



**INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY**

Initiative in Education & Lifelong Learning

## **Appreciation Programme**

# **Participatory Social Audit: A Tool for Social Accountability**

## **Module - III**

The development of Appreciation Programmes has been made possible through the technical and financial support of DVV International, Ford Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, Swiss Development Corporation, University of Victoria (UVic) and PRIA

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## Introduction And Objectives

### Introduction

Many of the recently launched programmes, like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS), Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) in India and the Safe Delivery Incentive Programme (SDIP) in Nepal, provide a central role for social audit. (Ministry of law and justice, 2005). The basic objective of these schemes is to ensure public accountability in the implementation of projects, laws and policies.

The operational guidelines of the MNREGS bestow the responsibility on the *Gram Sabha* to conduct social audit of the schemes, implemented under MNREGS. (Ministry of rural development, June, 2011). Similarly, JnNURM promotes community participation of communities in the development of the urban areas, which prompts the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to be transparent and responsible.

### Objectives

This module will help learners to understand:

- Roles and responsibilities of elected members of local governments
- Experiences that are emerging in relation to social audit as a tool
- New areas where the tool of social audit tool has high potential

## Unit 1: Roles And Responsibilities Of Elected Members Of Local Governments In Social Audit

As we have already learnt in the last two modules, social audit is an on-going process, through which potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders in an activity or project are involved at every stage, from the planning of the activity through the implementation, monitoring and down to the evaluation stages. The roles and responsibilities of the elected representatives in a social audit can be categorized as those before, during and after the implementation of a project.

### The Small Flat Scheme in Chandigarh (2006)

Chandigarh Housing Board, Chandigarh (India), with the vision of providing safe and affordable housing to urban poor, formulated the “Chandigarh Small Flat Scheme” in 2006. To identify the extent and number of slum dwellers existing in the city and to allot one room flats to them, on a monthly license-fee basis, a survey was conducted in March 2006.

Infrastructure Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) was requested to conduct the survey. The various aspects covered in this survey were:

- Socio economic profile
- Housing conditions
- Access to facilities and basic amenities
- Willingness to relocate
- Willingness to pay for facilities provided
- Preferences and perceptions, of slum dwellers towards rehabilitation

The biometric survey used in the process helped the agency in preventing duplicity in the identification of the slum dwellers. This system also helped build a permanent database of all existing families living in slums in the city (School of planning and architecture; PRIA, December 2011).

## 1.1 Before Implementation Of the Project<sup>1</sup>

Before the actual implementation of the social audit, it is imperative that local leaders and elected representatives visualise their role in the entire process (PRIA, 2008-09). This includes discussion on the intended benefits of a particular project and planning on how to reach those goals. Meticulous planning is a critical aspect of the successful implementation of any scheme, through which the objectives of employment generation, creation of quality assets etc. are to be achieved. Local governments can take up the responsibility and prepare a portfolio of projects and submit the same to the agency responsible for scrutiny and preliminary approval.

In a scheme like the MNREGS, the onus is on the government and its elected representatives to collect the required information. All information must be carefully scrutinized to avoid malpractices.

## 1.2 During Implementation Of The Project

Some of the roles and responsibilities of elected representatives during implementation of a project are:

### *1.2.1 Sharing Of Information About The Works*

It is the responsibility of the local government to dispatch information regarding schemes in a timely manner, to the beneficiaries. Having a Citizen Information Board (CIB) with the logo of the scheme/ programme set up with all the essential information, details of work, Schedule of Rates (SoRs), estimates, work status etc. would enhance this process.

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<sup>1</sup> The project in this context refers to MNREGS

### *1.2.2 Maintenance Of Funds*

For the purpose of maintenance of funds, local governments should open a separate bank account. This account should be jointly operated by the head of the local government, regularly reviewed by the other members, to ensure that the money is being used for none other than the purpose for which it was assigned.

For a programme like the MNREGS, the local government must ensure that every person/ institution working under any work scheme gets the minimum wage rates as fixed by the state government. Further, it must be ensured that equal wages are paid to both men and women workers and wages released to every worker within the stipulated period.

### *1.2.3 Formation of Vigilance and Monitoring Committee*

It would be beneficial to form a Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (VMC), for every work sanctioned under a scheme. It is the responsibility of the government to organize meetings of the VMC and provide necessary information.

Learners can assess the type of facilities provided at worksites in their respective countries, under a particular scheme financed and implemented by government agencies.

### **Issues addressed through social audit during “Urban Development Project, Chandigarh”**

It was during a housing project “Urban Development in Chandigarh”, India that it was realised that if checked, the following issues, could ensure quality of the work:

- Quality construction, no signs of cracks in the walls, leakage in roofs or falling of glass panes from windows
- Proper partitions in houses to create rooms, additional electricity points, kitchen slabs, windows in bathroom etc
- Regular supply of potable drinking water
- Facilities like schools, health clinics, and community centres in the vicinity
- A proper system of solid waste management
- Alternative options of livelihood for rehabilitated persons
- Easy access to public transportation
- Common areas and recreation zones
- Establishment of a post occupancy grievance redressal system

### 1.2.4 Maintenance Of Records

It is the responsibility of the elected representatives of the local government to ensure that the various registers are properly maintained under any particular scheme. A list of documents that must be maintained by the local governments is given below.

#### List of Documents

	Document	Contents	Role in the process
1	Monthly Progress Report (MPR)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) No. of city-wide projects, project cost, funding shares, no. of approved dwelling units.</li> <li>2) Housing units: completed, allotted and under-progress</li> <li>3) No. of installments (Central/State) received by the corporation in sanctioned projects</li> <li>4) Expenditure incurred in projects for social audit</li> </ol>	Selection of settlements
2	Detailed Project Reports (DPRs)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Layout Details (Drawings)</li> <li>2) List of Amenities</li> <li>3) Building Quality Specifications</li> <li>4) Costing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To cover the technical information into JIS (Janta Information System) or Public Information System, so that people themselves can assess and analyse the same</li> <li>2. To assess deviation in approved DPRs</li> </ol>
3	Beneficiary Lists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Contains names of people surveyed, with their eligibility criteria and list of documents held</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To assess criteria for allotment to people</li> <li>2. Assessing the level of exclusion and wrong inclusions while listing</li> </ol>
4	Allotment Lists	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) List of beneficiaries with allotted house numbers</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To check whether all eligible beneficiaries have been included in allotment lists</li> <li>2. Deviation of allotment from beneficiaries</li> </ol>
5	Notifications & Regulations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Notifications and regulations, regarding beneficiary selection.</li> <li>2) Other implementation related documents, like waiver of stamp duties, beneficiary share etc.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To understand process of beneficiary selection</li> <li>2. State initiatives and provisions for smooth implementation</li> </ol>



### 1.3 After Implementation Of Project

The roles and responsibilities of elected representatives after the completion of a project can be categorized as follows:

#### *1.3.1 Maintenance of Assets created after a project*

In any infrastructure development scheme, it is intended that after its implementation, there would be certain assets created at the local level. Sustainability of these assets depends upon high quality of work and regular maintenance of the assets after construction. This has to be ensured by the local representatives, with the support of the local people.

#### *1.3.2 Organising Social Audits*

It is the responsibility of the local government to organise community meetings and conduct social audit.

#### *1.3.3 Social Audit: A Continuous Process*

During the meetings, it would be the responsibility of local governments to provide all relevant documents including the muster rolls, bills, vouchers, measurement books, copies of sanction orders and other related books of accounts and papers, to the community people conducting the social audit. In a broader sense, social audit may be regarded as a means of promoting consultation, transparency, accountability and grievance redressal (Centre for good governance, 2005).

### Social Audit of WEMA Project

The Water Efficient Maize for Africa (WEMA) project seeks to bring royalty-free, drought-resistant maize varieties to five African countries (Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda), by 2018. In doing so, WEMA faces issues of public trust that are uniquely associated with complex public-private partnerships (PPPs) that involve the development of genetically modified (GM) crops. There are ethical and commercialization concerns related to past behaviour of biotechnology companies, and well-known social and cultural sensitivities surrounding GM crops. Such concerns lead to diminished trust on the part of stakeholders and the public, and could pose a significant barrier to the achievement of WEMA's humanitarian goals.

The Ethical, Social, Cultural and Commercialization (ESC2) Program at the McLaughlin-Rotman Centre for Global Health (MRC), University Health Network and University of Toronto conducted a second annual independent social audit of the WEMA project in 2010. The goal of this process was to help foster improved management practices, accountability and transparency, which in turn would help to build trust among the partners in the WEMA project, and between WEMA and the public.

One hundred interviews were conducted across five WEMA countries, keeping a focus on ESC2 issues in the WEMA project. Key documents, project meetings and interaction of project staff were reviewed.

During the sharing of the social audit report, stakeholders acknowledged the technical research and human capacity created throughout the development of WEMA seed, with hands-on training and funding to the scientific community. During the process, stakeholders requested to enhance capacity-building efforts for improvement of the National Agriculture Research System (NARS). Stakeholders in all five WEMA countries also commented on the limited human resource capacity of the NARS (University Health Network and University of Toronto , 2011).

Learners can assess and explore the various mechanisms available in their countries to conduct social audits in sectors like primary education, primary health, and drinking water.

## Unit 2: Experiences of social audit and recent developments

Large-scale irregularities in the process of beneficiary selection and allotment of their entitlements have raised issues on the lack of social accountability. Regulatory audits have been found incapable of addressing issues of forced evictions, absence of proper allotment list, missing names in beneficiary list etc.

### 2.1 Social Audit And Urban Development

The recent surge in urban population has demanded better mechanisms to ensure transparency in infrastructure development schemes. (Government of India) Right To Information (RTI) Citizen Charter, mandatory social audit under MNREGS etc. are among these mechanisms. Plans to incorporate social auditing in schemes like Basic Services to Urban Poor (BSUP) and the Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP) is underway (CUE-CEPT; Unnati; Samarthan, June 2011).

### 2.2 Social Audit And Recent Developments

Several countries are using social audit as a tool for bringing transparency and ensuring accountability in public authorities. Article 39 of the Bangladeshi constitution entitles its citizens to know details of public expenditure. However, democratic institutions like the election commission, political parties, different parliamentary committees for overseeing monetary and public expenditure, Anti-Corruption Commission and other statutory mechanisms still need restructuring.

In Uganda, a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey conducted in 1995 helped increase enrolment of students in schools.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Audit of Schemes Rules 2011 mandates state governments to submit a summary of the social audits to the Comptroller Auditor General (CAG) of India.

However, as different agencies are using different types of audit and in different ways, there is an issue of standardisation of the audit process. In a programme organised by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, in 2012, it was highlighted that it is very challenging for the Office to summarise all the audit reports, as they are conducted in different ways and also very high in numbers.

#### **Social Audit in Health Sector Programme of Nepal**

As a new, more democratic political era opens in Nepal, the demand for greater citizen participation and improvement governance is growing. Government and civil society alike are pushing for more transparent and accountable systems and social accountability tools like social audits, are being introduced.

Over the past two years, the Department of Health Services (DOHS) has begun implementing two different social audit approaches and guidelines. The first (linked to the Aama Programme - formerly the Safe Delivery Incentive Programme) is developed by the Family Health Division of Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP). The second one takes a broader look at health service provision, developed by the Management Division, with a view to harmonise social auditing in Nepal's public health sector. The Primary Health Care Revitalisation Division led a review of these different approaches is being used in the health and social sectors, while drawing on the experience of the South Asian region (NHSSP, 2011).

Learners can find out that what all are the latest developments that are taking place in their countries for promotion of social audit at the local level.

To maximize the potential and strengthen the process of social audits, the state has to undertake capacity building of local governments. A successful social audit can only be done with active cooperation between the government and civil society organisations, with adequate financial and human resources.

### Summary

The Module deals with the roles governments and elected representatives play in the process of social audit. This implies strict vigilance throughout its implementation and active participation in ensuring that the process takes place systematically.

The authorities have various responsibilities before, during and after the implementation of projects. These include formation of Vigilance and Monitoring Committees (VMCs), efficient dispatch of information, maintenance of funds and assets created after the project, maintenance of records etc.

The experience from the recent past has shown that rapid urbanization has raised issues regarding transparency. Social audits have thus become a mechanism for efficient service delivery for the government. The RTI, mandatory social audit under the MNREGS etc. are all examples of steps that the Indian government has taken to meet these new expectations.

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