

## Unveiling Corruption in Public Health Sector Procurement Video

### Introduction:

With over 600 state hospitals, nearly 200 private hospitals, thousands of pharmacies, and laboratories scattered across the island nation of Sri Lanka, the health landscape appears vast and varied [\[source\]](#). In a nation grappling with numerous challenges, the integrity of the public health sector is a primary concern. Amidst a backdrop of global crises, including a pandemic and economic turmoil, the problem of corruption looms large, threatening the well-being of Sri Lanka's citizens. This video endeavours to shed light on the negative impact of corruption in public health sector procurement, urging for transparency, accountability, and urgent reforms and to advocate for open contracting in procurement.

### Main Issues:

*The video will delve into several key issues plaguing the public health sector procurement landscape [can provide more information if needed. Not all these issues need to be included as it is mainly to inform the public about the situation]:*

- **Counterfeit Immunoglobulin Scandal:** Highlighting the discovery of forged documents leading to the circulation of low-quality immunoglobulin vials, ensuing a number of adverse allergic reactions in patients, and the arrest of former Health Minister, Keheliya Rambukwella, implicated in the scandal [\[Source\]](#).
- **NMRA Act Sec 109 Misuse:** Addressing allegations of misuse by former NMRA CEO, expedited drug purchases and utilising emergency purchases without justification. [\[Source\]](#)
- **SPC Procurement Delay:** Discussing the Auditor General's report exposing delays and non-compliance with procurement guidelines. [\[Source\]](#)
- **Financial Mismanagement:** Examining the transition from MSMIS to Swastha, conflicting expense reports, and lingering concerns despite efforts for improvement. [\[Source\]](#)
- **Lack of Coordination:** Highlighting persistent coordination challenges among healthcare entities, hindering monitoring and compliance efforts. [\[Source\]](#)
- **Importing Counterfeit Drugs:** Investigating quality issues with imported drugs, bypassing policies, and concerns over defective medical supplies. [\[Source\]](#)
  - TISL filed a petition stating that serious doubts have arisen regarding the quality, safety, and efficacy of the pharmaceuticals purchased under the Indian Credit Line from The Savorite Pharmaceuticals (Pvt) Limited. [\[Source\]](#)

### Human Cost of Corruption:

*Discuss the real-life implications of the corruption in the health sector which is seen in the human cost of mismanagement, malpractice and substandard drugs.*

Beyond the complexities of bureaucratic discourse and financial implications, lies an undeniable truth - corruption within public health procurement exacts a profound human toll. Each fatality and allergic reaction serve as a reminder of the imperative for accountability and systemic reform.

Examples of human cost [Can provide more info if needed]:

Date	Description	Outcome	Notes	Source
April 2022	Shortage of Cetirizine HCL Syrup in multiple hospitals	Stock levels reported as zero, affecting patient care	Delays and inefficiencies within SPC and MSD identified as causes of shortages in Auditor General's report	<a href="#">AG's Report</a>
April 2023	Death of Pregnant Woman in Peradeniya Hospital	Allegations of death due to defective anaesthetic drug administered during surgery	Incident raises concerns over patient safety and quality of medical care	<a href="#">Sunday Times</a>
May 5th, 2023	Shortage of radioisotope for PET scans at Apeksha Hospital	Cancer patients facing critical shortages affecting diagnosis and treatment	Lack of vital medical supplies highlights systemic issues within healthcare system	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPtdBhIKgs0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wPtdBhIKgs0</a>
July 1st, 2023	Woman dies at Ragama Hospital due to allergic reaction to antibiotic	Ministry of Health withdraws entire batch of antibiotic	Incident prompts scrutiny of drug quality and safety protocols	<a href="#">Newswire</a>

July 7th, 2023	Death of patient at National Eye Hospital	Opposition leader accuses Health Minister of using inferior quality medicines	Allegations raise questions about procurement and quality control processes	<a href="#">Sunday times</a>
July 11th, 2023	Death of patient at Peradeniya Teaching Hospital after being administered a drug, Ceftriaxone	Health Ministry acknowledges 63 drugs failing quality tests in 2023	Concerns raised over efficacy and safety of drugs administered in hospitals	<a href="#">Sunday times</a>
July 19th, 2023	Death of patient at Kegalle General Hospital	Health Minister provides no clear answers, attributes deaths to patient allergies	Lack of accountability in addressing patient fatalities	<a href="#">Sunday Times</a>
August 13th, 2023	Death of 57-year-old forces withdrawal of antibiotic at Gampaha Hospital	Use of antibiotic temporarily discontinued after patient death	Incident prompts review of drug safety protocols	<a href="#">Daily Mirror</a>
August 2023	Withholding use of antibiotic after patient's death at Gampaha Hospital	Health authorities take precautionary measures after patient fatality	Continued scrutiny over drug safety and quality assurance	<a href="#">Sunday Times</a>
September 2023	High number of deaths at Badulla Hospital due to heart failures	Concerns raised by GMOA over lack of angiogram machine and high death rate due to heart attacks	Inadequate medical facilities highlighted as contributing factor to patient fatalities	<a href="#">Ada Derana</a>

These incidents underscore the dire consequences of procurement failures and quality control lapses within the public health sector, emphasising the urgent need for transparency, accountability, and systemic reforms.

#### **Key Issues from [AG's Report](#):**

*Delve into the shortage of medical supplies, factors exacerbating the situation, and recommendations from the Auditor General for effective procurement and storage.*

According to the AG's report:

- Medical supply shortages in Sri Lanka stem from an exchange deficit and poor coordination among key entities like the Medical Supplies Division and Ministry of Health.
- Despite the economic crisis impacting supply chains, corruption within the health sector exacerbates the issue. The Auditor General noted that aside from the exchange deficit, factors like inadequate coordination and monitoring of procurement schedules contribute to the shortages.

#### **[COPA report](#) Concerns:**

*Discuss systemic failures in pharmaceutical procurement, storage, and quality control highlighted in the COPA report, emphasising the need for regulatory reforms and infrastructure improvements.*

According to the COPA report:

- The recent COPA report in 2021 highlighted systemic failures in pharmaceutical procurement, storage, and quality control, as it addressed investigations into seven government institutions summoned before the Committee on Public Accounts. Key findings revealed issues like improper storage conditions and compromised patient safety, emphasizing the urgent need for regulatory reforms and infrastructure enhancements to ensure pharmaceutical effectiveness and safety in Sri Lanka.

#### **Auditor General's Recommendations:**

*Explore recommendations to avoid delays, maintain stock levels, improve coordination, and maximise assistance projects for effective medical supply management.*

According to the AG's report, the AG recommends:

- Delegate procurement responsibilities promptly.
- Maintain a three-month stock of supplies for balanced control and cost.
- Implement a re-order stock level system for faster procurement.
- Ensure proper management of stock levels.
- Update and utilize computer systems effectively.
- Enhance coordination among involved entities and monitor supply orders closely

### **COPA General Recommendations:**

*Examine recommendations to amend procurement plans, regulate drug purchases, ensure proper storage, and enhance quality control mechanisms.*

- Revise procurement plans and regulate drug purchases.
- Ensure proper storage and estimate medicines for procurement.
- Expedite circular issuance and address post-purchase quality issues.
- Minimize supply expiration and ensure timely project implementation.
- Rectify unregistered medicines issuance and enhance quality control.

### **Questions for Public:**

*Pose pertinent questions regarding the accountability of responsible officials, efforts to address drug shortages, implementation of recommendations, and the nexus between economic and procurement crises.*

- Why haven't the recommendations from the Auditor General and COPE been put into action?
- What is the next step for victims of this issue? How will they be compensated?
- What actions has the Health Ministry taken regarding the 63 drugs that failed quality tests in 2023? What steps are being taken to restock the 217 drugs currently in shortage?
- How does the government plan to improve accountability in the health sector, given the recent scandals and issues surrounding the health sector?

### **Empowering Public Engagement:**

*Discuss how engaging the public in combating corruption within the public health sector is paramount to fostering transparency and accountability.*

Here are key avenues through which individuals can contribute:

**Public Vigilance and Reporting:** Encourage individuals to remain vigilant and report instances of corruption in public health procurement.

**Advocacy for Open Contracting:** Advocate for the adoption of open contracting practices in procurement processes.

**Engagement with Regulatory Bodies:** Encourage active engagement with regulatory bodies responsible for overseeing public health procurement.

**Utilisation of Reporting Platforms:** Promote the use of dedicated platforms such as [apesalli.lk](https://apesalli.lk) for reporting public health corruption.