

The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017

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Background

- The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017 is an act to review delivery of public services and implementation of government schemes and programmes through participatory social audit by government and the stakeholders.
- It was passed by the Meghalaya Legislative Assembly and received the assent of the Governor on 1st April 2017.

Key objectives

- To facilitate 'Concurrent Audit' of development programs and public services
- To monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the development programs and public services
- To monitor and encourage transparency in the delivery mechanisms of the developmental programs and public services
- To enhance citizen's ownership in the development initiatives taken up by the Government
- To provide a platform for airing of public grievances and ensure a time-bound redress of the same

Key Activities

- Establish a systematic concurrent audit system by involving the trained Civil Society Organizations
- Advise the State Government on all matters concerning the implementation of the Act
- Review the monitoring and grievance redressal mechanism
- Monitoring the implementation of this Act
- Commission research studies and surveys to suggest effective strategies of implementation to the Govt.
- Preparation of annual reports to be laid before the Assembly by the State Government

Methods

- The State Government shall constitute a Council to be called the State Social Audit Council to discharge the functions, and perform the duties, assigned to it by or under the Act
- The Programme Implementation & Evaluation Department is notified as Nodal Department responsible for the implementation of the Act
- The Deputy Commissioner shall be the principal authority at the District level as the District Social Audit Coordinator
- The departments, responsible for the implementation of the developmental programmes and public services shall identify officers not below the rank of:
 - a) The Director as the State Nodal Officer
 - b) The District Head as the District Nodal Officer
 - c) The Block level Officer as the Block level Nodal Officer

Methods (contd.)

- The general body of the VEC (Village Councils) and the Locality Committee, as the case may be, shall identify the Village or Locality level Social Audit Committees through a process of consensus
- The Village/Locality Social Audit Committee shall assist the Social Audit Facilitators (SAF) in their activities
- At the Village and locality level, the Social Audit will be facilitated by reputed Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs) and they will be termed as Social Audit Facilitators
- The Nodal Deptt. in consultation with the District and State level authorities shall prepare social audit reporting formats, resource material, etc.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- The Nodal Department shall monitor the action taken by State Government through its departments at various levels and incorporate the Action Taken Report in the annual report laid before the State Legislature by the State Government
- The Deputy Commissioner will review, coordinate, supervise and monitor the social audits to be taken up at the Block level
- The District Social Audit Coordinator shall ensure that the Social Audit Facilitators conduct Concurrent Social Audit for various activities on a random sampling basis

Results & Expected Outcomes

- Social Audit shall be conducted in at least 50% of the Villages and localities during a financial year
- Based on representations received from any citizen/s, the District Social Audit Coordinator can conduct a Concurrent Audit
- Public Hearing shall decide the timelines and responsibility is entrusted to the concerned department or officer or stakeholder for effective redress of the grievances raised therein and for initiating time bound corrective measures on the findings
- Any delay in taking corrective measures shall be subject to explanation by the respective implementing agency or officer concerned. Departmental proceedings shall be initiated against willful defaulters

Results of first round of social audits

1. 180 local youth trained in social audits
2. 11 Departments trained in Social Audit
3. Village Monitoring Committees of 15 schemes familiarized with mandate and roles
4. Nearly 1100 applications received through Social Audit Public Hearings
5. All Social Audit Reports in public domain-
http://mssat.nic.in/index.php/mssat_controller/reports_mssat
6. Protocol on social audit that includes platform for grievance redress and filing of applications- finalised through the pilots
7. Draft Rules based on pilots and suggestions from public finalised
8. 21 policy level issues identified through social audits wherein findings could be redressed only through changes in policy

Key insights of the Meghalaya Social Audit Act

1. The citizens could see how their funds and programs are implemented by the Govt. machinery on a concurrent basis.
2. Course corrections could be done instantly on many issues of entitlements like pensions, Mid Day Meal, ICDS etc. Thus this Social Audit Act is providing an enabling mechanism to the people to get their entitlements with dignity
3. Some of the findings require policy interventions at GoM and GoI level. Thus it has given us a scope for evidence-based policy making.
4. We found this Act is building the 'state capability' to facilitate participatory governance.
5. This Act can be seen as RTI (Right to Information) plus Act as it not only ensures the mandatory disclosure of information under RTI Act but also provide a mechanism to get the due entitlements for the people.

Thank You