

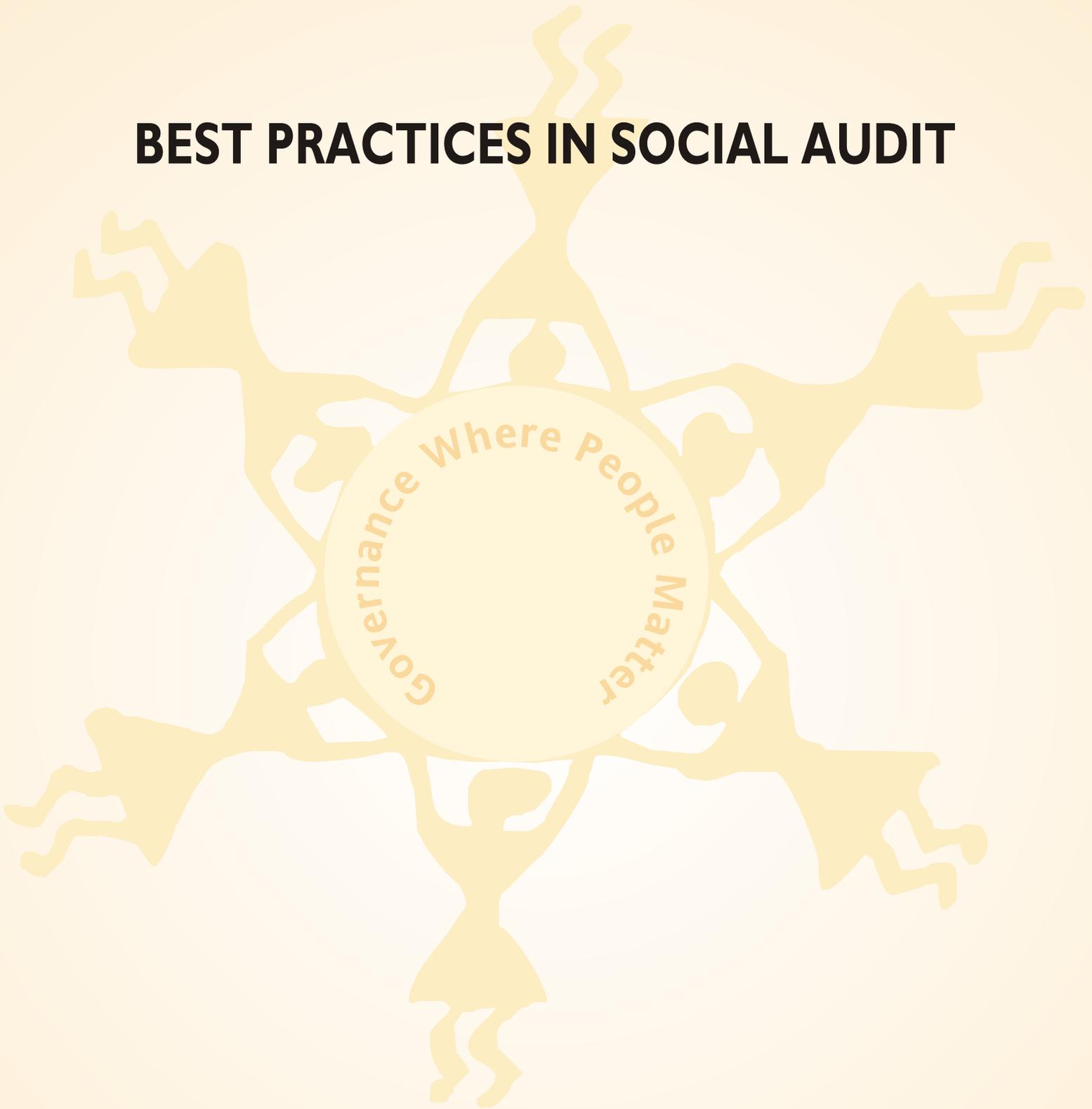
A large, stylized yellow graphic of a person with arms raised, holding a circular emblem with the text 'Governance Where People Matter'. The figure is composed of simple, rounded shapes, giving it a friendly and approachable appearance. The circular emblem is positioned in the center of the figure's torso, and the text is written in a curved path around its perimeter. The background of the cover is a gradient of light yellow to a darker, muted red-orange at the top left, with a diagonal line separating the two colors.

BEST PRACTICES IN SOCIAL AUDIT

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Concept and relevance of social audit: Social audit is conducted by the people in coordination with the local administration. It is a process in which details of the resource—financial and non-financial—used by public agencies for development initiatives are shared with the people, often through a public platform. It allows people to enforce accountability and transparency, providing the ultimate users an opportunity to scrutinise development initiatives. Social audit not only strengthens downward accountability but also helps create ‘voices’ for the poor and marginalised sections. The exercise involves active participation of primary stakeholders, that is, people directly affected by any department/agency/ scheme/programmes or law being audited.

Legal provisions for social audit in India: In response to the demands for explicit accountability provisions, a number of acts passed in the recent past have transparency and accountability provisions. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA), conformity acts of different states and National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) are major examples. Even before the 73rd CAA, the Ashok Mehta Committee had recommended for the establishment of “Social Audit Cell” at the district level as a watchdog to monitor the utilisation of funds earmarked for the socio-economic development of weaker sections. Defining social audit, the Ashok Mehta Committee wrote in its report, “this would not be in the nature of financial audit or even of general programmed discussions. Broadly, it will be subjected to closer scrutiny. The criterion will be not financial disbursements but the extent of the benefits reaching to the targeted groups.”

Article 243(a) states that ‘a Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide’. Article 243(b) states that ‘Gram Sabha means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of the Panchayat at the village level’. Social audit has been legislated in eight states of Assam, Gujarat, J & K, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Sikkim, and Daman & Diu.

Article 17 of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) makes provision of social audit of NREGS through the Gram Sabha. Article 17(1) states that the Gram Sabha shall monitor the execution of works within the Gram Panchayat. Article 17(2) mentions that the Gram Sabha shall conduct regular social audit of all the projects under the scheme taken up within the Gram Panchayat. And Article 17(3) says that the Gram Panchayat shall make available all relevant documents including the muster rolls, bills, vouchers, measurement books, copies of sanction orders and other connected books of account and papers to the Gram Sabha for the purpose of conducting social audit.

The NREGA Operational Guidelines issued by Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD), Government of India, suggest that social audit of NREGS is an ongoing process through which potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders of projects under the scheme are involved in every stage: from planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This process of continuous social audit helps in ensuring that projects under the NREGA are designed and implemented in a manner that is most suited to the prevailing local conditions. It appropriately reflects the priorities and preferences of those affected by it, and most effectively serve public interest.

In the Central Operational Guidelines for NREGA, there is a mention of Social Audit Forum (SAF), that is, Gram Sabha. It suggests that SAF meetings to be held at least once in every six months where people will be given the opportunity to question officials, seek and obtain information, verify financial expenditure, examine the provision of entitlements, discuss the priorities reflected in the choices made, and critically evaluate the quality of work as well as the services of the programme staff.

The SAF will not only give people an opportunity to review compliance with the ongoing requirements of transparency and accountability, but will also serve as an institutional forum where people can conduct a detailed public audit of all NREGA works that have been carried out in their area in the preceding six months.

National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) emphasizes upon continuous public vigilance in terms of ‘social audits’. The basic objective of social audit has been to ensure public accountability in the implementation of health projects and policies at the grass roots level.

The Act, guidelines and circulars provide an institutional design and create space for the community to participate in ensuring transparency and accountability. However, to make these designs operational and effective some facilitation is needed. In some states this facilitation has been done by government agencies themselves and in others by civil society

organisations, academic and research institutions.

Different approaches and agents of social audit: Different approaches to conduct social audit have been observed. The first one is to conduct it in a campaign mode, combining it with an awareness programme, followed by a village, block or district level sharing. For example the mass social audit of Dungarpur or Karauli in Rajasthan. Learning from Dungarpur's experience, in Andhra Pradesh 31 NGOs and civil society organisation networks came together with the Department of Rural Development in Anantapur District to conduct a mass social audit through a *Padayatra* in August 2006 (CEC 2006). Such social audit is good for awareness generation and creating demand for downward accountability but the quality of such social audit and its sustainability is questionable.

The second one, mainly facilitated by government agencies is to collect information on the basis of a pre-designed format for all the Gram Panchayats of the district. Reports are then read in the Gram Sabha and also consolidated at the block and district level to be transmitted to higher authorities. In Jharkhand and also in Madhya Pradesh the state administration adopted this approach. This type of audit is a mere formality and more of an upward accountability than social audit.

The third one, usually facilitated by civil society organisations, is done in selective Gram Panchayat and blocks and data is collected with the help of volunteers, largely outsiders, and presented at the block level and district level public hearings attended by government officials. This approach has been adopted by organisations ASHA, MKSS, and activist-academics such as Jean Derez during social audits in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. Here the approach is confrontational and generally resisted by elected representatives and administration. Since there is little role of the local community it is not sustainable. However, it creates great noise and highlights the gaps in implementation of the development programmes.

The fourth one, initiated by the Gram Panchayat, and facilitated by civil society organisations, where a committee consisting of residents of that Gram Panchayat collects information and presents it in the Gram Sabha. The Rajasthan Government in its guidelines has adopted this approach. PRIA and its partners—Unnati, Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra and



CHAPTER 2

STATE SPECIFIC BEST PRACTICES

Samarthan has adopted this approach in those Gram Panchayats where it is working intensively although this approach, though time-consuming, is more sustainable and transferable.

The following sections will describe some of the best practices in social audit.

(i) Andhra Pradesh

Legal framework for social audit in the state: Panchayat Raj and Rural Development (RD-II Department, G.O. Ms.No.317, dated 22.08.2008), National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme–AP Conducting Social Audit Rules, 2008.

Social Audit Rules 2008 defines social audit as auditing of a scheme by primary stakeholders of the scheme or with the active involvement of the primary stakeholders of the scheme. In this case the labourers and rural communities of the districts where NREGS-AP is being implemented and social audit being carried out includes facts on ground vis-à-vis the official records taking into account the oral evidence as well, and is in effect, aided and facilitated by civil society organisations and/ or government.

A social audit unit, which is independent of the mainstream structure, is responsible for coordinating the social audit processes in the state. The Rural Development Commissionerate has entered into an MOU with the unit headed by a government officer and consists of senior resource persons.

Best Practice I

(1) Location

All NREGS districts in AP.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh

(3) Process of SA

- The social audit process begins with the filing of application under the Right to Information Act 2005, with the Programme Officer at the Mandal level.
 - Social audits are conducted by VMC or literate youth from labourer families who are identified and trained as village social auditors. These social auditors are identified in the open meeting of the Gram Sabha.
 - The process is facilitated by state and district resource persons drawn from civil society organisations having experience of working on strengthening and establishing people's rights at the grass roots level.
 - During the social audit process 100 per cent verification of muster rolls and works is done through door to door campaigning, focused group discussions and organising of Gram Sabhas. The implementation of the non-negotiable workers entitlements of the employment guarantee scheme (EGS) is also seen.
 - Awareness generation of wage seekers on their rights and entitlements under the scheme is an integral part of the social audit process.
 - The process culminates at a Mandal-level public meeting held on a pre-notified date in presence of the public, political representatives and officials and EGS functionaries where village wise social audit reports are read out, followed by public testimonies and corrective action.
1. The Mandal Parishad Development Officer (MPDOs)/Additional Programme Officer shall extend cooperation for conduct of social audit by giving the required information and records on the scheme and shall necessarily participate in the social audit public meeting.
 2. At no stage will there be any interference by the administration in the actual social audit process.

3. For effective implementation of the programme and also to build the trust of the people, it is important that the administrative machinery takes immediate corrective action on the issues arising out of social audits. The project directors will be reviewed on the subject in the EGS meetings.

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

The preparatory work was started with the training of 35 resource persons drawn from unions and NGOs having 10-15 years of experience of working on peoples' issues at the grass roots level. In every NREGA-AP district a pool of District Resource Persons (approximately 20 per district) were trained in social audit. In the process two training modules, two training films and step-by-step procedure for doing social audit were developed. The district resource persons then went into the villages of the Mandal and identified active literate youth (three-four per village) from the labourers' families. These youth were trained in social audit processes over a three-day period. The training included main features of the EGS, SA processes and study of the EGS records pertaining to that Mandal. The resource persons were put in different teams which were allotted villages.

(b) Information gathering and analysis

The process of information collection began with the filing of application with the MPDO/Assistant Programme Officer by the district resource persons under the RTI for relevant records of the EGS in the Mandal.

The process was successfully completed by August 2008. It was envisaged that there will be social audits carried out in the state every six months.

(c) Information sharing and discussion

Social audits were conducted by literate youth (men and women) from the labourers' families. The social audit process at the village level consisted of door to door verification of the muster roll, focused group discussions, and night Gram Sabhas.

At the Mandal level the social audit process culminated in a public meeting where social audit reports were read out in the presence of the public, peoples' representatives, the concerned EGS functionaries and senior officers of the government.

In September 2008 a mass social audit of 600 villages in 39 Mandals of Ananthapur was conducted by 1500 volunteers from over 31 NGOs. The final day's event was attended by the Minister Rural Development and four state-level ministers.

(4) Impact of SA

(a) Actions on complaints or suggestions

After the process misappropriated money (more than Rs 1 crore 25 lakh were recovered from people. During the process the EGS functionaries who were found to be involved in misappropriation and embezzlement of money from the EGS (more than 1000 FAs, 10 TAs and nine departmental enquiries, 14 criminal cases and suspension of three MPDOs) were terminated. These people were reported to have embezzled money fraudulently by creating fake muster rolls, inflated bills, exaggerated measurements, and non-existent works, all through bribes and cuts from wage seekers.

In addition, corrective actions were taken during the social audit meeting by the project director and the senior officials present.

(b) Impact on improving effectiveness of office/scheme in achieving the desired goals 15 day follow-up and appraisals: The social audit team members' visit to the Mandals every 15 days after the completion of social audit ensured that the decisions taken during the public meeting were complied with.

The return of money on public platforms and in large gatherings of wage labourers at the social audit public meetings lent legitimacy and credibility to the process of social audit. Since the start of the process more than 400 applications under the Right to Information Act were filed and approximately 40 lakh official records pertaining to the EGS were scrutinised publicly.

In AP the process raised awareness among the labourers and also successfully empowered them for their rights. Labourers took centre stage—participating enthusiastically in the verification process, listening avidly in the Gram Sabhas, testifying in public meetings, forgiving those who harassed them, requesting re-induction of functionaries who took bribes from them, querying about how much wages they actually got with passbooks in their hands, physically protecting the social audit team members from being beaten or arguing at the end of a bitter grueling public meeting

about issues when nothing seems to have gone right and they had not got their wages in three months.

Source:

1. Aakella, Vakati Karuna and Sowmya Kidambi. 2007. 'Social Audits in Andhra Pradesh: A Process in Evolution', *Economic & Political Weekly*. Mumbai: November 24, 2007.
2. A note on Social Audit under the Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. http://rd.ap.gov.in/SAudit/Social_Audit_Note_131008.pdf
3. Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Department (RD-II), National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme-AP Conducting of Social Audit Rules, 2008.

(ii) Chhattisgarh

Best Practice 1

(1) Location:

Saradeeh Gram Panchayat, Dabhra, Block, Janjgir, District.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Srijan Kendra

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

The preparation for the social audit was started with a meeting with the Sarpanch and secretary. Meetings were also organised with the Panches to involve and make them understand the process. To ensure participation of Gram Sabha members the mobilisation for the Gram Sabha process started before seven days of the Gram Sabha. A day before the scheduled Gram Sabha, the Kotwal disseminated information like date and place of the Gram Sabha to villagers.

(b) Information gathering and analysis

Data were collected after meeting different stakeholders and the same was presented in the Gram Sabha.

(c) Information sharing and discussion

During the Gram Sabha the secretary of the Gram Panchayat shared the agenda and expenses under NREGS in 2007. In addition, he presented the details of expenditures incurred under the various developmental works. He also shared the provision of opening an account in post offices to reduce financial bungling in NREGS.

During the Gram Sabha, members jointly raised scores of questions pertaining to the non-payment of wages. The Sarpanch said that the muster-rolls had been sent to the concerned block office from where the sanctioned amount was supposed to be released. He also said that due to scarcity of assistant engineers in the block the works could not be measured.

(d) Impact of SA:

Gram Sabha members became aware of their right to seek answer from local authorities on issues of their concern. Wage payment was expedited after the Social Audit.

Best Practice 2

(1) Location

Doomarbahal Gram Panchayat.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Lok Shakti Samiti, Raigarh.

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

The preparatory process began with news of the migration of 30 people (Gram Panchayats of Bildegi and Doomarbahal) in search of work. A resident (Sri Jeetram Bhagat) of the village after getting the information met the 30 labourers and tried to know the reasons for migration. It was found that the main reason behind their migration was lack of employment opportunities in the village. The issue was brought to the notice of the Rozgar Sahayak who intervened and informed them about the NREGS programme and also of the registration process. The secretary told them about the work of levelling of land, which was sanctioned under NREGS.

(b) Information sharing and discussion

To address this problem the facilitator discussed it with the Gram Panchayats and informed about the VMC committee and its role. The Gram Panchayats identified the VMC members and shared this problem with them. The LSS facilitator helped them by explaining their roles and responsibilities and insisted that they get engaged in NREGS work.

(4) Impact of SA:

(a) Impact on improving effectiveness of office/scheme in achieving desired goals

Active efforts of the Gram Panchayat and monitoring committee provided jobs to the people. The people of the Panchayats are getting jobs in the village and this in turn has decreased the migration in the area.

Best Practice 3

(1) Location

Devlapaat Gram Panchayat.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Gram Mitra based in Korba.

(3) Process of SA:

(b) Pre-social audit preparatory work

Gram Mitra imparted trainings to the elected representatives and citizen leaders of the Panchayat. The VMC members were also included and their capacities were built for the preparation of social audit.

(c) Information gathering and analysis

The citizen leaders with the VMC members visited the sites and examined the work to check the quality. They also enquired about the quality of the work with local people and the discrepancies observed were conveyed to the Gram Panchayat. To make the process more participatory they visited every house to get the people's view regarding NREGS work in the Panchayat and collect data. The Gram Mitra facilitator met with the elected representatives and the Panchayat officials to fix the date for the Gram Sabha.

With the help of VMC members the information regarding the man-days, payment, job-card and balance for the payment were collected. The collected information was verified/matched with the register of the Gram Panchayat.

(d) Information sharing and discussion

The Gram Sabha was organised in the Devlapaat Panchayat. The secretary read out the agenda and placed the plan of the new work under NREGS. He shared that a total of 367 households had opened their accounts in the post office.

(4) Impact of SA:

(a) Actions on complaints or suggestions

The Sarpanch and secretary assured the people that some of the problems that had arisen in the Gram Sabha would not be repeated in future.

(b) Impact on improving effectiveness of office/scheme in achieving the desired goals

The citizens were made aware about the Gram Sabha and its significance under NREGS. They were told that in this the muster-roll be read by the secretary, which provided a clear picture regarding all the information on NREGS.

Best Practice 4

(1) Location

Kumli Gram Panchayat (includes two Ashrit grams namely Jalanga tola and Boga Tola).

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Jan Kalyan Sansthan.

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

Capacity Building: A number of meetings were organised between the Jan Kalyan facilitator, Sarpanch and secretary for the social audit. The meetings were followed by capacity building of elected representatives, Rozgar Sahayak and VMC members to make them understand their roles and responsibilities under NREGS.

Mobilisation Process: To ensure the maximum participation of people in Gram Sabha mobilisation processes were started before three days of the Gram Sabha. Information was disseminated by the Jan Kalyan facilitator with the support of the VMC members. The medium used for dissemination were pamphlets, posters posted at public places and door to door visits.

(b) Information sharing and discussion

Gram Sabha: The Gram Sabha process was started by reading out the agenda and details of progress of different development works.

(4) Impact of SA:

(a) Impact on improving effectiveness of office/scheme in achieving desired goals

During the Gram Sabha people participated very enthusiastically. People were found to be satisfied with Panchayat works.

(b) Impact on transparency and accountability

The Sarpanch assured and made commitments towards the solution of peoples' problems.

Best Practice 5

(1) Location

Rajnandgaon.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

ABHIYAN

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

ABHIYAN provided capacity-building trainings to elected representatives and *Preraks* (appointed under Sakhsharta Abhiyan). Under the capacity-building programme for NREGA there were two components, namely NREGS and RTI. Under the capacity-building programme for NREGS provisions of all the facilities at the worksite, taking the receipt after making the demand for jobs, allowances if they travelled from one place to another and unemployment allowances if they got jobs after 15 days of application were discussed.

(b) Information sharing and discussion

The facilitator of Abhiyan mobilised the people from the worksite. During the visit to work sites it was found that the facilities of first aid and crèche were below standard.

(4) Impact of SA:

(a) Impact on improving effectiveness of office/scheme in achieving desired goals.

The residents of Manpur Block raised the issue of facilities of first aid and crèches to the higher authority and put

pressure on Panchayats. As a result, these facilities are available at the NREGS worksites.

Best Practice 6

(1) **Brief profile** location and audited office/scheme

Batuli Block, Surguja District.

(2) **Agent/s** who facilitated/conducted SA

Students of Delhi University and Allahabad University

(3) **Process of SA:**

(a) **Pre-social audit preparatory work**

(b) **Information gathering and analysis**

A two-week survey of NREGA in the area was conducted by students of Delhi University and Allahabad University. The survey was done at 19 worksites spread over 15 Gram Panchayats in Batuli Block.

Various irregularities were observed in the distribution of job cards, such as applicants being charged for photographs, or joint cards being issued to joint families. In Gram Panchayat Silma, it was found that only “Below Poverty Line” (BPL) families were given job cards. In Bilaspur, people had to pay up to Rs 60 for photographs.

Regarding work applications, the survey team found that most people were not aware of the application procedure. Work applications were submitted only in a few isolated cases, such as Jharganwa Gram Panchayat. Applications were often discouraged or refused, and where they were accepted, work was rarely provided within 15 days. In Govindpur and Jharganwa, works were started after the lapse of four months. It was also found that no receipts were issued against work applications, even after insistence for dated receipt in Chiparkaya.

(c) **Information sharing and discussion**

A public hearing was organised on the basis of the information collected during the survey. The public hearing was attended by 300 local residents. During the hearing survey teams presented their findings on various issues relating to the implementation of NREGA. Issues related to job cards, work applications, worksite facilities, wage payments, and transparency safeguards were discussed during the hearing.

On the wage payment front, the main complaint was that wages were not paid on time. At almost 70 per cent of the worksites the wages were not paid within 15 days. Startling delays were reported from Nakna and Tilaighar where payment was due since the past three months.

Attendance was not recorded in the official muster rolls. Instead, supervisors recorded attendance in informal notebooks, and filled the muster rolls later on. Similarly, incomplete or missing entries were found in many jobcards. A glaring case came to light in Chiranga Gram Panchayat, where the Sarpanch was involved in fudging signatures and thumb impressions.

(4) **Impact of SA:**

(a) **Actions on complaints or suggestions**

The assistant development commissioner, who was representing the District Collector at the public hearing took the issues seriously and stated that steps would be taken to address them. The ADC also mentioned that a decision had been taken to provide “advances” (equivalent to 40 per cent of the amount sanctioned for a particular work) to the Gram Panchayats so that delays in wage payments could be avoided. The ADC also assured that from now on payments would be made on a weekly basis.

Similarly, Gram Panchayats and Janpad Panchayats were instructed to keep shelves of projects ready (with administrative sanction) so that employment could be provided anywhere at short notice. The ADC promised swift and firm action against anyone found guilty of fraud or other irregularities in the implementation of NREGA. “This is a law and not a scheme”, she said. “Anyone who tinkers with people’s rights under the Act does it at his own peril”.

(iii) Jharkhand

Best Practice I

(1) Location:

Ranchi district in Jharkhand

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/ conducted SA:

Collaborative effort of NREGA Watch, NIRD and District Administration

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

In 2007, the then DC of Ranchi district Mr. K. K. Son initiated this process of social audit taking help from Jharkhand NREGA Watch and PRIA. A two-day training programme was organised at Central Training Institute at Brambay Ranchi. The training was facilitated by NREGA Watch and NIRD. The logistic arrangements and food and accommodations were provided by the district administration.

Social audit teams were formed comprising Gram Sabha members, representatives of different NGOs from different places and students from different colleges and universities. These groups were oriented in this training programme. Each team comprised 15 to 18 members. A team leader was selected for the team's coordination during social audit. The team was then sub-divided into further teams meant for muster roll verification, document verification, physical verification and mobilisation and awareness. Each team was given some learning material and tool kit.

(b) Information gathering and analysis

The teams were then sent to the selected Panchayats where they were provided with documents of schemes selected for social audit during the training itself. The training also included a session in which participants were oriented on documents. Summary sheets of muster rolls were also prepared during the training.

The teams stayed in the villages and met almost all the labourers of the schemes. The teams also visited the worksite for physical verification, collected testimonies from labourers and prepared a report of findings of the social audit.

(c) Information sharing and discussion

The team stayed for five days and at the end of the social audit they organised a Panchayat-level Jan Sunwai. In this Jan Sunwai the report was shared with the Gram Sabha members and participants of the Jan Sunwai. The implementing agency (representatives of block and Panchayat-level functionaries) was also present in the Jan Sunwai and it answered queries as well as promised to take action on the findings. In some cases immediate action was taken.

The findings of social audit in each Panchayat and proceedings of the Jan Sunwai were then shared at the district level. The report was handed over to the Deputy Commissioner of Ranchi district. He committed to rectify things and take actions against the wrong doers.

(4) Impact of SA:

This was a pilot exercise supposed to start the process of organising social audit by the Gram Sabha which is mandatory according to the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. The exercise had wider impact on civil society, administration and the Panchayat level middlemen. A message went to every one that NREGA is different from other programmes and provision for transparency in the act can reveal everything. The major achievements were as follows:

1. Helped in building an understanding of government officials. Social audit is a comparatively new term to administration due to which it is interpreted differently by them. The ignorance not only delayed to organise the social audit but also led to wrong interpretations and denial of involvement of Gram Sabha in the process of social audit.
2. Other districts also started following the process. Some of the districts in Jharkhand took pains to follow this example. But again it depended on the district head. Pakur district administration convened social audit programmes almost in the same spirit. Here the facilitators were literacy workers and some outside experts. In the social audit team there was no representation of Gram Sabha members. Training on social audit especially muster roll verification was imparted to all the facilitators and then the social audit team

carried out social audit village wise in the selected Panchayats. The experiences of verification work were shared at the Panchayat and district level. Despite painting a cushy picture of NREGA, few anomalies were also brought to the notice and action was taken by the district administration. The Pakur administration though tried to emulate the Ranchi experiment but it restricted involvement of the Gram Sabha to the Jan Sunwai level. Unlike the Ranchi experiment where some social auditors from the village grew in the process of social audit and increased capacity building through active involvement in social audit, this aspect was missing in Pakur. Though the Gram Sabha learned the process it could not be sustained as the process was transformed into an event. The social auditors who were supposed to emerge from the village itself did not happen during the social audit in Pakur. Such social auditors could have carried social audit in future with some support from outside facilitators in the initial phases.

3. A mass level mobilisation of civil society, media, academia, Gram Sabha and administration at the lower level was carried on at the social audit. There was a need to make people, especially labourers, aware of the provisions of NREGA. Social audit in Ranchi as well as in Pakur had been successful in generating awareness among people, especially among labourers. The process mobilised labourers and hundreds of labourers applied for work in each Panchayat.
4. The Gram Sabha in the district became active and started meeting regularly. Every month Gram Sabha meetings were held on NREGA on the 26th. The practice is still prevalent in some of the GPs though attendance has dropped sharply as Gram Sabha resolutions are not taken seriously by the administration after transfer of the DC.
4. Many FIRs were lodged against the culprits—departmental action was also taken and money taken from the villagers in forgery cases were returned back to villagers on the spot of public hearing convened in all the selected Panchayats. The Gram Sabha where social audit is carried out has learnt the process and also developed a sense of empowerment.

5) Sustainability of SA:

This kind of social audit initiated by the district administration can only be sustainable if an institutional mechanism is created at the district level. For example, a social audit cell is created at the district level, which has some full time experts, drawn from government and civil society and a panel of resource persons. These resource persons should train village-level social auditors or members of VMC to carry out social audit in their respective Gram Panchayats. Whereas in Ranchi district entire exercise was an one off event and local resource persons were not trained. Further, this process was not community-owned, making it unsustainable.

Best Practice 2

Social Audit Facilitated by NGOs in Collaboration with Gram Sabha and District and Block Administration

(1) Location:

Sonahatu and Jamtara districts in Jharkhand

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Purna Samarpan and MADAIT

(3) Process of SA:

In this model of social audit NGOs promote social audit by Gram Sabha. A social audit team comprising Gram Sabha members is formed. The selection is done by the Gram Sabha itself. The social audit team is then oriented on the social audit process and how to conduct it. The team is helped in procuring documents of schemes selected for social audit. The social audit team then prepares a summary of muster roll; scrutinizes all the documents, conducts verification of muster roll, other documents and physical verification of the assets created. The social audit team itself conducts the verification of muster roll, documents and assets created. The NGO activist or representatives help the social auditors in carrying out their work. NGOs remain as the facilitators. At the end of the social audit process a special meeting of Gram Sabha is held where all the stakeholders are present. In this meeting the social audit team presents the findings of the social audit process conducted in the village. The Gram Sabha passes a resolution after hearing the cases and findings and recommends action. Unlike other kinds of social audit, Gram Sabha is called at the village or Panchayat level and not at the block level. This is the most authentic form of social audit but extremely difficult. Social audit facilitated by

PRIA in some Panchayats of Jamtara and Sonahatu blocks of Jamtara and Ranchi district respectively are examples of this kind of social audit.

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

Environment building: A baseline study was conducted. An awareness campaign was carried out for inclusion of more people and making people aware about the process of social audit. The social audit team in Sonahatu was formed by mobilising Gram Sabha meetings while in Jamtara vigilance and monitoring committee members and some other active members of the Gram Sabha were included in the social audit team. Meetings of Gram Sabha were also used for discussing social audit and environment building. Several interfaces were undertaken with block and district administrations for clearing their doubts on social audit and seeking their support to the Gram Sabha in carrying out the process.

Capacity Building of the Social Audit Teams: Panchayat level orientation meetings were organised for the social audit teams. In these meetings team members were oriented on NREGA, provisions of transparency, social audit process, how to conduct social audit and their roles and responsibilities.

(b) Information gathering and analysis

Procurement of Documents: This is the most difficult task and the social audit team requires most support in this as block and district administrations avoid giving documents to social audit teams. It is learnt that though the administration agrees to help or to collaborate with the Gram Sabha when it comes to giving documents they apply all the means to de-motivate social audit team members so that either the process is delayed or cannot happen at all. Social audit teams were helped in framing applications and submitting them. In the cases where the social audit team could not find documents applications were also filed for documents under the Right to Information Act when general applications did not produce any result.

Document and Physical Verification: Documents were scrutinized; physical verification of assets created and muster roll verification was carried out. During muster roll verification any manipulation or deviation was taken in writing and signed by the labourers (testimony). A report of the social audit process and findings were prepared.

During the verification process middle men and contractors also started de-motivating social auditors as well as those who reported any discrepancies to the social audit team. In this process the social auditors as well as labourers need to be highly motivated. In Gram Sabhas too they try to coerce people to withdraw their testimony.

Gram Sabha Mobilisation: Gram Sabha mobilisation starts right at the beginning of the social audit process. An application by the Gram Pradhan is submitted to the BDO about special meetings of Gram Sabhas to be held, copy of the application is given to the Panchayat secretary. Gram Sabha members are informed about the special meeting by beating drums. During the verification process labourers and other Gram Sabha members are asked and motivated to attend special meetings of Gram Sabhas. A sub team of the social audit team is specially working on mobilisation.

(c) Information sharing and discussion

Special Meeting of Gram Sabha: On the scheduled date and venue a Gram Sabha meeting was held. Members of the Gram Sabha were first oriented on the provision of NREGA and concept of social audit. In the meeting the social audit team presented its findings. Muster roll summary sheets and major findings written in chart papers were displayed at the meeting venue. Labourers and people from marginalised sections were promoted to ask questions and raise issues related to the implementation of NREGA. The Gram Sabha meeting was chaired by the Gram Pradhan. Minutes of the meeting were taken.

(d) Impact of SA:

In this practice of social audit a pool of social auditors from villages came into existence. These social auditors learnt social audit by doing. They were highly motivated and took the lead in carrying out social audit in their villages. They developed a kind of ownership and with some help from external facilitators they would be able to carry out the process in future too. The Gram Sabha has been involved or rather facilitated to play the role of doer of social audit. Gram Sabha itself selected the social audit committee members and heard its findings in its special meeting (Jan Sunwai) and recommended actions in its resolutions. This ownership of Gram Sabha will sustain the process in these villages.

Best Practice 3

Independent Social Audit by Activist Groups

(1) Location:

Karon Block in Deoghar district. Social Audit of NREGS

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/ conducted SA:

There are several active activist groups in Jharkhand conducting social audit independently. The motive of such social audit is to bring transparency, reveal malpractices of government officials and middlemen or contractors. Such social audits have been successful in their objectives. Social audit conducted in Palamau, Latehar, Madhupur and Deoghar and in some other parts of Jharkhand are examples of such social audit.

(3) Process of SA:

In this type of social audit external experts conduct the social audit. In the social audit team there is no or little representation of Gram Sabha members. They themselves collect documents from the block office and if the block level administration does not give the documents then the block administration is pressurised through the district, state or even through central council or administration.

The activists follow the pure form of social audit minus involvement of Gram Sabha members in the social audit committee. The social audit team comprises students, NGO activists and others. The documents are verified, physical verifications are done, and testimonies of labourers are collected. The process of data collection is completed in three to four days. A report of the process and findings is prepared and it is shared in the Jan Sunwai which is usually organised at the block level.

(4) Impact of SA:

This kind of social audit has multiple implications which are favourable or unfavourable, negative or positive. The non-inclusion of villagers in the social audit team, absence of environment building exercises during social audit and ignoring the role of Gram Sabha office bearers make it an exercise conducted by an outsider. The 'outsider' remains in the village for a brief period or for the period of social audit only. After that middlemen and contractors pick local activists and those who give testimony in the Gram Sabha. This creates a kind of fear among labourers. Due to the hue and cry in the media and celebrity status the activist administration takes some action but there is no follow up of these actions. The social audit process is transformed into a big event with no involvement of the Gram Sabha. The question is: What happens after the event remains unanswered? Though such events have been successful in creating fear among the implementing agency and middlemen and contractors, with no follow up and support to Gram Sabha, labourers and local activists have to face the music of contractors, middlemen and Panchayat functionaries. In spite of all these negatives associated with this kind of practice of social audit activist groups have been successful in highlighting the malpractices in implementation of NREGA in Jharkhand.

Best Practice 4

Lok Adalat on NREGA in Latehar:

(1) Location:

Latehar district. Lok Adalat was organised on NREGA.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated:

The Lok Adalat was organised due to the effort of Jharkhand State Legal Services Authority (JLSA).

(3) Process of Lok Adalat:

Justice M. Y. Iqbal, president of JLSA took a lot of interest in organising the Lok Adalat on NREGA. It was due to his efforts that the Lok Adalat on NREGA was held on February 7. The district judge and the deputy commissioner of the district have the authority **TO DO WHAT?**. An advertisement for the same was published in news papers. More than 20,000 applications were received. Most of the complaints were related to non allotment of work and non payment of unemployment allowances. One reason for such a huge number of applications was that whosoever had the job card and did not get work was entitled for unemployment allowance.

The JLSA formed 20 benches to look into these applications. Each bench comprised one advocate, one gazetted officer of the district, one social worker and one peon. The cases were supposed to come to these benches. The benches spent five days in scrutinizing such applications from February 2 to 6. The benches were supposed to award its verdict after due consideration and verification of the complaints on of February 7.

On February 7, the Lok Adalat started with formal inauguration and inaugural speeches of dignitaries like secretary MoRD, Commissioner NREGA, Deputy Commissioner Latehar, Mr. Jean Derej and Justice M. Y. Iqbal. Unemployment allowance for 74 labourers was disbursed by Mr. Iqbal. At one end of the stadium 20 stalls were set up for 20 benches. Though security was tight such a huge crowd was highly unmanageable. Within one hour it was so chaotic that it was difficult to even reach the stalls. It revealed the short sightedness of the administration as people had come with very high expectations. There were several irregularities and anomalies in the Lok Adalat, prominent among them were—

1. Out of four members in each bench one was supposed to be a social worker. In the name of social workers middle men or contractors were selected. Gazetted officers taken for each bench were the persons against whom there were complaints and in the Lok Adalat they were supposed to deliver justice. These things reduced the credibility of the benches.
2. The time was insufficient to handle such a huge number of cases. It was also reflected that the administration did not do much home work on handling the cases.
3. There was improper management of the applicant and crowd. People were not aware about which counter they were supposed to go to, in which bench their case would be heard, etc. This created a chaotic situation in the stadium and after one hour the process almost stopped.

(Impact of Lok Adalat):

The Lok Adalat on NREGA can produce speedy justice to labourers and complainants and can play a very active and effective role in implementation of NREGA, especially in bringing transparency. The Lok Adalat needs to be organised in a smaller scale—may be one Lok Adalat for a cluster of Panchayats or at the block level. Moreover, instead of organising celebrative events Lok Adalats should be held at regular intervals. Hope the learnings generated in the Latehar Lok Adalat will be kept in mind by the administration, JSLSA and the activists groups and CSOs.

(iv) Kerala

I. Legal framework for social audit in the state

G.O. (MS) No. 274/04/GAD dated 24/09/2004, Thiruvananthapuram.

Social audit would be done both at the government and local government levels. In the case of government it would be confined to the Social Welfare Department, SC/ST Development Department, Health Department, Higher Education Department, Public Works Department, Water Resources Department, the public utilities of Kerala State Electricity Board and Kerala Water Authority and the public sector organisations created primarily for social purposes.

Mode of conduct of social audit.

In the case of government, social audit would be conducted by accredited panels of eminent citizens of unimpeachable integrity and social commitment to be identified jointly by the government and the opposition. These panels would be empowered to co-opt experts if they so desire. Membership of these panels would be considered honorary and the actual cost of social audit would be met by the government. While conducting social audit, the teams would hold public hearings and get the views of the stakeholders besides looking at records and gathering evidence from the organisation. In the case of local governments, in addition to panels of eminent citizens the Performance Audit Wing is proposed to be utilised for conducting a regular form of social audit for which the protocol needs to be devised and suitable training given.

The process of social audit would be on the following lines:

- (1) Planning—deciding on the issues to be audited.
- (2) Accounting—collecting information and indicators for examination.
- (3) Audit—conducting audit through panels or community interaction.
- (4) Reporting—consolidation of findings into a report.
- (5) Follow up—taking action to remedy the defects pointed out.
- (6) Learning—allowing the results of social audit to feed back into policy.

All social audit reports would be public documents. The social audit reports would be given to the

departments/organisations concerned as well as to the legislature. The legislature committee concerned with the department/organisation could go into the report and follow up on its recommendations. In the case of local governments social audit reports would be sent to the Ombudsman also.

In all government departments/organisations subject to social audit, right to information would be made mandatory. Also through well-designed pilots, social accounting and social balance sheet systems would be introduced both at the government and local government levels.

Best Practice I

(1) Location:

Vellamunda Panchayat, Narokkadavu Ward

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Citizen of Village.

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

A team of 11 members consisting of farmers, farm labourers and those from the weaker sections of society like the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes was constituted to conduct the audit.

(b) Information gathering and analysis

The team visited the work sites and interacted with the beneficiaries and elicited their reactions.

(c) Information sharing and discussion

A special Gram Sabha was convened at Vellamunda to discuss the report of the audit. The problems listed in the report prepared by the team were of very different nature, some of which could be addressed at the local level while others needed intervention at the state-level and there was also a demand for amendments in the NREGS enactment.

During the sharing it was found that the major problem faced by the scheme was the delay in distributing wages to workers. It was also reported that there is only one overseer to supervise 60-70 workers at a time and due to that it was not possible to do both things like supervising the work and processing the paper work and getting clearance for payment in time.

a. Impact of SA:

(a) Actions on complaints or suggestions

During the sharing it was suggested to undertake work like farms of small peasants, who owned five acres or less under NREGS. At present, identification of productive projects to employ around 6,000 workers in the Panchayat is an arduous task, and approval of work in farms will solve this problem.

(Source: “Kerala village conducts audit of job guarantee scheme”, *The Economic Times*, November 26, 2007)

(v) Karnataka

Best Practice

Pilot social audit in Gulbarga district:

(1) Location:

The pilot was conceived within the broad framework provided by NREGA Operational Guidelines-2005, prepared by the Union Ministry of Rural Development. Gulbarga has 337 GPs distributed over 10 talukas. But for the pilot 10 Gram Panchayats, one in each of the 10 talukas were selected. The selected GPs were amongst the top few that recorded

the highest to average expenditure in the respective districts. In each GP, two villages (out of 4 to 5) were selected for the pilot exercise.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA:

To generate empirical evidence on the effectiveness of NREGS in Gulbarga district, to pilot test a set of instruments for conducting social audit of NREGS with the involvement of local civil society organisations and semi-state institutions like universities, etc., and to assess implications of the pilot initiative for replication and scaling up of social audits in the state of Karnataka.

(3) Process:

Social audit teams were trained through field demonstrations and provided with replicas of the formats of records to be maintained by the GPs along with a sheet to record observations related to the completeness of entries and details, discrepancies between NREGA operational guidelines and the state government stipulations. State government does not prescribe asset register, muster roll register and complaint register. However, some GPs in Gulbarga were maintaining asset registers. The records maintained by GPs and subject to audit were:

- Form 2 B: Register of applications for registration
- Form 3 A: Register of job seekers and employment
- Form 2 E: Household job card register
- Form 5: Employment demand register
- Form 1 I: Asset register

Muster roll details for individual works were cross verified randomly during the community group meetings with beneficiaries in each of the GPs. Analysis of the data from audit of records was guided by a simple scoring scheme:

- Records with all entries and complete details as per the prescribed format: 1 point
- Records with incomplete entries/details with reference to the prescribed format: 0.5 points
- Records without any entries/details or records not maintained: 0 point

Since five records were subjected to audit, the maximum score for a GP would be 5 points. The degree of compliance to the requirements of record keeping was graded as follows:

- 4.0 to 5.0 points was graded as fully compliant.
- 2.0 to 3.5 points was graded as partially compliant, and
- 0 to 1.5 points was graded as not compliant.

Salient findings and observations:

None of the GPs covered showed full compliance with the requirements of record keeping. The average score of 2.5 showed that GPs on the whole are only partially compliant to the requirements of record keeping. The highest score for a GP was 3.5 – Karjagi, (Afzalpur taluk) and Mandewal (Jewargi taluk). The lowest score for a GP was 1.5 – Malkeda, (Sedam taluk). Some GPs like Malkeda (Sedam taluk), Farhatabad (Gulbarga taluk), Kakkasgera (Shahpur taluk) did not even possess an employment demand register. Malkeda did not have an asset register. Devapur (Shorapur taluk) did not have register of job seekers and employment. (Why: The P.O. had not supplied it). The unrecorded details usually pertained to missing entries, signatures of applicants, date of receipt of applications, photographs of the household members, muster roll numbers, etc. In four out of the 10 GPs, the officials had retrieved the job cards issued to households promising new ones. In many GPs, the applications for employment appeared to be questionable since they did not bear signatures of the applicants nor were acknowledgement receipts issued (this was also corroborated by feedback from beneficiaries). The GPs reported acute shortage of human resources and frequent changes in the formats of records as the main reasons for constraints in complete and up to date record keeping.

(4) Impact: Implications for scaling up:

The five-step social audit methodology and the instruments used are robust and able to generate valuable and reliable feedback and therefore are feasible for replication. The piloted methodology is a vast improvement over the prevalent practice of social audit in the district. However, further fine tuning of instruments is a prerequisite for scaling up across the state. Unlike the HH sample survey, community group evaluation. (CGE) does not capture variations amongst individual beneficiaries and hence poses problems for quantification. Therefore, the complimentary link between CGE

and household survey of beneficiaries needs to be further strengthened. Muster roll verification must be grounded more strongly into both HH survey and CGE HH sample survey if the objective is to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme at the district level for aggregation at the state level. If the objective is to introduce a community-driven audit of the programme at the GP level, village level community group evaluation facilitated by a non-state agency is a viable and feasible method. To some extent, the CG meeting acted as a proxy to the Gram Sabha. However, lack of village-level community meetings with officials and GP members to discuss the emergent problems and seeking their solutions was a major limitation of the pilot. People's sense of identity with their village is stronger than their sense of belongingness to the GP. Therefore, a village would be a more appropriate unit for social audit forums since GP level Gram Sabhas are unwieldy and less interesting for people. The pilot has proved beyond doubt that students, representatives of NGOs and CBOs and persons with basic literacy skills can be effectively trained to function as social auditors and administer the piloted methodology. Across all the GPs, the pilot succeeded in evoking enthusiastic response and participation from the village community—both men and women were equally vocal. GP functionaries were reasonably cooperative mainly due to instructions from the district-level administration though they were resistant to share the records and copies of the muster rolls. Panchayat members in some GPs were overindulgent during community meetings.

(Source: Presentation of Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore)

(vi) Maharashtra

Best Practice

(1) Location:

40 Gram Panchayats in Chamorshi Tehsil in the remote tribal district of Gadchiroli.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Indian Institute of Youth Welfare (IYW)

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

IYW provided training to resource persons (10 IYW persons and 15 persons of other NGOs) to carry out social audits. Selected resource persons were trained in a two-day workshop, during which they were made aware about all aspects of the law. One of the resource people trained at the workshop said that, "The most important thing we were taught were the various *namunas* (forms) to be filled in at various stages during the NREGS implementation process. Of these, the most important is Form 1, which is the registration form, Form 3, which is for job cards, Form 4, which is to demand work, Form 5, which is the crucial receipt of demand for work, Form 7, that is related to the work order, Form 15, that pertains to the muster roll, and Form 16, that pertains to the registration of a newly-married woman as a member of her husband's family. We were trained not only in the nature of the forms but also on the finer points of who is entitled to fill which form and when."

Apart from the paperwork, a thorough understanding of other formalities involved in implementation of the NREGA was also part of the training module. Resource persons were oriented to review the process of work allotment and approval. For instance, whether a village vigilance committee had been constituted; how much work had been approved in the village; if work had not been approved, what was hindering it? In all these cases the muster rolls were to be checked for irregularities and complaints were to be registered immediately. In addition to the orientation of resource persons, the Gram Rozgar Sewaks were also trained by selected NGOs and a module was designed for them. During the training vigilance committee members and some Panchayat members also joined the training.

(b) Information gathering and analysis

The information pertaining to social audit was collected through visit to villages, meetings with officials and information shared during the two-day workshop.

(c) Information sharing and discussion

To ensure maximum participation of villagers in the social audit process prior information were provided to Panchayats and even if people did not turn-up then door to door visits were undertaken before the start of the process.

The IYCW NREGS social audit was carried out in 40 Gram Panchayats between June 1 and 25, 2007.

The main findings of the audit were:

- NREGS work was not started in 35 out of the 40 Gram Panchayats until the onset of the monsoons, when the villagers were busy with agriculture work.
- No unemployment allowance was paid to those who were not given work. The issue was brought to the notice of the collector but no remedial measures were taken.
- Village-level officials and people's representatives had provided people with erroneous information to the effect that work could be demanded only after NREGS projects had been sanctioned in the village. As a result, many people did not apply for work at all.
- Vigilance and Monitoring Committees had been constituted arbitrarily by Gram Sewaks and Panchayat members. Many members are not even aware that they are in these committees.
- In all villages, Gram Rozgar Sewaks and vigilance committee members had not received any training.
- Only 30 per cent of people who had filled in demand notes for work had been issued receipts.
- There was little clarity regarding the nature of remuneration to be paid to Gram Rozgar Sewaks.
- During the audits, village officials and Panchayat members were not cooperative; many were not even present at the meetings.

Some of the irregularities that were reported during the social audit were as follows:

- In some villages, as much as 30 per cent of the eligible population had not been registered.
- The situation on the filling of Form 4, which pertains to demand for work, was more dismal. Bhendala village is a case in point. In this village, the Panchayat had not issued Form 4 to people on the pretext that it did not have any forms. It was only after Shramik Elgar, an unorganised sector labour union working in the area, provided forms to the people that they were able to fill them up and get work.
- The situation in Kunghada Raitwari, one of the villages covered by the audit, was typical. Of the 1,600 families in the village, 1,372 families had job cards, but only 118 families had filled in demand notes. When it came to actually getting work, just 66 families got 12 days of work during the entire season.
- When questioned closely about the above mentioned issues, the Gram Panchayat secretary admitted that the Gram Panchayat machinery had been negligent in publicising relevant information about the NREGS.

Constrain: In most villages, people were enthusiastic about the social audit while Gram Panchayat members, Gram Sewaks and Gram Rozgar Sewaks were not very cooperative. In many villages, Sarpanchs and/or Gram Sewaks were absent during the Gram Sabha that was held for the audit.

(4) Impact of SA:

(a) Actions on complaints or suggestions.

A month after the remuneration issue was raised by the IYCW social audit the district administration informed the CSO that payments had been released. However, the basis for the remuneration was still unclear.

(vii) Orissa

Best Practice I

Public Hearing by SPREAD

(1) Location:

Bilaput, Jabagada, Pangiput, and Godiput of Bilaput Panchayat under Nandapur Block.

(2) Agents:

Facilitated by SPREAD

(3) Process of SA:

Volunteers from villages were oriented by SPREAD to conduct social audit in their villages. Although there was provision of suo motto disclosure of information under NREG Act, it was neither available in Bilaput Panchayat nor in Nandapur block. Then a few volunteers from the above four villages applied for detail information under Right to Information Act in December 2006. They were provided the information in March 2007. After receipt of information the volunteers, along with activists of SPREAD, analyzed the information and verified the same with villagers. Findings of this analysis was then presented in Public Hearing organised on 26th May 2007 in the Bilaput Gram Panchayat. Sarpanch and local MLA also participated in the hearing.

Summary of Findings of social audit

- Muster roll showed 58 persons had worked on protection wall constructed under NREGA in Bilaput and people confirmed the number but Internet muster roll stated that only 27 persons had worked. When job cards were verified it was found that a total of 49 persons were employed in this work.
- The team found that figures relating to the number of labourers employed varied between the muster roll, Internet muster roll, job card and labourers' own statements. This was found to be matching in only three cases—Adu Suabi, Samari Suabi and Madhaba Bimari.
- Total person days generated in the muster roll was 1184 but labourers stated that 767 person days work was generated. Verification of job cards revealed 1093 person days and Internet muster roll revealing 351 person days were generated.
- According to the muster roll, labourers got a total of 772 kg of rice as part wage payment worth Rs 4,864 but the bill showed that 35 quintal rice worth Rs 20,050 was disbursed to labourers. There is no mention of this payment in the Internet muster roll. Therefore there is a difference of Rs 15,186 between the bill raised by the JE and the muster roll prepared by the village labour leader.
- According to the muster roll, total wage payment was Rs 60,195 but labourers stated that they had received Rs 31,560 and the Internet muster roll states wage payment of Rs 19,565.
- Under materials procured for the construction of the protection wall, the bill states that 658 cement bags were procured at a rate of Rs 185 per bag totalling Rs 1,21,730 but labourers stated that a total 550 bags of cement at Rs 185 per bag were procured at a total cost of Rs 1,01,750. Therefore there is a difference of Rs 19,980 between the bill raised and labourers' testimony.

(4) Impact:

This public hearing and statement made by people clearly indicated that there was corruption in all four NREGA works. Participants emphasised that administration should take action against culprits. Local MLA in his address said that he would question the Collector on no Government officials attended the audit. He said he would also raise the issue of cashew plantations with the Collector and try to ensure entitlements over the plantations are given to tribals who had protected the trees. He believed that if people were organized then they can act against corrupt officials.

Best Practice 2

(1) Location:

Rengali Gram Panchayat of Khaprakol Block in Balangir district (Orissa)

(2) Agent/s:

Organised by Social Audit Forum, Rengali and facilitated by the Humanity:

(3) Process:

At the outset, with a view to sensitizing the people in general and Panchayat representatives in particular about NREGA, the organisation undertook massive training programme in the Block. All the 258 Panchayat representatives, 200 labourers and volunteers were provided training on NREGA from March to July 2008. Then a special training on 'social audit' was conducted for Panchayat representatives, labourers and the volunteers in the Panchayat to educate them about various aspects of social audit and processes to be followed for conducting social audit in the Gram Panchayat in September 2008. The Panchayat representatives and volunteers were also provided booklets and materials on NREGA, operational guidelines and OREGS.

Preparation of ground work made by the volunteers in Rengali Gram Panchayat

- a. A Palli Sabha meeting was organised in villages like Rengali, Sindhbahali, Bharuamunda and Khuripani in September and a resolution was passed to conduct social audit on NREGA work undertaken in their respective Gram Panchayats.
- b. A village-level vigilance and monitoring committee was formed in all the villages to monitor the NREGA work.
- c. A team of trained volunteers was selected to ensure the conduct of the social audit in Rengali GP. They were assigned to cross-check the data at the field level.
- d. A social audit forum was formed at the GP level to undertake social audit of NREGA work in the Gram Panchayat.
- e. A request letter on behalf of the Social Audit Forum was given to the Sarpanch and Block Development Officer, Khaprakhhol Block to provide the photocopy of documents relating to NREGA works like sanction letter, copy of estimate, muster roll, measurement book, etc. It is to be mentioned here that no information was provided by the office of the block and Gram Panchayat for social audit.
- f. As per request of the committee, the volunteers of The Humanity downloaded all the information relating to NREGA from the NREGA website and helped the people to cross check the information while discussing with the labourers at the field level.
- g. After completion of all formalities, the date, that is, 1.11.08 was fixed to conduct social audit and a letter was issued to the collector, sub-collector, block development officer, junior engineer, Sarpanch and Panchayat executive officer to attend the programme.
- h. The Humanity was requested to make a presentation of the NREGA work along with analysis in the social audit meeting.
- D. A meeting of Social Audit Forum (Modus Operandi) was held at the GP headquarters of Rengali Gram Panchayat on 1.11.08. in which around 300 participants including labourers, Panchayat representatives, social activists, NGOs, journalists, local volunteers and government officials participated.

It is to be mentioned here that though the Gram Panchayat and Block office was asked to provide the information, no information was supplied from their side. Keeping this in view, it was decided to download all the information from NREGA official website, that is, www.nrega.nic.in. Construction of eight farm ponds (locally called *Chahalla*) of Rengali, Sindhbahali, Khuripani villages, improvement of water harvesting structures at Chitakhutna village, minor irrigation projects constructed by Minor Irrigation Division, Bolangir in Bharuamunda village were taken up for social audit. Besides that operational issues were also taken up for audit.

- E. Summary of findings on various stages of implementation of NREGA in Rengali Gram Panchayat was gathered by the volunteers and the people and presented in the meeting. The information relating to all the primary stages in the NREGA process was collected by the social audit volunteers, and they came across a number of irregularities and as well as complaints on specific cases still unsolved by the concerned authorities. These are as follows.

i. Construction of Farm Pond

25,000/-. The details of farm pond analysis are attached herewith (Annexure-1). While crosschecking the work of eight farm ponds along with the presentation made by beneficiaries, it was found that

- No beneficiary had been paid the full estimated amount of Rs 25,000.00.
- The money paid to them ranged from Rs. 4200 to Rs. 10,000.00.
- All the farm ponds were half-constructed and not in a position to give any benefit to the farmers.
- No labourers engaged in the work were paid at the right time, that is, within 15 days of the work (as per Section 3 of the Act).
- No resolution was passed in the Palli Sabha to carry out the work {violation of Section 4(A) of OREGS}.
- The delayed payment has discouraged the farmers from doing NREGA work.
- No compensation was paid to the labourers due to delayed payment (as per point 30 of Schedule-2 of NREGA.)

- It was found that the farm pond was partially constructed which could never be useful for the beneficiaries nor help them irrigate their land during the period of water scarcity.

(4) Impact:

The major recommendations made by the social audit forum are as follows:

The NREGA documents like muster roll, bills, vouchers, and sanction orders should be kept open for public inspection and punitive action must be taken against the officials who refuse to show the documents to the public.

The job card distributed in this Panchayat should be replaced and redesigned. The new design should be reader-friendly and contain a column for wage payment.

The ban of contractors should be strictly enforced. Exemplary action should be taken against contractors involved in the NREGA as well as against the functionaries who co-operate with them.

In construction of the check dam in Bharuamunda Village undertaken by M.I. division in Balangir more than Rs 57,000 was pocketed by the concerned officials and contractors in the name of 13 labourers. Similarly, in construction of WHS in Chitakutna village a sum of Rs 19,000 was syphoned off by the concerned authority. So the Social Audit Forum demanded that an independent body be set up to investigate this matter and steps must be taken against the officials who were involved in this loot.

As per Section 16 of the Act the selection and identification of works at the village levels is the sole responsibility of Palli Sabha/Gram Sabha, but in all the villages of Rengali G.P works are being identified in a centralised manner without participation of members of Palli Sabha/Gram Sabhas. The works are selected by the order of BDO, district level officials and based upon the circulars made by the Panchayat raj.

(viii) Rajasthan

I. Legal framework for social audit in the state: In Rajasthan there is mandatory provision of conducting social audit under the Panchayati Raj Act of 1994. Under Section 8 of the Act, the Gram Sabha and the Ward Sabha has the right to conduct social audit of various works done by the Panchayat. Under the Panchayats Rule of 1996, Rule 321 to 328 also highlights the provision of providing the documents if demanded, which relates to the right to information. This provision only led the foundation of conduct of social audit in the state through one of the orders dated 24.9.1996 of the chief secretary of Government of Rajasthan ordering preparation of information of social audit, conduct of social audit and formation of vigilance and monitoring committees by the Panchayat.

Even the RDPRD department of Government of Rajasthan in its rural works guidelines 2004 give directions of necessarily conducting social audit of the construction works and assets of the Gram Panchayat.

Apart from these provisions, in the first quarter of the year 2008, the Government of Rajasthan conducted a meeting for discussion on publishing a social audit manual in which PRIA participated and when the manual was published it defined the steps of conducting social audit as well as services to be audited during the Gram Sabha. This helped in building a conducive environment for facilitation of social audit in the state and a clear cut direction for conducting the process in different places.

In 2008, according to this guideline, the government gave direction to conduct the social audit in the Panchayats covering services provided by eight different institutions at the Panchayat level.

Best Practice – I

Social Audit in Nadauti Panchayat Samiti in Karauli district (June 2006)

(1) Location:

In Karauli district of Rajasthan, a programme of social audit and *Padayatra* was organised from June 14 to 21, 2006 in Nadauti block.

(2) Agents:

“Rozgar and Suchna ka Adhikar Abhiyan”. In the programme a total of seven different groups ran the process of social

audit in 29 different Panchayats of the Nadauti block in which there was inspection of the work place and the Panchayat to know the actual status of the work.

The whole process was steered by MKSS with the participation of – Ekat Sansthan – Karauli, Prayatn – Dhaulpur and SSD – Karauli.

(3) The Process

Pre-Padayatra Phase

A month before the start of the actual *Padayatra* in the Panchayats, a meeting was called for the NGOs of the area and selected local people where the volunteers were selected and the NGOs were given various responsibilities of the actual conduct of the event. After this a total of around 100 volunteers were given training in the Panchayat Samiti for understanding the process of conducting social audit in the field and how to do the inspection of the document. At the end of the training RTI applications were put in the Panchayat Samiti to get information related to the work of NREGS going on in the 29 Panchayats of the area. The documents asked for were UCs, muster rolls, bills and vouchers of materials for the different works taking place in the area. After this different documents were procured from the Panchayat Samiti.

The Padayatra Phase

One day before the start of the *Padayatra*, seven different groups were formed. The route plan for each group was decided. Between June 16-19, 2006, the *Padayatra* was conducted in 29 different Panchayats of Nadauti. During the *Padayatra* there was actual inspection of the different worksites. A tally of bills/ vouchers was also conducted at the site according to the information that was procured under the filed RTI applications.

During the *Padayatra* the group not only collected the information and inspected the sites but simultaneously also ran the awareness drive and mobilised the people for the Jan Sunwai at Rausi.

The Last Phase

A day after the *Padayatra* ended, the formats devised for compilation of the information from the field/worksites was completed. A Jan Sunwai was organised in Rausi Panchayat to highlight the issues, verifying the information compiled and highlighting the frauds found during the *Padayatra*. District, Block officials and Panchayat secretaries were invited including the collector and CEO-ZP of the district. The report based on the compiled information was read by the *Padayatra* group members. People were asked to raise issues related to the work and money involved for the work in the Jan Sunwai. At the end a compiled report in the form of “Maang Patra” was submitted to the CEO-ZP and the collector to take action.

(4) Impact: People became aware of their rights and entitlements under NREGA. Administration was made aware of lacunas in the implementation of NREGA.

Best Practice – 2

Jan Sunwai on Pension in Vijaypura (District Rajsamand – Rajasthan)

(1) Location:

Under the Government of India’s Social Security Scheme pension is provided to the widow, old age and handicapped with assistance from both the respective State and Central governments. Under the scheme millions of rupees are distributed among the selected beneficiaries which is ensured by the respective state government. This social audit was conducted in Vijaypura and Sangawaas Panchayats of Rajsamand district on May 22, 2008, in which the RTI support group was there for the conduct of the process of social audit.

(2) Agent: MKSS

(3) Process:

The first step was to get the information under RTI for which the application was put in the name of the Deputy Cashier of the Post-office of Devgarh Tehsil. After getting the required document, relevant information was compiled. Thereafter there was a house to house drive in the two Panchayats to meet the beneficiaries and get information about the pension that they got. On the basis of the information a report was prepared highlighting the irregularities in providing pension like payment of pension to the dead, tips taken from the postman for delivering the pension and threatening the beneficiaries to stop the pension in case of denial of giving tips to the postman. At the end a Jan Sunwai was organised in which the district officials including the CEO-ZP, Auditor general of Main Postmaster General, Jaipur,

BDO of Devgarh block and representatives from MKSS (Nikhil Dey, Aruna Roy) and RTI support group were present. At the end the report was given to the representative of the administration and assurance of action was given from them.

(4) Impact and sustainability:

It could be said that the process of social audit in Rajasthan was pioneered by MKSS which started the process with use of the RTI Act. Though in recent times they faced a lot of resistance from the public and the Government of Rajasthan on the process of conducting it. It is because process focuses largely on curbing corruption and is facilitated by outside volunteers. Social audit that was to be conducted in Banswara district on NREGS between December 1 to 20, 2007 was resisted by elected representatives and some villagers.

This can be sustainable only if the process is community owned, have involvement of all stakeholders from the beginning and has a holistic perspective of making development initiative effective rather than has a narrow focus on curbing corruption

(ix) Uttar Pradesh

Best Practice 1

(1) Location:

Nairini block, Banda district.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

ParagiLal Vidya Dham Samiti

(3) Process of SA:

The information was collected by ParagiLal Vidya Dham Samiti and community people by taking the recourse of RTI applications.

On the basis of collected information a public hearing was held. The public hearing was attended by the CDO, BDO, Pradhan, secretary and villagers. During the hearing the Gram Panchayat's account and muster roll were shared and malfunctionings were reported.

(4) Impact of SA:

(a) Actions on complaints or suggestions

The case of malfunctioning was proactively taken up by the CDO and an enquiry was ordered.

(b) Impact on improving effectiveness of office/scheme in achieving the desired goals.

The initiatives taken by the civil society organisations have made people aware about the process of social audit. However, the organisations also acknowledged that a lot needed to be done to make the scheme achieve the desired goals.

Best Practice 2

(1) Location:

Bharawan and Sandila Blocks, Hardoi District

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Asha Parivar

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Information gathering and analysis

The analysis of the job cards exhibited that the Gram Pradhans favoured their family members and people who voted for them. It was found that the names of all adult members of the family, especially the women members were missing

on the job cards. No job cards were issued to any woman even in women-headed households. Name of only one woman was mentioned in a job card in Tiloiyakalan Gram Panchayat. In almost all Gram Panchayats, people had to submit their photographs or pay money to the Pradhan to get their photographs affixed on the job cards.

Discrepancies were observed in the Block office record in respect of the job cards issued and in the register, which was available with the Gram Panchayat Vikas Adhikari (VDO). It was also found that the job cards in all Village Panchayats were with the Gram Pradhans or BDOs and some were distributed to people just before the arrival of social audit teams in the village. In Gram Panchayat Jamu it was reported that the Gram Pradhan had cancelled the job cards when the workers did not report for work. The issue was denied by the BDO and since the workers did not have the job cards with them the fact could not be verified.

The analysis of the muster roles showed that the payments made towards work were registered in personal diaries, private registers, blank sheets and on blank muster rolls. The signatures/thumb impressions were taken either on these diaries, private registers, blank sheets and on blank muster rolls. It was also found that people who could sign had been asked to put thumb impressions on muster rolls.

Names of people who had never worked on the site were shown on the muster rolls. The details of work were entered in the job card without bringing it to the notice of beneficiaries.

The analysis of minimum wages and measurement of work showed that in Gram Panchayats Purwaman, Mahitha, Atwa Danda, Sahgawan, Bakwa, Parihawan Sekhwapur, Bharigahna, Atsalia and Mavai Musalmanan Rs 40-50 were paid instead of Rs 58 for each day of work. During a discussion with the Pradhans it was said that they paid from their own pockets because of delay in receiving payments from the district authorities. It was further found that the payments to workers were not linked to measurement of work as no measurements of works had taken place. The authorities were not able to provide measurement books for most of the works.

Transparency was not observed in implementation of the scheme. Important issues related to transparency reported during the discussion were as follows: (a) No boards were put at the worksites displaying the work details or sanctioned amounts (b) Muster rolls were not present at work sites (c) No information of job cards was available (d) Social audits were not done by the Gram Panchayats.

During the meeting with people it was also found that they were afraid of speaking out against the corruption in EGS because the Gram Pradhans and BDOs had threatened the people to not to speak the truth during any enquiry otherwise benefits under other schemes would be denied.

(4) Impact of SA: People got mobilised on issue of social audit and also became aware of their entitlements. Local authorities felt that they need to be accountable and should seek advice from the community to make NREGS more effective.

Best Practice: 3

(1) Location:

Hardoi, Sitapur, Jaunpur, Chitrakoot and Kushinagar

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Movement for right to food and employment

(3) Process of SA:

(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

To facilitate the process of social audit a three-tier process was followed: 1. Surveys in all the districts (minimum five Gram Panchayats representing different blocks per district). 2. Public hearings covering as many districts as possible by People's Commission. 3. Deliberations in Peoples' Court with a focus on result of the studies and findings of people's commission represented by people from all the concerned districts of Uttar Pradesh.

(b) Information sharing and discussion

The People's Commission hearings were held in the above-mentioned districts and were attended by hundreds of workers. The People's Court was held on March 26, 2007, and was attended by 3000 people from more than 20 districts of Uttar Pradesh. People's testimonies were presented before the jury comprising Commissioner Shri. Harshmander, eminent activist Aruna Roy and was chaired by Sandeep Pandey. Additional Commissioner Rural

Development Shri Chandrapal Arun represented the State government.

During the hearings several lacunae were pointed in the implementation of both NREGA and MDM schemes and several issues pertaining to government apathy, hostility and nexus with vested interests were raised. The hearing also showed people's determination to take this as a challenge as labourers came forward and resolved to stand for their rights, exposed the government and "shining" lobby of contractors and politicians.

In respect to Sitapur district it was found that job cards were not given to workers. The job cards were with the Gram Pradhans or the Village Development Officers. The involvement of contractors were also there and they took a bunch of JCs from the Gram Pradhans or VDOs by paying a small sum per card and got the work done by employing some other labourers.

Women were hardly given any work and their names were also not mentioned in the job cards. During the public hearing it was reported that in the village Panchayat Mohammadnagar, Block Mishrikh the Gram Pradhan asked four widows to surrender their pension if they wanted job cards upon which they tore their job cards. Physically challenged people were not provided any work.

(4) Impact of SA:

(a) Actions on complaints or suggestions

The District Administration in Sitapur agreed to consider 60 cu ft of earthwork as a standard for eight hours of work rather than 100 cu ft, which was prevalent earlier. However, in reality only about 40 cu ft of earthwork can be done in one day's of work.

Best Practice: 4

(1) Location:

Civil Court Premises, Chitrakoot

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Vanangana, Dynamic Action Group and Dalit Mahila Samiti with support of District Development Officer.

(3) Process of SA:

A public hearing on NREGS was organised with more than 500 people from Chitrakoot, Pahari, Ramnagar, Mau, Kotari, Miyaganj and Manikpur Block. During the hearing a number of issues were put forward by the participants and many startling issues were also put forward. During the hearing it was found that most of peoples were not aware about their rights provided under NREGA. Many people stated that they knew about NREGA but they had not applied for any job card. Some also mentioned that even after getting job cards they did not get employment. It was also highlighted that the name of all adult family members especially women were not mentioned in the job card and no job cards were issued on the name of women-headed families. There was not a single job provided to physically challenged persons. It was also reported that in many cases people were made to pay for photographs.

Regarding muster roll it was found that not a single muster roll was at the work site. Further analysis of the muster roll revealed that hefty payments were made but in actual labourers had received very little payments. Signatures and thumb impressions on job cards and muster rolls were fudged. Many labourers even did not know that they had to sign on muster rolls. It was reported that works were even provided to those peoples who were not living in the village for a long time.

(4) Impact of SA:

D.D.O. accepted incidents of corruption and misconduct and also admitted that there was political pressure. However, he assured appropriate and necessary action against the culprits.

Best Practice 5

(1) Location:

Itwan Dudaila, Gram Panchayat.

(2) Agent/s who facilitated/conducted SA

Akhil Bhartiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan (ABSSS), in association with community-based organisations called Chingari

Sangathan.

(3) Process of SA:

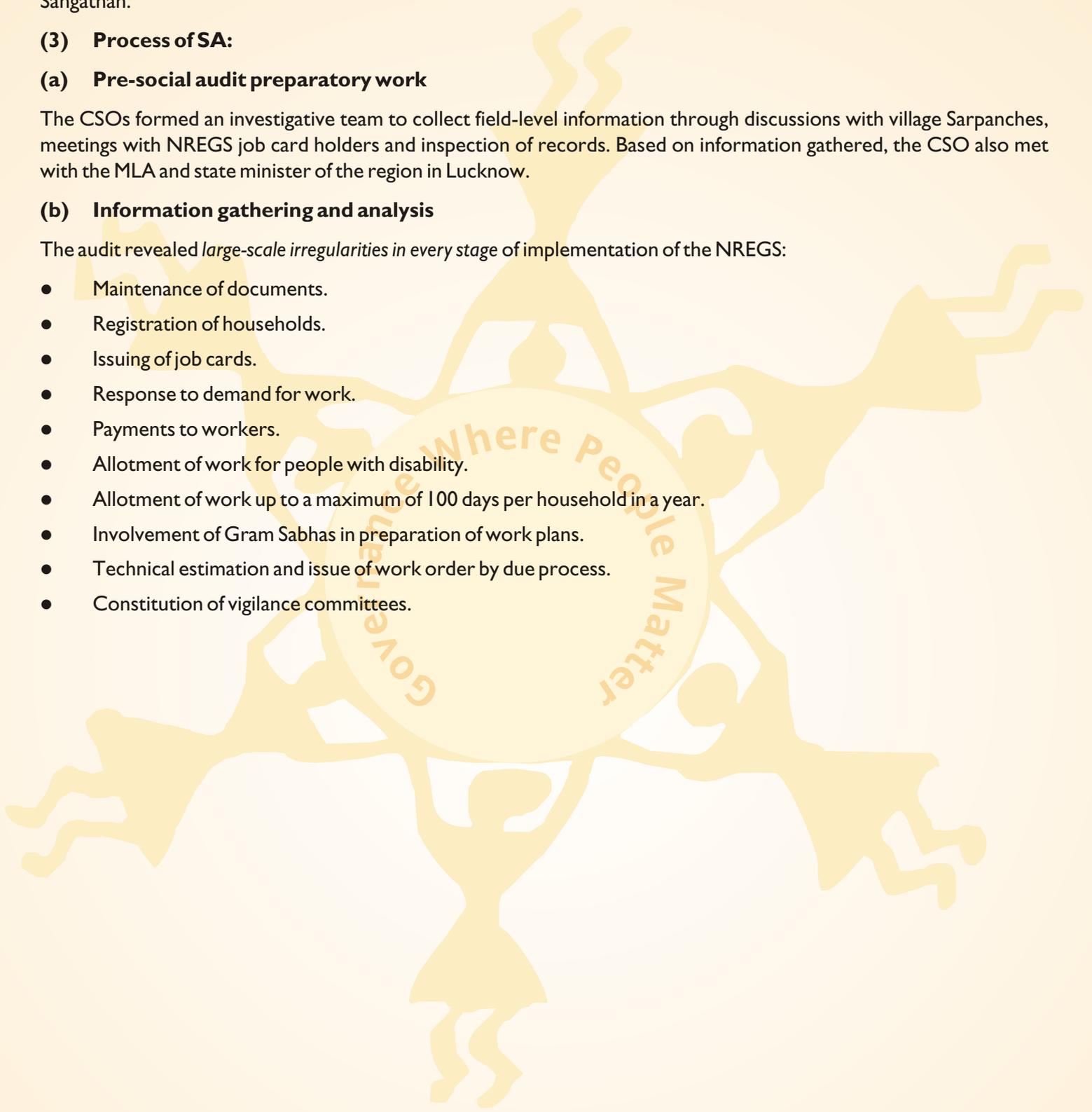
(a) Pre-social audit preparatory work

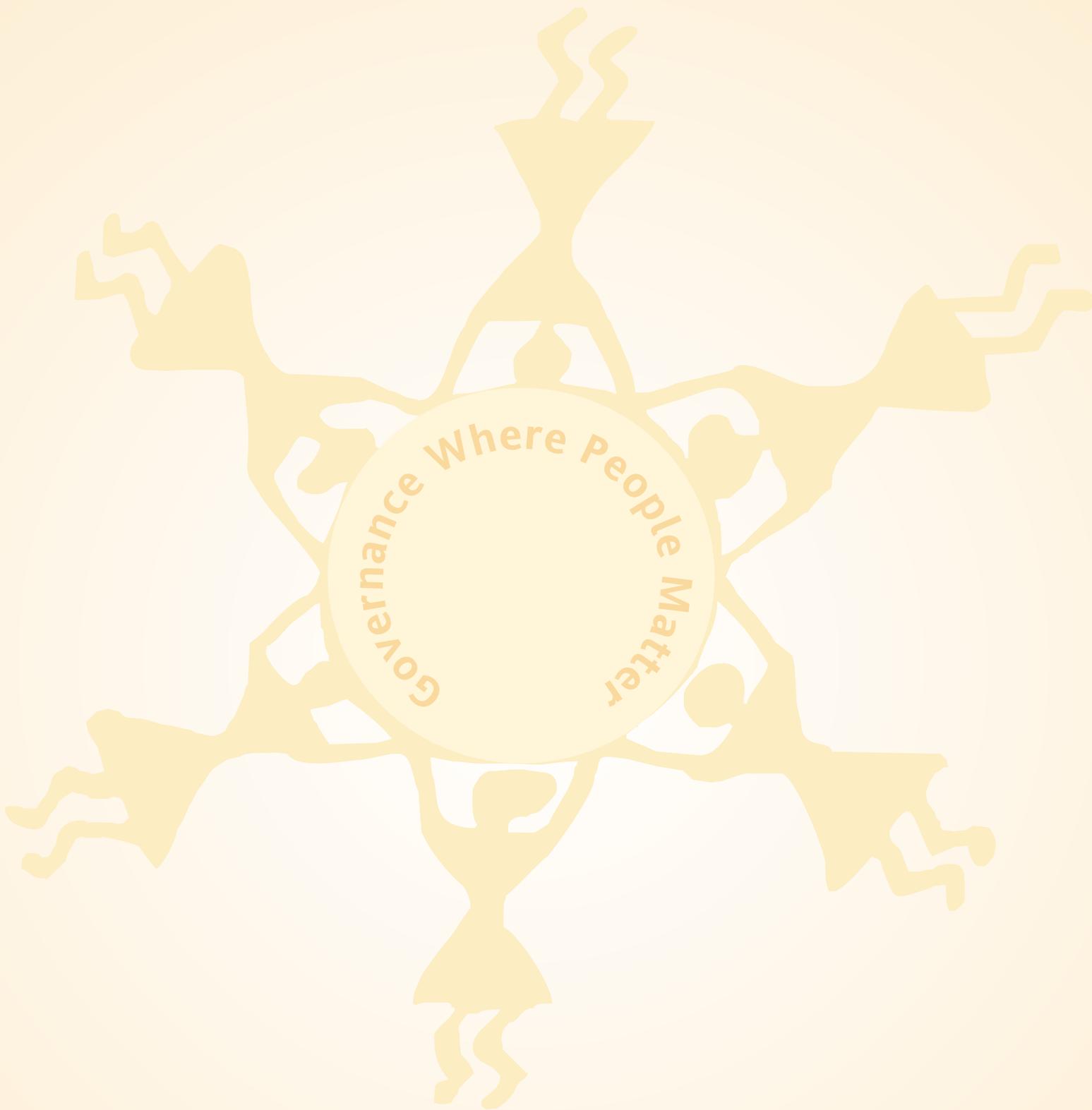
The CSOs formed an investigative team to collect field-level information through discussions with village Sarpanches, meetings with NREGS job card holders and inspection of records. Based on information gathered, the CSO also met with the MLA and state minister of the region in Lucknow.

(b) Information gathering and analysis

The audit revealed *large-scale irregularities in every stage* of implementation of the NREGS:

- Maintenance of documents.
- Registration of households.
- Issuing of job cards.
- Response to demand for work.
- Payments to workers.
- Allotment of work for people with disability.
- Allotment of work up to a maximum of 100 days per household in a year.
- Involvement of Gram Sabhas in preparation of work plans.
- Technical estimation and issue of work order by due process.
- Constitution of vigilance committees.





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42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area, New Delhi - 110 062
Tel. : +91-11-2996 0931-33 Fax : +91-11-2995 5183
E-mail : info@pria.org Website : www.pria.org