, transparency and persistent inquiry.

### Vision

A society free from war, discrimination and social injustice and based upon human dignity for all.

### Mission

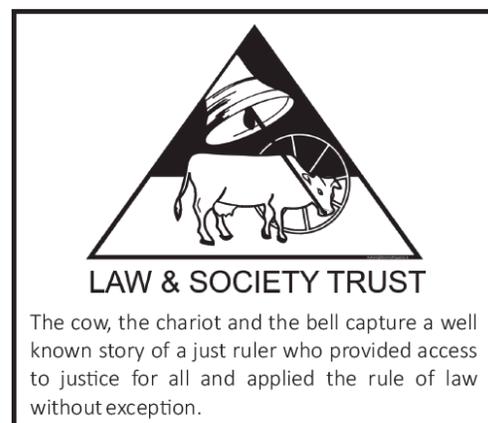
To utilise rights-based strategies in research, documentation and advocacy, and to promote the full realization of the rule of law, justiciability of rights and public accountability.

### Goals

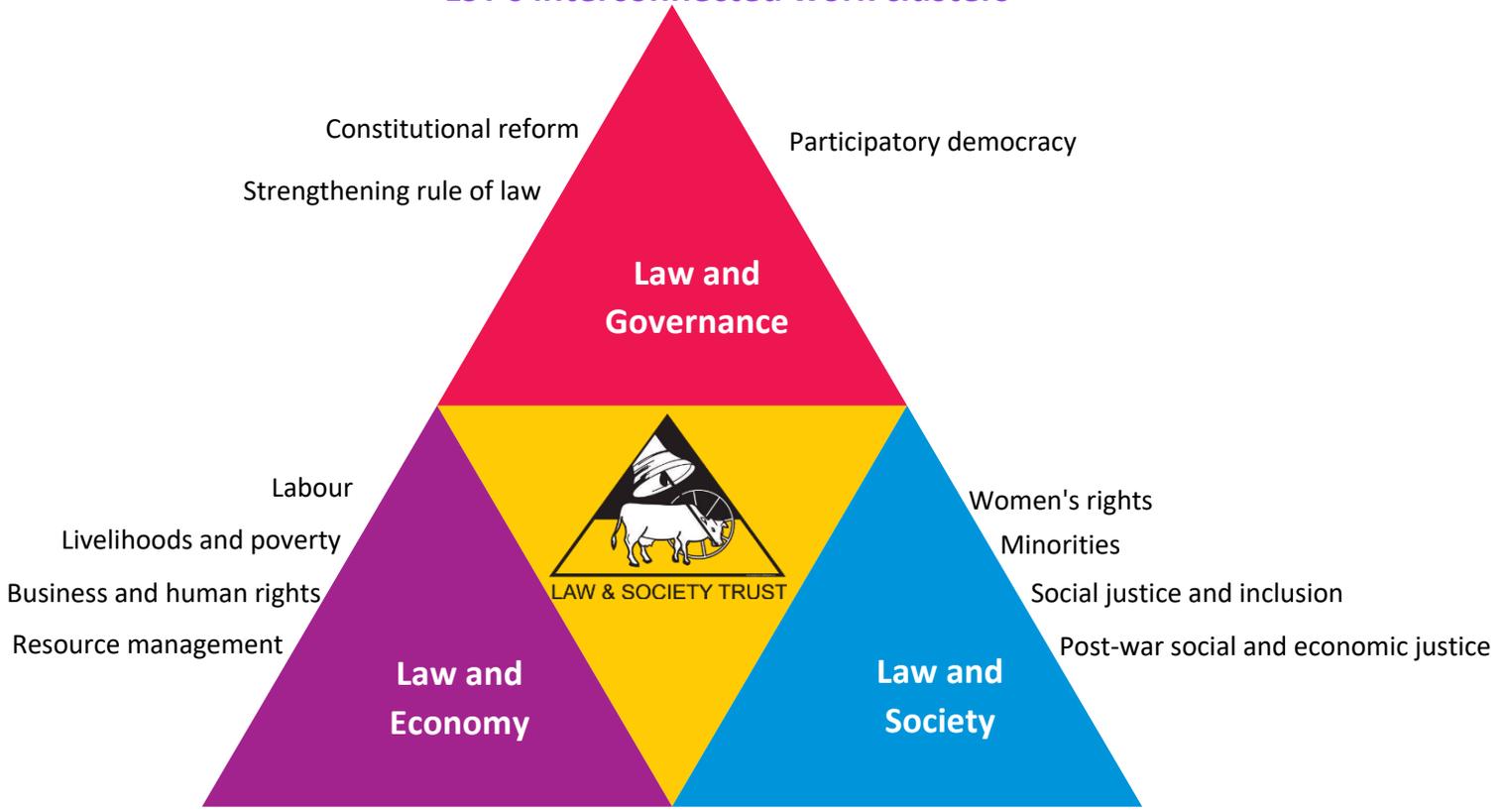
1. To be a leader in national level policy and legislative changes
2. To be a change maker in perceptions, attitudes and traditions which affect rights
3. To be a space maker for human rights discourse
4. To advocate for effective accountability ensuring good governance, transparency, equality and social justice
5. To empower and build the capacity of rights holders

The programme interventions have included human rights education, advocacy, training and engagements with community-based organisations and duty bearers at the district and national levels. It also engages with judges, lawyers and opinion leaders.

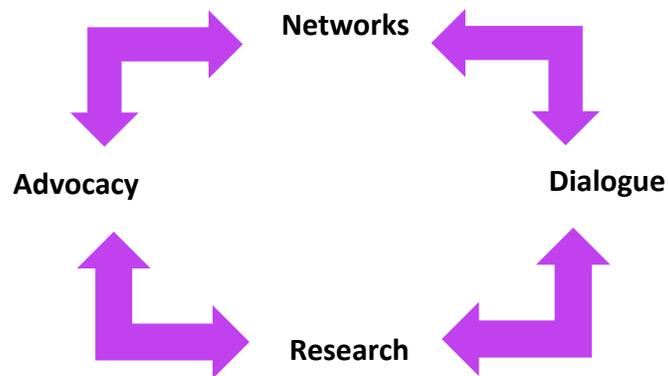
The organization also focuses on building networks and coalitions of human rights activists and defenders at the national and international level. The knowledge gained through these efforts has shaped the strategies and approaches adopted in all of LST's programmes.



## LST's interconnected work clusters



## How we work



### **Board of Directors**

Mr. Chandra Jayaratne - Chairman (retired 31 July 2019)

Dr. J A S Felix - Chairman (From 29 August 2019 -

Mr. Geoffrey J.T. Alagaratnam PC

Dr. Harini Nireka Amarasuriya

Miss Anushya Coomaraswamy

Dr. Fathima Farzana Haniffa

Mr. Tissa Jayatilaka

Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda

### **Company Secretary**

Secretarius (Private) Ltd

### **Auditors**

KPMG - External Auditors

### **Internal Auditors**

Jayasinghe and Company

### **Senior Management Team**

Dr. Sakuntala Kadirgamar - Executive Director

Mr. Sandun Thudugala - Director of Programmes

Ms. Hasara Fernando - Head of Finance and Administration

### **Program and Research Staff**

Mr. P. M. Senarathna - Project Manager

Mr. Vidura Munasinghe- Senior Researcher

Ms. Zamruth Jehan Mufazlin - Project Coordinator

Mr. Nilshan Fonseka - Project Coordinator - 31.10.2019

Ms. Amalini De Sayrah - Communications Officer from 01.10.2019

### **Consultants**

Ms. Uda Menike Deshapriya -Researcher

Ms. Natasha Van-Hoff – Research Assistant

Ms. Marisa De Silva- PARL Co-ordinator

Mr. Madasamy Vijeyakanth - Research Assistant

Mr. Malinga Prasad Jayarathna -Research Assistant

Mr. Prabath Hemantha Kumara - Research Assistant

Ms. Megara Tegal - Researcher

Mr. Arumugam Dhanushan – Project Co-ordinator from 19.09.2019

Ms. Dimali Wijesinghe -Research Assistant from 01.04.2019 –

Mr. Ashwin Hemmathagama - Communications Officer upto 30.06.2019

Ms. Tharmika Sivarajah - Research Assistant

Ms. Emesha Piumini Perera - Research Assistant up to 31.08.2019

### **Human Resources and Administration**

Ms. Janaki Kamani Dharmasena - Human Resources and Administrative Officer

### **Finance Unit**

Ms. Dharshika Anthonyraj - Accounts Assistant

Ms. Sagarika Nilmini - Accounts Assistant

Mr. Prasanna Kaminde Gajaweera -Accounts Assistant & Logistic Officer

### **Publications**

Ms. Dilhara Pathirana - editor

### **Library**

Ms. Dilani Wickramasinghe - Librarian

### **Support Staff**

M. Chandran

# Human rights underpin peace and prosperity: Looking back and looking ahead

## Looking Back

29 July 2019 marked the twentieth anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, the founder of the Law and Society Trust. He championed human rights, peaceful co-existence based on mutual respect, tolerance and appreciation of diversity. He believed sincerely that dialogue, negotiations and mediation should be the basis of resolving social as well as interpersonal conflicts. He also believed in democratic norms and values and the best traditions of parliamentary democracy. It is through this prism that I review developments in Sri Lanka in 2019 and the work of the Law and Society Trust.

Sri Lanka began 2019 on a promising note with the judgment by the Supreme Court holding unanimously that the Presidential proclamation to dissolve Parliament and call for a general election was ultra vires and unconstitutional. The Court's judgment was historic, and came at a time when Sri Lanka's constitutional and democratic processes were challenged.

The Supreme Court decision to uphold constitutional due process sent a strong signal that it was committed to judicial independence, democracy, fundamental rights, the rule of law, and the Constitution of Sri Lanka. It was hoped that all political actors would respect and follow the judgment and work to bring about a speedy resolution to the crisis as Sri Lanka's democracy and its economy suffered catastrophic consequences due to this crisis. However, this was not to be.

## The human, political and economic cost of dysfunctional government

The President and the Prime Minister continued to maintain their destructive political stand-offs and failed to cooperate. A cross-party Parliamentary Committee noted that the, well-coordinated, terrorist bombings by Muslim extremists on the 21st April 2020 - on Easter Sunday no less, causing a trail of grief and destruction, were outcomes of security failures that stemmed from the bitter rivalry between the President and the Prime Minister.

Shortly after these attacks, revenge attacks were organized against innocent Muslim communities. The government has also arrested and incarcerated many Muslims under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Many remain in detention without formal charges being filed against them and many of the detainees have not been able to secure legal representation with lawyers refusing to represent them or because they are unable to bear the costs.

For years, human rights lawyers and activists have campaigned against the Prevention of Terrorism Act as it is draconian and has led to the abuse of power and the miscarriage of justice. Successive governments have promised to abolish it but it remains in active use.

A strong anti-Muslim sentiment was on the rise and extended to baseless allegations against Muslim doctors and traders who were alleged to be part of conspiracies to sterilise Sinhala women.

To Sri Lankans emerging from 30 years of war, returning to such horrors of the past is too difficult to contemplate. Investigations revealed that Indian intelligence had alerted the Sri

Lankan authorities of an imminent attack, but politicking stood in the way of the President and Prime Minister taking concerted action for the public good.

The Parliamentary Committee report also noted that further investigation was "needed to understand whether those with vested interests did not act on intelligence so as to create chaos and instill fear and uncertainty" in the lead-up to the presidential election, due to be held on November 16."

### **Democracy requires elections plus a commitment to democratic norms**

The contest for the presidency included additional dramas surrounding the two main candidates that revealed systemic failures in Sri Lanka's democratic system. There was a lack of clarity as to whether Gotabaya Rajapaksa had renounced his citizenship of the United States of America and while this was eventually made public, there were no transparent accountability measures in place to ensure that the public had full information about the Presidential candidates. The United National Party too exposed its own fault lines, revealing that it had no transparent and democratic mechanisms for selecting its leader and nominating a presidential candidate. The internecine struggles within the United National Party were revealed in the party's reluctant and belated endorsement of Sajith Premadasa as its presidential candidate.

### **Role of the media and social media in the elections**

Studies of the traditional media and social media during the elections were informative in revealing their biases and prejudices. Traditional media outlets played a significant role in shaping political discourse but they are often divided along partisan lines. Furthermore, gossip domains played an influential role in spreading politically manipulated narratives disregarding facts on a range of topics, including national

security and religious and ethnic issues. Studies have noted a link between unethical reporting by mainstream media outlets and the prevalence of hate speech and disinformation on social media.

Studies of social media during the presidential elections highlighted the prevalence of hate speech and misleading information and the manipulation of key topics during this time. It also reflects the divergent views between the majority and minority communities on topics relating to governance and reconciliation. They also demonstrated that a greater proportion of posts expressing negative sentiments in comparison to positive sentiments were shared more widely than posts with positive sentiments. Religious and ethnic groups, the Hindu and Muslim communities in particular, were referred to in posts using discriminatory language and ideas based on racial superiority.

The Easter attacks further hardened positions and shaped the narratives relating to national security, reconciliation and peace and religious and ethnic issues in the run up to the presidential elections.

Since significant amounts of political campaigning are now taking place on social media, election regulations must be revised to take note of that and civil society too must be ready and better equipped to enter into the frays in this arena.

### **A new President and a new vision**

The election of Gotabaya Rajapaksa as president, the symbolism of his inauguration and his own address to the people sets the tone of the politics he chooses to advance in Sri Lanka. He is explicit in supporting an exclusive Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism, a deification of war heroes, and an impatience with democratic checks and balances through an independent judiciary and constitutional commissions as they may thwart government policies.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's policy statement "Vistas of Prosperity and Splendour" was adopted as the national policy framework committing the country to ten key policies, while "giving due consideration to socio, economic, environmental and political aspects".

The ten key policies prioritise: national security, a friendly, non-aligned, foreign policy, an administration free from corruption, a new Constitution that fulfills the People's wishes, a productive citizenry and a vibrant human resource, a People centric economic development, a technology-based society, the development of physical resources, sustainable environmental management and a disciplined, law abiding and values-based society.

### Looking Ahead

National debates will inevitably emerge around the details of these policies, their conception and implementation, their impact on all the communities and on Sri Lanka's long-established commitment to parliamentary democracy. The Law and Society Trust will be active in these debates holding fast to the belief that human rights underpin peace and prosperity

Despite the challenges, in the year 2019, the Law and Society Trust provided support for vulnerable communities that did not have access to justice - be it in fighting for their rights to land, contesting the death penalty or arrests and detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. We documented the stories of families who suffered the loss of their breadwinners through arbitrary detentions and we worked to support

and strengthen public administration, especially in respect of servicing communities to secure their rights to land. We engaged with communities to express their needs and created platforms for government and communities to meet and develop programmes for cooperation. We are part of a coalition of human rights organizations and work collaboratively to support human rights. The organization undertook a major review of its staffing policies and rationalized its compensation packages.

We recognised that this was an appropriate juncture to revisit our strategic plan for 2020 - 2025 and we commenced reflections on a new strategic plan that will guide our work in 2020. It is closely aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals that successive governments in Sri Lanka and around the world have adopted. We remain convinced that human rights create the foundation underpinning sustainable development, peace and prosperity. Only then can prosperity and the splendours of life be enjoyed by all. Any other approach will only create a mirage of prosperity.

I would like to thank the Board, our members, donors, partners and my colleagues who have supported me since I took up this challenging position. I look forward to continued support as I provide leadership to fulfil the mission and mandate of the Trust.

**Sakuntala Kadirgamar**

**Executive Director**

## Challenges in our changing spaces

The year 2019 posed serious challenges to the individuals and organisations working to strengthen peace, justice, democracy and good governance in Sri Lanka. The failures of the government that came to power on a platform to foster good governance have not only resulted in them losing the power, but discredited and undermined their platform. Transitional justice and a reform agenda to institutionalise good governance are the babies thrown out with the bath water. The Easter Sunday terror attacks in April, and the hate campaigns against Muslims which followed it, has exposed the fragile nature of the social fabric in Sri Lanka. The widening polarization of the society along ethnic and religion lines led, for the first time of the history of Sri Lanka, to the election of a President with almost exclusive support from one ethnic group.

As civil society organizations, that are committed to promoting the ideas of pluralism, inclusion, human rights and democracy, we are at the crossroads and must rethink our approaches. The failure to challenge the dominant narratives of ethno-centralism has enabled the acceptance of authoritarianism in Sri Lanka. We failed to take our message to the masses across the country that human rights and democracy are not optional fads. We failed in creating broad movements which brings everyone together to fight for their rights.

Despite the upheavals and challenges posed in 2019 by the context of Sri Lanka as well as globally, the Law and Society Trust has stayed firm in our beliefs of fighting for the justice and equality for all. We based our work on fundamental principles of human rights and did our best to intervene to protect these ideals and the people who suffered. Our efforts have included the demand justice for Muslim men and women who suffered arbitrary arrests

under Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), for rural women - both Sinhalese and Tamils who are exploited by predatory micro-credit lending companies and the Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim communities whose land has been forcibly grabbed by the military or businesses. These actions represent the face of human rights struggles.

We have worked at different levels, adopting different strategies to make ourselves relevant. Our engagements have ranged from supporting rural farmers in Lahugala in the Ampara District to engaging with the International Committee of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights based in Geneva to understand the ground realities. We engaged directly with Government and Ministries to influence policy changes and also with local social movement to build their capacities to demand justice and advocate for changes. We developed our research and publications as tools for advocacy and community mobilization as well as to inform policy makers of the social discourses. Our programmes are designed to be flexible to respond to the changing context.

We are fortunate that we work with a group of partners who truly understand the mission and vision of LST and support us in these endeavours. Special thanks go to Diakonia, who provided us with the core funding on which to build a strong foundation to build our program. Our donors as well as international, local and research partners and our dynamic, skilled and committed staff have been the biggest strength of LST during these challenging times.

We are stepping into the future of uncertainties. The COVID pandemic has revealed to governments that businesses and society are vulnerabilities and our misdirected priorities. Globally we see the emergence of

authoritarian rulers who have exploited the economic downturns and social upheavals to presents themselves as the only way. They challenge the basic value systems that support a fair and just world order that is based on sustainable and inclusive development. Environmental, economic and health crises have never been so daunting. Yet, we see that people are resisting and fighting back. From the tribal lands in Amazon to streets of Los Angeles people are fighting for their rights and or justice.

In Sri Lanka too we see men and women of all ethnic groups who are continuing to fight for these ideals even in extremely difficult situations. We get courage from them. We look towards the future through their struggles. We will continuously challenge ourselves to be better equipped so we can support the efforts of these citizens to make Sri Lanka a place where all people can live with dignity.

**Sandun Tudugala**

**Director of Programmes**

## LSTs interconnected work clusters

LST undertook activities to support economic, social and cultural rights and political and governance reforms in Sri Lanka. Many of these activities are interconnected cutting across the spectrum of the economy, the society and politics reaffirming the understanding that there are no clear demarcations between indivisible human rights.

### Law and Governance

#### Advocating for policy and legal reforms

##### Reform of the Land Development Ordinance

During the last 3 years, LST has been engaged with people's right to land and to livelihoods and this has advocated for reforms of the Land Development Ordinance (LDO), specifically for the removal of the gender discriminatory provisions within it.

LST developed a policy paper: "Land Development Ordinance: Key Concerns and Ideas for Reforms" and in 2019 LST organized a national symposium with the Ministry of Land, the Land Commissioner General's Department and Provincial Land Commissioners to discuss the proposed reforms and the ways forward. As a result of this long-term engagement with LST, its partners and the community, the Ministry of Land started drafting the amendments to the LDO, incorporating recommendations to ensure women's rights to State Land. Currently the prepared draft has been presented to the Attorney General's Department's review.

##### Support for a new Land Use Policy

LST engaged with the Department of Land Use Policy Planning to draft a new Land Use Policy for Sri Lanka. LST coordinated consultations at the district and national levels to receive the views of the community and CSOs to frame the draft. Currently the Department is in the final stages of the drafting the land use policy.

See:

<http://luppd.gov.lk/web/images/Handout2.doc>  
[x](#)

##### Drafting a People's Land Policy

LST worked with the People's Alliance for Right to Land (PARL) to draft a People's Land Policy. A People's Land Commission (PLC) was appointed and the PLC met with more than 800 people in 15 districts to receive their views and their proposals for a people's land policy. People's land policy, which will be launched in 2020 will provide a common framework for affected communities to advocate together for favorable policy, law and administrative reforms.

##### Advocating for a better regulatory framework on micro credit lending

Based on the initial research findings of a three-year research study on livelihoods of rural women and indebtedness, LST, together with MONLAR and the Nelum Yaya Foundation, prepared a policy brief, "Micro Financing the Community: not individuals.", proposing reforms to the current micro credit regulatory systems. The policy brief was presented to the Ministry of Finance, Central Bank, and the representatives of the main candidates of the Presidential election. Based on the discussions, the Ministry of Finance agreed to revise the current Micro Credit Regulatory Act and a draft was prepared and presented for public consultations.

## **Critiques of Counter Terrorism Act & laws & policies inimical to human rights**

LST has consistently advocated for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) and against the introduction of new Counter Terrorism Act (CTA). In 2019 LST worked with a number of other CSOs and human rights activists to alert policy makers, lawmakers and the general public on the draconian provisions of CTA and the impact it will have on the democratic and human rights of citizens and on social harmony. LST has also supported human rights activists to file petitions against the CTA at the Supreme Court. These actions created a wider discourse on the Act. Subsequently the Government newly appointed in November 2019 in the aftermath of the constitutional crisis, withdrew the Bill, while keeping in place the PTA.

## **Legal support to appeal death penalty and arbitrary arrests under the PTA**

LST initiated a program to provide legal support for people who were on death row, appealing the death penalty on the grounds that it is a violation of human rights. LST also supported people who were arbitrarily arrested under emergency regulations and PTA after the Easter Sunday attacks by Islamist extremists in 2019. This initiative was launched in collaboration with The Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust and other human rights organizations and human rights defenders. LST facilitated legal support for 20 cases.

## **Advocacy against the VSSOA (Voluntary and Social Services Organization Act)**

LST played an active role in the collective civil society action against the proposed new VSSOA (Voluntary and Social Services Organization Act, which proposed provisions that could restrict the civil society space significantly. LST was part of the delegation that met with the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Languages and Social Integration to raise objections to it. Due to

the opposition from CSOs, the Government agreed to withdraw the bill and appointed a CSO committee to draft a new law. LST was also a member of this drafting committee and the alternative draft was submitted to the Government August 2019.

## **Law and Society**

### **Creating awareness and influencing public discourse on critical social, political and economic issues**

#### **Tracking arrests under the PTA**

LST initiated a research project to document the experiences of victims who were arbitrarily arrested under PTA and the experiences of their families. To date the researcher has met with several lawyers working on cases related to arrests under the PTA and ICCPR Act (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act) following the Easter Sunday Attacks, and short-listed a number of cases to document. The researcher followed up on cases in Colombo and in the provinces.

#### **Rise of extremism: Dialogues to understand its complexities**

After the Easter Sunday attacks, a book titled "Islamic Extremism: Clash of Civilizations or Clash within Civilization?" was published and was launched at a public event on 30th May 2019 to catalyse public discussions. After the book launch several paper articles were published recognising the need of to understand the complexities associated with the rise of Islamic extremism.

#### **Understanding labour struggles in the context of the competing paradigms of national development and human security**

A review of three labour struggles indicated a paradigm shift in labour management and

relations and the trend of depending on manpower agencies to provide outsourced labour. The review led to a research publication: 'Old Wine in New Bottles: Returning of Old Authoritarianism in the Neo-Liberal Era' and it has been used as a tool for engagement with trade unions.

### **Understanding the impact of Personal laws on women**

LST, in partnership with the Chevening Alumni Sri Lanka, documented the plight of Muslim women who suffered injustices under discriminatory personal laws through a series of interviews with victims and activists. These interviews framed a narrative that was captured in a documentary film titled 'The Struggle: Silenced Voice in MMDA Reform.'

### **Understanding rural indebtedness and building awareness of the need for reforms**

A survey on the rural indebtedness in Sri Lanka was conducted and the survey report was published under the title of 'The Future Foreclosed: Women Trapped in Endless Indebtedness in Sri Lankan Rural Economy'. A 2-day symposium was organized in November 2019, engaging the participation of researchers, academics and activists who are working on the issues of the rural economy and microfinance.

### **Critical analysis of the women's quota in Local Governance**

As quotas are encouraged as a means to increasing women's political participation and representation, LST focused on the impact of quotas for women in local government. through a critical analysis. LST conducted over 60 in depth interviews with elected/ contested women for the Local Government Institutions (LGIS), male politicians involved in local and national level politics and civil society activists who are engaged with the capacity building activities to support the newly elected female

LGI (Local Governance Institution) members. The female LGI members interviewed belonged to fourteen local government institutions across the country, and represented political parties that were significant at the national and regional levels. The research was captured in the publication: 'Quest for Agency: Reflections on Women's Quota in Local Governance.'

### **Community empowerment and the protection of rights**

#### **Youth for Inclusive Development in South Asia (YIELD): Youth Civic Engagement in minority and marginalised communities**

LST worked on a multi-country action research in partnership with Misaal Foundation in India and Bandhu Social Welfare Society in Bangladesh. As part of this action research with developed tools to empower and engage youth from Muslim minority communities in India and LGBT+ communities in Bangladesh, in civic engagement. In India youth groups work with communities on furthering access to entitlements, education and livelihood development. In Bangladesh peer education is used to engage with LGBT+ youth. The YIELD project invested in the youth 'Changemakers' and by tracking their experiences, learned lessons on the challenges faced by these communities, the strategies that worked, and the initiatives and support required to empower them in meaningful ways..

After two years of rigorous capacity building, we saw how the Changemakers utilized the skills they learnt to support and empower their communities, signifying the development of organic leadership through YIELD.

The project comes to an end in July 2020 and the final research report of the project outlining the lessons on youth civic engagement will be launched later in the year.

### **Support for community actions against predatory micro finance**

LST supported a number of community organizations spearheaded by women to organize under the umbrella network “Collective of Victims of Predatory Micro- Financing” and assisted them to organize a press conference and protests in several localities, demanding justice for the victims of predatory micro credit schemes. The actions were organised around International Women's Day to gain greater visibility. In October 2019, they organized an event to present their proposals to representatives of the political parties, demanding that their proposals are included the manifestoes of the Presidential candidates as solutions. The majority of presidential candidates made various comments on the microfinance crisis and promised to "cut-off" and "scrap" micro credit loans of the people. LSTs research was referenced by commentators on this issue.

## **Law and Economy**

### **Support for land rights activists**

PARL (the broad, land rights network coordinated by LST) identified 60 organizations and community groups that are working on land rights issues in 5 provinces. Regional networks in 5 provinces were established. Action plans for 5 provincial networks were developed. PARL will continue to support the implementation of work plans in 5 provinces. PARL has developed a database with the information of around 35 cases of land rights.

A wireframe has been developed to host an online database - <http://www.parlsl.com/land-disputes>

### **Support for multi stakeholder platforms to resolve land issues**

Under the Land Rights project, in 2019 LST collaborated with Provincial Land Commissioners in North, North Western and Eastern Provinces to establish divisional and district level multi stakeholder platforms. These platforms brings together all government agencies related to land governance and communities to one forum to resolve land issues. Provincial Land Commissioner has committed to continue these platforms beyond LST support. Training of local land officers, creating spaces for communities to present their land issues for authorities, facilitate multi stakeholder platforms to discuss and resolve land issues have contributed in increased understanding, knowledge among local communities and local authorities of land –related challenges. As a result of these interventions in 2019, 11004 families qualified for land permits (with 2958 families coming from the North Western Province, 921 from the Northern Province and 7125 from the Eastern Province) and 10727 qualified for land grants (with 650 coming from the North Western Province, 3557 from the Northern Province and 6520 from the Eastern Province).

### **Support for plantation workers: mainstreaming their struggles**

LST has continued to support the movement for salary increase of plantation workers. A video documentary based on LSTs research was developed and shared with movement members to support their campaign. Salary increases of plantation workers has been a key discussion point during the election, with all Presidential candidates promising to increase the salary of plantation workers.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=8&v=WSjCUOI9LI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=WSjCUOI9LI) .

## Support for participatory governance

Through its Participatory Governance project, LST built the capacities of citizen's forums and local government authorities to undertake the

concept and elements of participatory budgeting, social audits and budget monitoring. Citizen's forums in 12 local government authorities have submitted their proposals for annual budgets to local government institutions.

## Publications and Communications

In 2019 LST published books, and reports in three languages and is active in reaching out to a wider audience through press statements and social media. LST has also reactivated its blog in 2019 and developed several videos on important themes and also records the proceedings of seminars and citizen's dialogues and uploads it on the web to reach wider audiences.

LST has also collaborated with partners to publish reports and books.

### Books

**Old wine in new bottles:** Returning of old Authoritarianism in the Neoliberal era (March 2019 English- Sinhala-Tamil)

**Sri Lanka: State of Human Rights: 2018** (Published in 2019)

**Quest for Agency** – 2019, English- Sinhala- Tamil

**Islamic Extremism: clash of civilizations or clash within civilization?** (May 2019 English-Sinhala-Tamil in one book)

**Citizen's Dialogue 02- Umaga Kelawara Alokaya** 2019 (Sinhala-Tamil)

### Reports

**LST Review – Will Sri Lanka ever have a people's constitution?** *Vol. 29, Issue 347, Jan 2019*

English- Sinhala-Tamil

**Policy Brief - Micro financing the community: not individuals** March 2019

English- Sinhala -Tamil

**Future Foreclosed** (English/ Sinhala/ Tamil)

### Collaborative publications

**ANNI Report 2019 on the Performance and Establishment of National Human Rights Commissions** - Forum Asia

### Video documentaries

LST publishes its video content on its Facebook page and as well as on a dedicated YouTube channel.

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1DBKzI7oxsndaGg6NKs\\_aQ/videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1DBKzI7oxsndaGg6NKs_aQ/videos)

The statistics reported here are a cumulation of viewership across these two platforms.

- **Realm of Debt- Documentary on Micro credit crisis September 1 2019**

This trilingual documentary, featuring the voices of women affected by predatory microcredit loans, was created. It gained approximately 1500 views on LST's platforms -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWGicyzAYfo&t=17s>

- **Five Myths About Life in Sri Lankan Plantations** June 26, 2019

Focusing on the up-country Tamil populations LST works with, this documentary gained approximately 800 views on the YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eWGicyzAYfo&t=17s>

- **Human Rights and access to land: Looking back at LST's lands rights programme** June 25, 2019

Approximately 700 people viewed this video, which was a recap of LST's work on land in areas across the country.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbvcLLAtTQE>

- **Islamic Extremism: Clash between Civilizations or Clash within Civilization?** June 24, 2019

A panel discussion titled 'Responding to Easter Attacks: Role of New Social Imaginaries' was held at ICES Auditorium on 28th May 2019 with the participation of Dr. Malathi de Alwis, Dr. Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri, Dr. Sivagnanam Jeyasanker and Ms. Sharmila Seyyid. The video update of the panel gained 470 views on LST's YouTube Page.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPi4Zndw7Y0>

- **The Struggle: Silenced Voices in MMDA reform** English (July 25 2019), Tamil (August 2 2019), (Sinhala (August 16 2019)

Produced in collaboration with the Chevening Alumni Association, this video explored the experiences of individuals working to reform the MMDA, and the lives of women impacted by this law. Across the YouTube and Facebook platforms, the three language versions of the documentary gained over 5000 views, with the

YouTube video of the English version registering the highest viewership.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoQm3M8QcdJDvL0QstDdbJoZe5U-7uk1s>

- **Realm of Debt – Symposium on Micro Credit** July 2019

LST held a symposium on the topic of microcredit, featuring presentations by researchers, activists and affected women. 13 videos capturing these presentations were uploaded to the YouTube channel, and cumulatively gained over 2000 views.

These sessions were also streamed via Facebook Live, reaching over 6000 viewers.

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoQm3M8QcdJAj2Gtc0AGhhf3l96mXEDsW>

- **Ten Years of Peoples' Land Struggles** October 31 2019

This conference on reflections and ways forward in the work on land rights was streamed via Facebook Live, reaching over 2000 viewers.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/lstlanka/540655136711260/>

- **Old Wine in New Bottles** October 2nd 2019

An interview with Kesara Kottegoda, Secretary of the Ceylon Bank Employees Union, on exploitative trade and finance agreements, gained approximately 2500 views on LST's Facebook page, and was also posted on two other Facebook pages that discuss workers and labour rights.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz2naqB8XAQ>

An interview with Sumit Chaaminda, Department of Public Policy and Political Science on the crisis of the neo-liberal economy

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ\\_oshJNaqU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJ_oshJNaqU)

## Chapter III – LST’s blog

LST re-activated its blog page in 2019, commencing with reflections on the stark realities of life in the ‘Holy Land’.

It was read by approximately 500 people.

### Press statements

In 2019, LST has published press statement on matters of significance impacting human rights and the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary and the freedom of expression. These include:

- **The Presidential pardon for a man convicted of murdering a young woman**

The statement reached 1,300 people on LST’s Facebook page, and generated close to 7,000 impressions on Twitter.

[https://lstlanka.org/lst\\_media/lst-statement-on-the-presidential-pardon-for-shramantha-jayamaha/](https://lstlanka.org/lst_media/lst-statement-on-the-presidential-pardon-for-shramantha-jayamaha/)

<https://lawandsocietytrust.blogspot.com/2019/12/this-holy-land-i-chosen-people.html>

- **The decision of The Election Commission to block the launch of a report on land issues in the Ampara district titled ‘Land, Grabbing – Denial of Our Existence’ and preventing area politicians from engaging with the issue stating it to be in breach of election laws**

The statement reached 1,900 people on LST’s Facebook page, and generated close to 2,000 impressions on Twitter.

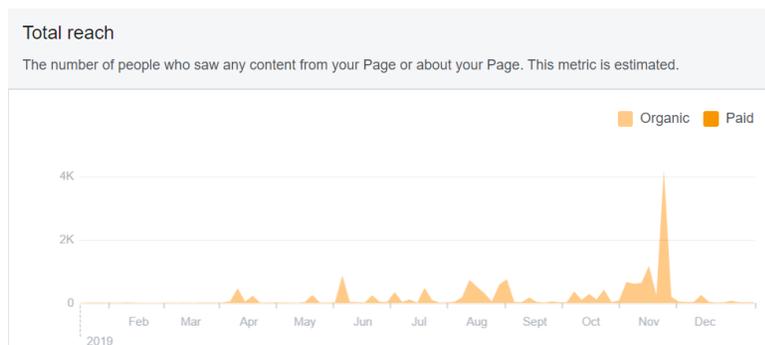
[https://lstlanka.org/lst\\_media/ampara-civil-society-organisations-report-launched-blocked-by-election-commission/](https://lstlanka.org/lst_media/ampara-civil-society-organisations-report-launched-blocked-by-election-commission/)

## LST’s Facebook platforms

LST sees a significant part of its online engagement on Facebook, which remains the most widely-used social media platform in Sri Lanka. All reach statistics have been recorded for the period of January 1 2019 to December 31 2019.

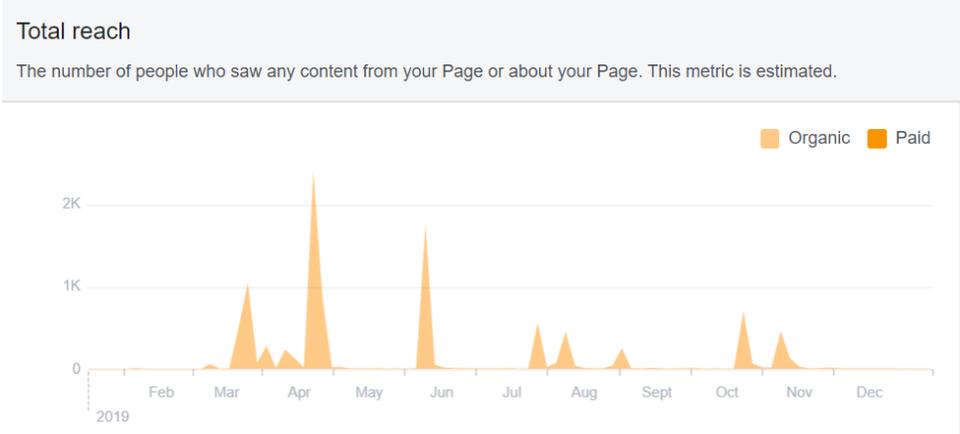
### LST official page – facebook.com/lstlanka

Over the year, LST’s Facebook saw an overall reach of over 15,000 viewers.



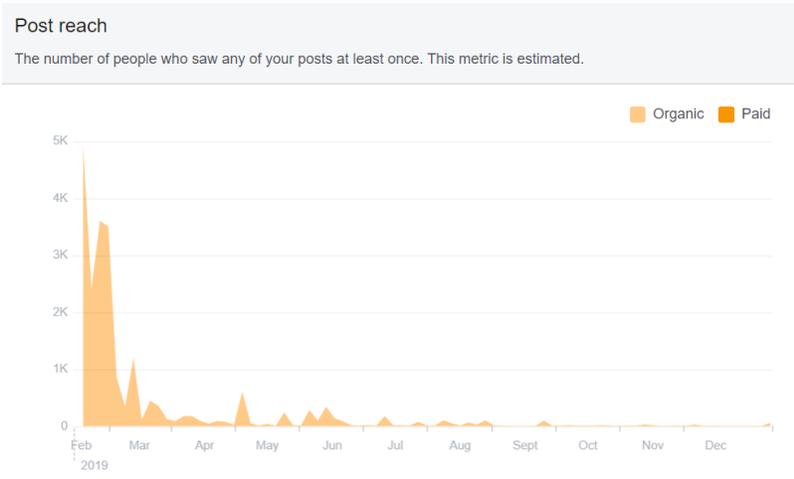
**PARL: People’s Alliance for Right to Land – facebook.com/parlsl**

PARL’s Facebook saw an overall reach of over 10,000 viewers during the year 2019. Updates from PARL Land Commission visits, including anecdotes and photographs from those giving testimony, were among the highest-performing posts.



**Citizens’ Dialogue – facebook.com/citizensdialogue**

Citizens’ Dialogue, a Facebook page begun on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2019, saw an overall reach of over 12,000 viewers.



## LST in media

- LST's statement on pardon for Shramantha Jayamaha featured in Daily FT

<http://www.ft.lk/opinion/Law-and-Society-Trust-on-presidential-pardon-for-Shramantha-Jayamaha/14-689604>

- Vidura Munasinghe quoted in article on micro finance in Daily Mirror

<http://www.dailymirror.lk/news-features/TRAPPED-IN-A-DEBT-CYCLE/131-174081>

- Interview with Dr. Sakuntala Kadirgamar on human rights and human dignity - <https://www.forum-asia.org/?p=30505>
- LST's statement on pardon for Shramantha Jayamaha featured in Daily FT  
<http://www.ft.lk/opinion/Law-and-Society-Trust-on-presidential-pardon-for-Shramantha-Jayamaha/14-689604>
- Vidura Munasinghe quoted in article on micro finance in Daily Mirror  
<http://www.dailymirror.lk/news-features/TRAPPED-IN-A-DEBT-CYCLE/131-174081>

- Sandun Thudugala quoted in article on Silavathurai land struggle in Sunday Observer

<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2019/04/07/news-features/promises-release-land-yet-be-fulfilledsilavathurai-residents-fight-tooth>

- Interview with Dr. Sakuntala Kadirgamar on constitutional reform in The Morning

<http://www.themorning.lk/reformed-constitution-to-guarantee-equality-vital-sakuntala-kadirgamar/>

- Sandun Thudugala quoted in article on Silavathurai land struggle in Sunday Observer  
<http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2019/04/07/news-features/promises-release-land-yet-be-fulfilledsilavathurai-residents-fight-tooth>
- Interview with Dr. Sakuntala Kadirgamar on constitutional reform in The Morning  
<http://www.themorning.lk/reformed-constitution-to-guarantee-equality-vital-sakuntala-kadirgamar/>

## Donors and Partners

LST was privileged to receive programme and long-term support from donors and partners committed to our values and objectives.

### International Donors

AJWS (American Jewish World Service)  
CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development)  
Diakonia  
European Union  
Ford Foundation  
IDEA-MSI (IDEA- Increased Demand and Engagement for Accountability) - (MSI - Systems International)  
IDRC (International Development Research Centre)  
NED (National Endowment for Democracy)  
UNDEF (United Nations Democracy Fund)  
WE Effect

### National Donors

Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust

### International Partners

Business and Human Rights Resource Centre  
Forum Asia  
Minority Rights Group  
South Asia Collective  
ESCR-Net

### International Research Partners

University of Edinburgh  
Goldsmith College, University of London  
University of Warwick

### National Partners

People's Alliance for Right to Land  
Chrysalis  
Savistri Women's Movement  
National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO)  
Centre for Society and Religion (CSR)

## Library

In 2019, the library reference collection stands at 9343 books.

LST subscribed to new digital libraries, Jstor and LawLanka to support research. In addition, the library updated classification of the reference collection as well as scanned and uploaded old publications, including the LST Review, to the website

A Library Automation Project commenced in 19th December 2019.

The library is developing an active outreach program. LST participated in the National

Reading Month in October 2019 and donated LST publications to academic libraries. LST also engaged with the Law Faculty in Colombo and donated books and participated in the university book fairs.

The Library is active in preserving the collection. It consulted the Preservation and Conservation Department of the National Library for technical advice on fumigation, which was done in December 2019.

## Organisational updates

With the support of Strategic Inspirations, LST undertook a review of its organizational structure and salary scales to bring them in line with comparable institutions.

In 2019 LST initiated the process of developing a new strategic plan for 2020-2025.

## Financial Highlights

	2017	Percentage increase / (decrease) year on year	2018	Percentage increase / (decrease) year on year	2019	Percentage increase / (decrease) year on year
<b>Income</b>						
Grant Income	41,920	12%	60,614	45%	77,645	28%
Publication Income	239	-40%	213	(-11%)	65	(-69%)*
Interest Income	4,516	8%	4,825	7%	5,052	5%
	2017	Percentage increase / (decrease) year on year	2018	Percentage increase / (decrease) year on year	2019	Percentage increase / (decrease) year on year
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(-186)	(-105%)**	5,756	3195%	(1,741)	(-130%)***
Total Assets	93,202	0%	104,869	13%	108,648	4%

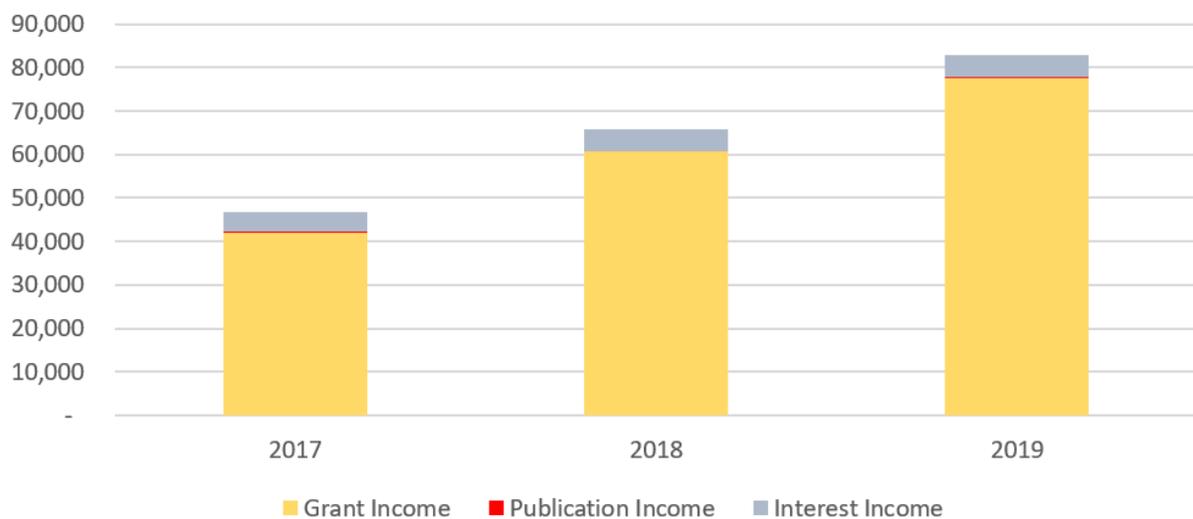
\*-69% is due to significant deduction Rs 147,415/- Year on year de

\*\*105% Reduction 2017 is due to net off 2016 Gain consisted 2.5 Valuation gain from Library books and Unexpected Funeral cost Of LST Employee.

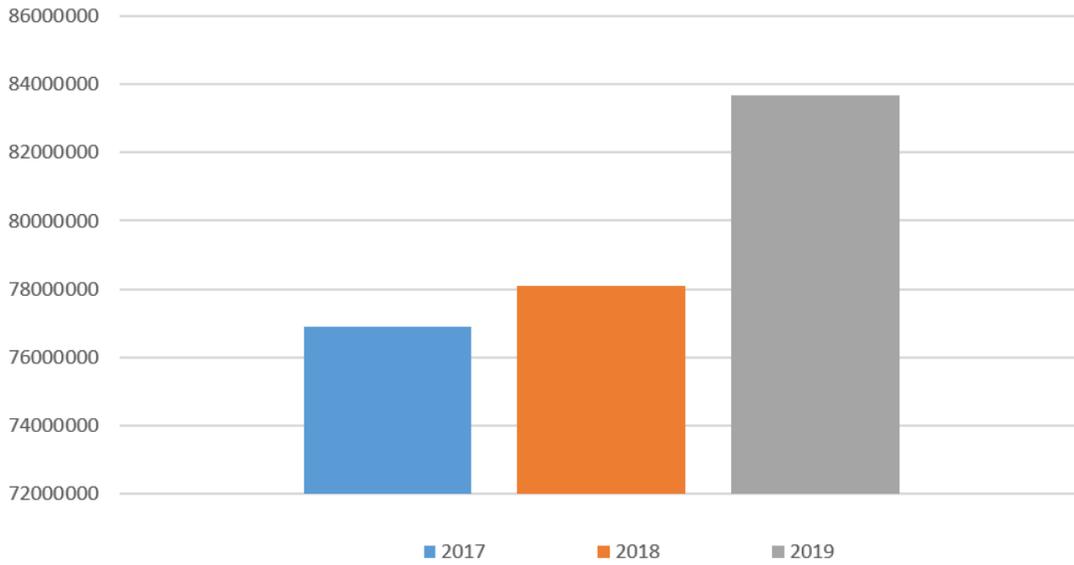
\*\*\* 130% Reduction in 2019 is due to asset depreciation and one of donor receivable funds in 2019 had been received in 2020

\*Amounts shown in thousands

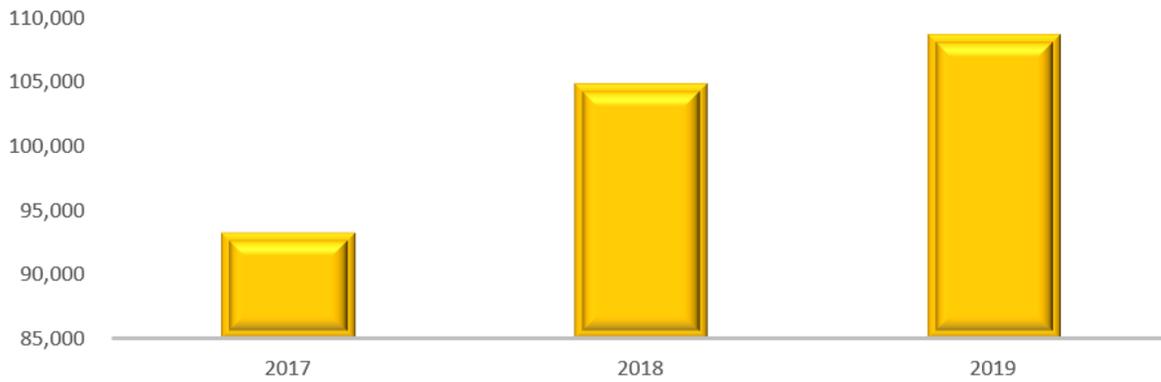
### Income



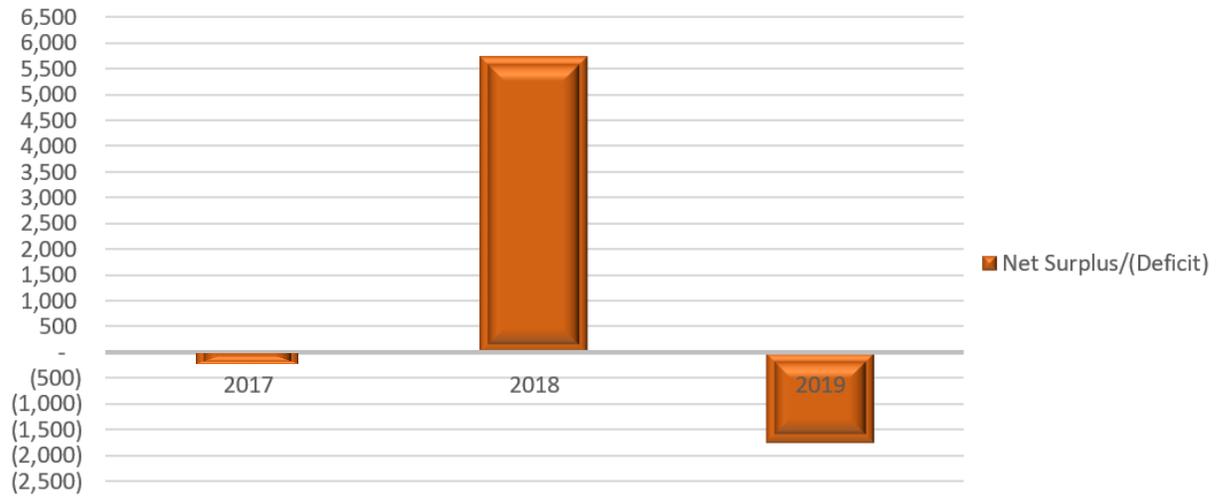
## Short Term Investments



## Total Assets



## Net Surplus/Deficit



# Annual Report of the Directors for the year ended 31st December 2019

The Directors present herewith the Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Law & Society Trust for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019.

## Nature of Business of the Trust

- To promote and conduct research into the indigenous legal culture of Asia and its relationship to the religious traditions of the Continent of Asia.
- To initiate studies in order to provide legal solutions appropriate to the problems and needs of contemporary Asian society from the indigenous legal culture and concepts of Asia.
- To establish centers for research and training on all aspects of law and social change, legal theory, social theory, comparative law, anthropology and related fields.
- To sponsor or co-sponsor with other institutions, lectures, meetings, seminars and symposia in pursuance of its applied and academic work and for the diffusion of legal knowledge.
- To promote an understanding and belief in the protection of human rights and in furtherance thereof to promote international understanding and co-operation in an universal respect for the observance of human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion, colour and creed.
- To promote and encourage, in furtherance of protection of human rights, acquisition and diffusion of knowledge among the masses.

## Financial Statements

The financial statements of the Law & Society Trust for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 include the Income Statement, Statement of Financial Position and the notes to the financial statements as set out on pages 3 to 17 of the audited financial statements.

## Auditor's Report

The Auditor's Report is set out on page 1 and 2 of the audited financial statements.

## Accounting Policies

Accounting policies used are summarized on pages 7 to 15 of the financial statements and are consistent with those used in the previous year.

## Directors Remuneration

The Directors receive no remuneration from the Law & Society Trust.

## Donations

No donations were given by the Trust for the period under review.

## Directors

The Directors of the Law & Society Trust as at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 were as follows:

Dr. J A S Felix

Dr. H N Amarasuriya

Mr. G J T Alagaratnam

Dr. F F Haniffa

Miss Anushya Coomaraswamy

Mr. Tissa Jayatilaka

Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda

Dr. F F Haniffa and Dr. H N Amarasuriya retire by rotation in terms of the Articles of Association of the Trust and being eligible offer themselves for re-election.

A Resolutions for the appointment of Mr. Tissa Jayatilaka who is over 70 years will be proposed at the AGM of the Trust.

The Board met on four occasions during the period under review. The attendance at Meetings of the Board of Directors during the period under review is as follows:

Director	No. of Meetings Attended
Dr. Shivaji Felix	4
Dr. H N Amarasuriya	2
Mr. G J T Alagaratnam	3
Dr. F F Haniffa	1
Miss. Anushya Coomaraswamy	4
Mr. Tissa Jayatilaka	2
Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda	1

\*Dr. F F Haniffa was temporarily overseas from September 2018 and returned to Sri Lanka in June 2019 and had duly informed the Board.

\* Prof. Jayadeva Uyangoda was appointed on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

**Amounts payable to the firm holding office as External Auditor**

The remuneration payable by the Trust to the external auditor is given in Note 16 to the financial statements.

**Auditor’s relationship or any interest with the Company**

The Directors are satisfied that the auditors did not have any relationship or any interest with the Trust that would impair their independence.

**Directors’ interests in contracts**

The Directors have confirmed that none of them have conflict of interest in relation to operations and transactions or contracts and have no related party interests in any transactions or contracts of the Trust.

**Going Concern**

The financial statements are prepared on a going concern basis. After making adequate inquiries from the management, the Directors are satisfied that the Trust has adequate resources to continue its operations in the foreseeable future as a going concern.

**Appointment of Auditors**

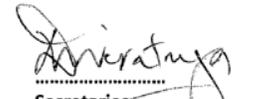
The Directors recommend the re-appointment of Messrs. KPMG, Chartered Accountants as auditors of the Trust.

A resolution to re-appoint Messrs. KPMG, Chartered Accountants, will be proposed at the Annual General Meeting of the Trust.

This Annual Report of the Directors has been signed on behalf of the Board by:

  
.....  
Director

  
.....  
Director

  
.....  
Secretaries  
Director  
SECRETARIUS (PRIVATE) LIMITED.  
PV 5958

Colombo  
10<sup>th</sup> July 2020



## **Law & Society Trust**

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Sri Lanka

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