



Activating Social Audit in NREGA (Orissa Perspective)

**Process Documentation
CYSO**

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The Context

Social Audit

The word 'audit' is derived from Latin, which means 'to hear'. In ancient times, emperors used to recruit persons designated as auditors to get feedback about the activities undertaken by the kings in their kingdoms.

Social Audit has also been carried out by some NGOs as a means of understanding their impact on society and to see whether they are catering to people's needs. Social Audit has evolved from the stage where these evaluations had no shared structure or method and no agreed criteria to a stage where it is now accepted as an independent evaluation of the activities and programmes being implemented by an organisation.

Functions of Social Audit

Social Auditing can be used as a tool to provide critical inputs and to correctly assess the impact of government activities on the social well-being of the citizens, assess the social costs and measure the social benefits accrued as a result of any programme implementation. The performance of government departments is monitored through various mechanisms, in different states. However, these practices do not capture adequately the broader social, community and environmental benefits.

Therefore, to generate information on social relevance, costs, and benefits of a programme/ activity, Social Audit can be used to provide specific inputs for the following:

- To monitor social and ethical impact and performance of the organisation;
- To provide a basis for shaping management strategy in a socially responsible and accountable way and to design strategies;
- To facilitate organisational learning on how to improve social performance;
- To facilitate the strategic management of institutions (including concern for their influence and social impact on organisations and communities);
- To inform the community, public, other organisations and institutions about the allocation of their resources (time and money): this refers to issues of accountability, ethics (e.g., ethical investment) etc.

Different types of Audits

Broadly speaking, there are at least three types of audits. These are:

- a. Government or institutional audits,
- b. Social audits, and
- c. People's audits.

Government or institutional audits are those that are conducted in-house or through external, professional, auditing institutions, and are ordinarily conducted without the significant involvement of the affected people and/or the intended beneficiaries.

Social audits are those that are conducted jointly by the government and the people, especially by those people who are affected by, or are the intended beneficiaries of, the activity being audited.

People's audits are those that are conducted by the people themselves, including those who are directly affected or are the intended beneficiaries, sometimes with the assistance of movements and NGOs, but invariably with the sincere effort to involve the concerned department or institution.

Social Audit as different from other types of audits:

As government or institutional audits do not significantly involve the affected persons, or the intended beneficiaries; they end up at best assessing outputs rather than outcomes and are also not able to assess whether the decision-making processes had the inputs and support of all the critical stakeholders. Such systems are also very corruptible, as those involved in the audit do not have a real stake in the outcome of the process that they are auditing.

Public audits do not have these problems, because they are usually conducted by the affected persons and/or the intended beneficiaries. However, the findings of a public audit might not be easily acceptable to the government and other implementing institutions as they are not intrinsically involved in the process of audit and, despite best efforts, might not participate. Besides, without the participation of the implementing departments/institutions, their side of the story does not get told.

On the other hand, social audits do not have a uniform approach and methodology and many local factors affect their efficacy. To conduct social audits, a huge amount of public mobilisation is necessary and, in the absence of that, social audits might not be effective.

The Ideal Option

Ideally, government or institutional audit would remain the basic auditing practice, but would become far more transparent and inclusive of affected persons and intended beneficiaries, incorporating and integrating some of the practices of social audits.

Social audits would be conducted in addition to government or institutional audits, for a sample of activities, especially for those that involve distribution of disaggregated benefits at grassroots level or very large investments, (e.g. NREGS, ICDS, PDS). Findings of such social audits would be publicly compared to those of the government or institutional audits and correctives identified and incorporated in both. There would also be a public rendering of action taken.

Only where there was dissatisfaction among the public with one or both of these auditing processes would the public take the initiative of conducting a public audit. When this happens, the government or other implementing institutions would fully participate in the public audit, thereby making it comprehensive, and take on board the findings. The concerned institution would also come back to the public and report on the action taken on the findings.

Social and Financial Audit

While financial audit answers the question, "was the money spent correctly", social audit answers "did it (the spending) make any difference"?

Social Audit assesses performance and unpacks decisions while complementing financial audit. Together the social and financial audits give us the true picture of the process.

The Basic Principles of Social Audit include:

- **Transparency:** Complete transparency in the process of administration and decision-making, with an obligation on the government to suo moto (voluntary disclosure of information) give the people full access to all relevant information.
- **Participation:** A right based entitlement for all the affected persons (and not just their representatives) to participate in the process of decision making and validation.
- **Representative Participation:** In those rare cases where options are pre-determined out of necessity, the right of the affected persons to give informed consent, as a group or as individuals, as appropriate.
- **Accountability:** Immediate and public answerability of elected representatives and government functionaries, to all the concerned and affected people, on relevant actions or inactions.

A social audit is a process by which the people, the final beneficiaries of any scheme, programme, policy or law, are empowered to audit such schemes, programmes, policies and laws. A social audit is an ongoing process by which the potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders of an activity or project are involved from the planning to the monitoring and evaluation of that activity or project. It thereby tries to ensure that the activity or project is designed and implemented in a manner that is most suited for the prevailing (local) conditions, appropriately reflects the priorities and preferences of those affected by it, and most effectively serves public interest.

The Need for Social Audit

Social Audit is an ongoing process that involves the potential beneficiaries and stakeholders from the planning to the monitoring and evaluation of that activity or project. It is a check/verification, an effective implementation and control of irregularities of a programme/ scheme implementation.

Objectives of social audit

- Assessing the physical and financial gaps between needs and resources available for local development.
- Creating awareness among beneficiaries and providers of local social and productive services.
- Increasing efficacy and effectiveness of local development programmes.
- Scrutiny of various policy decisions, keeping in view stakeholder interests and priorities, particularly of rural poor.
- Estimation of the opportunity cost for stakeholders of not getting timely access to public services.

Role of Social Audit Committee in the Process

The committee will only play the role of facilitation and compilation. It will not take any decision or influence any views of any people. It is expected to play the following role:

- Environment building on social audit
- Collect and prepare list of information people need from time to time (any thing any person may demand)
- Facilitate the collection of information from concerned department, office or agency using RTI Act.

- Facilitate transparency in programme implementation (display of as much information as possible, keep the records for public inspection at any point of time and collect feedback from the people)
- Transcribe the information into people's language (many times it is difficult for the people to understand government language or technical words)
- Sorting and analysis of information
- Sharing the findings with respective person/s and collect his/her opinion, feedbacks and reactions. This may be done collectively in small groups or with individuals, if the person wants
- Compilation of all findings (this may be done work-wise, head-wise or group-wise as decided by the people)
- Presentation of findings (a particular day may be decided to present the findings before all including implementing agency, administration, people's representatives and other stakeholders. This is called Social Audit day.
- Record their views and suggestions and help implementer to rectify or change the process wherever required and sort out if there is any discrepancy in the work as per suggestion.

Applying Social Audit

An Audit by the community, a Social Audit involves an audit of the quality of works executed at different levels, the details of disbursements made, the number of labourers employed and materials used. It is a process in which, details of the resources, financial and non-financial, used by public agencies for development initiatives are shared with the people, often through public platforms. Social Audits allow people to enforce accountability and transparency, providing the ultimate users an opportunity to scrutinise development initiatives.

Importance of Social Audit in NREGA

A social audit is a process in which the people work with the government to monitor and evaluate the planning and implementation of a scheme or programme. The social audit process is critically dependent on the demystification and wide dissemination of all relevant information.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, empowers people to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes through Gram Sabhas, Social Audits, Participatory Planning and setting up of local Vigilance and Monitoring Committees. Hence, for the first time "Social Audit" was institutionalised as never before, for implementation in 2005, under the NREG Act.

It was felt that active community participation was particularly important for ensuring transparency and public accountability. Thus, there is a role for all grassroots institutions such as workers' associations, local beneficiary committees, self-help groups and user groups in spreading awareness, mobilizing workers and in monitoring the implementation of the Scheme.

Once the NREGA was passed, the Government of India issued operational guidelines that provided the broad operational framework. Moreover, it demanded in the context of transparency and accountability, detailing out of the Citizens' Charter and provided of a step-by-step guidance on how social audits were to be done along with formats for reporting.

As a new phenomenon, Social Audit in NREGA could possibly be termed as a process of participatory evaluation. This was so since in spite of the usual evaluation by external facilitators, it would still include the local community.

Elements /Activities constituting Social Audit

A social audit is conducted over the life span of a scheme or programme, and not just in one go or at one stage. The activities that constitute a social audit include:

- Making people aware of their rights, entitlements and obligations under the scheme/programme.
- Specifically, making them aware of their right to participate in the ongoing process of social audit.
- Making sure that all the forms and documents are in simple, easily understandable language and structure and available in local languages.
- Also ensuring that all relevant information is publicly displayed on boards and through posters and is also read out at appropriate times for the convenience of the people, especially those who cannot read.
- Ensuring that the decision-making process, especially for those decisions that are critical and/or vulnerable to distortions, is transparent and open and carried out, as far as possible, in the presence of the affected persons.
- Making certain that all decisions, along with reasons, as appropriate, are also communicated as soon as they are made to the affected people, and in a manner that makes it easy for them to comprehend.

- Where there is a need for measuring, inspection or certification, ensuring that randomly selected individuals, from among the affected persons, are involved on a rotational basis.
- Also ensuring that members of the public and especially those directly affected are facilitated to inspect and verify records, inspect works and generally monitor planning and implementation.
- Where required, to have a formal public hearing (Gram Sabha) where pertinent information is put before the public and verified in consultation with the affected persons.
- Ensuring that the findings of the social audit process are acted upon as they become available and that apart from addressing the specific issues, systemic changes are also brought about.

Basic Techniques of Social Audit:

The success of social audit depends upon the use of technique. The Committee Member can choose different methods and sequence to capture both qualitative and quantitative information from the respondents. However it is also important to ensure the follow up action taken on the social audit report and the interest on the part of the concerned department to adopt the recommendations in the report. The Committee Members should always suggest the modalities for improving the performance based on the feedback received from different stakeholders. The very basic techniques which are followed in the social audit purpose are:

- Preparatory activities involving review of the programmes
- Defining audit boundaries and identifying the stakeholders
- Social accounting and book-keeping
- Undertaking Public hearing
- Dissemination of the result/findings
- Feedback and institutionalization of social audit

Basic Procedural Steps of the Social Audit Process:

The process of conducting a social audit for specific schemes or programmes is described below, step by step, to help those from among the government and people's institutions who want to organise a social audit. The specific examples taken are from the NREGA.

However, though the general structure will remain the same for all schemes and programmes, specific changes will need to be incorporated for each scheme in order to accommodate the unique characteristics of each scheme.

Step 1: Study the details of the NREGS and familiarise oneself with all the provisions and requirements of the scheme and of the Right to Information Act.

Step 2: Identify the various stages of the scheme, especially those where decisions have to be made, beneficiaries identified, sites selected, strategies determined, details specified, etc.

Step 3: For each of these stages, identify the vulnerabilities, in terms of what can go wrong, what can be corrupted, what distortions can occur or what biases can creep in.

Step 4: Identify, for each stage, the appropriate measures to be taken to ensure that the identified vulnerabilities are addressed through the relevant social audit mechanisms. These could include one or more of the measures listed at point 6 above and essentially includes making all relevant information available publicly, ensuring that critical decisions are made jointly with the affected people and in their presence, and that the process of verification, measurement and certification is done with the involvement of the affected people.

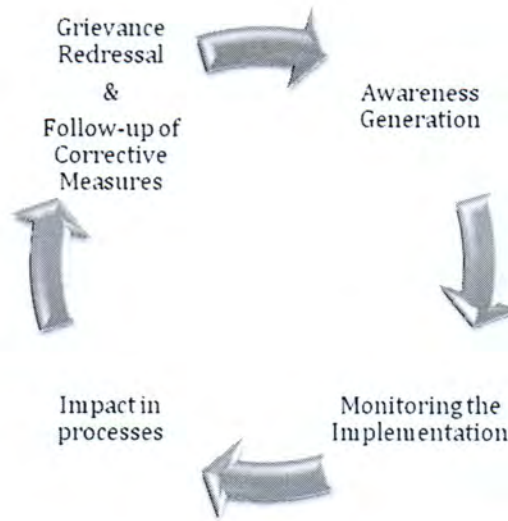
Step 5: Identify the functionaries and institutions that would be responsible for ensuring that the social audit is conducted, and conducted properly (see chapter 4 for allocation of responsibility in the NREGA).

Step 6: Call a meeting of the village/community and discuss the principles and method of social auditing in detail with them.

Step 7: Ensure that the identified institution and functionary complies with all the requirements of a social audit.

Step 8: Every six months, prepare for a public hearing. or a Gram Sabha. In this Gram Sabha, the affected persons collectively review the process of social audit. Also reviewed is the progress of the scheme. The reports and data related to the scheme are publicly verified and people are given an opportunity to discuss their problems with the implementing institutions, and understand their problem.

The Benefits of Social Audit in NREGA



Integrating Social Audit into NREGA

The NREGA provides to the people certain entitlements. These are:

1. The entitlement to register one's family.
2. The entitlement to a job card.
3. The entitlement to apply for work.
4. The entitlement to participate in the process of preparation of shelf of projects/ selection of sites.
5. The entitlement to participate in the development and approval of technical estimates/issuance of work order.
6. The entitlement to get work allotted within fifteen days of applying for it.
7. The entitlement to participate in the supervision of works.
8. The entitlement to receive full wages for the work done, as per the prescribed rates.
9. The entitlement to receive unemployment allowance, if work is not allotted in the stipulated fifteen days.
10. The entitlement to be involved in the evaluation of the works undertaken under this Act.

In order to ensure that each individual has the opportunity to get all that he/she is entitled to, the process of social audit when integrated and institutionalised in the process of implementing this Act, it would provide for certain measures to ensure full transparency and participation of all stakeholders.

The Efforts So Far

Since the constitution of the Act in 2005, a few approaches were implemented to carry out Social Audit prior to the proposal of pre-testing of the Social Audit Committee by CYSD.

Public Hearing:

It was a fact-finding procedure by gathering people and identifying issues through discussions.

Information dissemination by the government:

This was a once a year gathering for dissemination of information about muster rolls, job registration and worksite facilities under NREGS to be presented to the Central Government.

The High-Impact approach of NGOs:

WOSCA, a State level NGO, was designated and delegated by NIRD, Hyderabad, to carry out a public hearing in Malarpada Gram Panchayat of Keonjhar District, in 2007. This effort of carrying out a “high impact” approach of social audit was done by filling up of information into a format based on entries provided by beneficiaries, members of the Panchayats and members of the Block. This fact-finding was followed by a public hearing with discussions on the issues in the presence of government officials and the members of the Panchayat. The problems faced were presented to the Government with the possibilities of initiating action against corrupt people. This so called “high-impact” approach was carried out with the objective to provide the community with the necessary information and to acclimatize them with the scenario to bring about changes called for.

The Success/Failure of the Approaches

Public Hearing: The process of public hearing however could have acted only as a component of Social Audit, and not as a complete model for replication. This was so due to an evident lack of community participation that further led to divisions among the community infusing vindictive attitude in them after the hearing. The larger objective of empowering the community remained a distant dream. The public hearing could only be treated as an event which practically had no impact. The process was short-lived and could not have been accountable in the long run.

Information Dissemination by the Government: This was a tool of generating information, and never an approach to check corrupt practices. Moreover there was a significant lack of participation of the community in taking any corrective measures.

The High-Impact approach of NGOs: The corrupt intentions and vested interests of a section of people in the community came in way of success of this high-impact approach and kept it from being implemented as a successful model.

Errors or deficiency in the earlier approaches that led to their failure:

- The Beneficiaries, Panchayat members and officials of Govt. departments (Forest, Agriculture and soil) who work for NREGA remained absent. So the presumed audit was not at all a Social Audit.
- Problems of labourers and late wage payments were not discussed. 100% verification of the Muster Roll was not carried out. There was no way to find out whether works were completed or not. Details of the work were not discussed.
- The BDO was not responsible towards the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Valuation of the work was done only after it had been completed. The Social Audit by the Govt. did not cover the main objective of the NREGA.
- The community was unaware of the amount of money spent, the gender ratio of labourers, the quality and quantity of work, whether the work was permanent, and most importantly the date of initiation of work.
- Lastly, and most importantly, rather than providing a preventive action, the approaches were a post mortem; instead of strengthening the system the approaches disintegrated it.

Due to the failure of these social audit approaches, an interactive model was designed by CYSD that apart from providing an accountable and transparent mode of increased community participation, established communication with government agencies and strengthens the community enabling them to supervise NREGA works for ever.

The Opportunity

The NREG Act- 2005

With the basic objective of the Act to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to adult members of every household who volunteer to do unskilled manual work, the NREGA is a “Peoples’ Act” in several senses.

Prepared after a wide range of consultation with people’s organizations, the Act addresses chiefly to working people and their fundamental right to life with dignity. It empowers ordinary people to play an active role in the implementation of employment guarantee schemes through Gram Sabhas, social audits, participatory planning and other means. More than any other law, NREGA is an Act of the people, by the people and for the people.

The NREG Act is an important step towards the realization of the right to work. It is also expected to enhance people’s livelihoods on a sustained basis, by developing the economic and social infrastructure in rural areas. The choice of works seeks to address the causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion. This work guarantee can serve the objectives of generating productive assets, protecting the environment, empowering rural women, reducing rural-urban migration and fostering social equity, among others. Effectively implemented, the employment generated under the Act has the potential of transforming the geography of poverty.

Social audit is an intrinsic part of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). Identified as a measure for ensuring transparency and accountability, and ideally carried out by user groups and village communities who can take the help of civil society organizations, the Social Audit Process involves a preliminary process to ensure its success.

Social Audit as a continuous process

An innovative feature of the National Rural employment Guarantee Act is that it gives a central role to ‘social audits’ as a means of continuous public vigilance (NREGA, Section 17). The basic objection of a social audit is to ensure public accountability in the implementation of projects, laws and policies.

In this perspective, a social audit is an ongoing process through which the potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders of an activity or project are involved at every stage: from the planning to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This process helps in ensuring that the activity or project is designed and implemented in a manner that is most suited to the prevailing (local) conditions, appropriately reflects the priorities and preferences of those affected by it, and most effectively serves public interest.

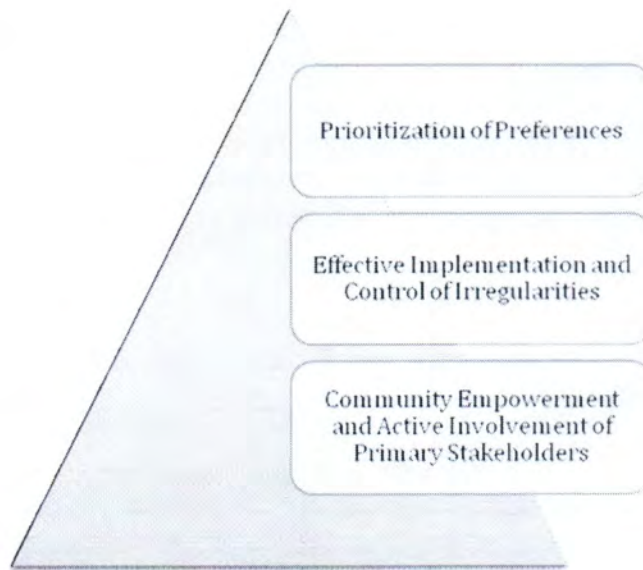
In the context of NREGA, the process of social audit should include public vigilance and verification of the following 11 stages of implementation:

- o Registration of families
- o Distribution of job cards
- o Receipt of work applications
- o Preparation of shelf of projects and selection of sites
- o Development and approval of technical estimates and issuance of work order
- o Allotment of work to individuals
- o Implementation and supervision of works
- o Payment of unemployment allowance
- o Payment of wages
- o Evaluation of work
- o Mandatory social audit in the Gram Sabha (Social Audit Forum)

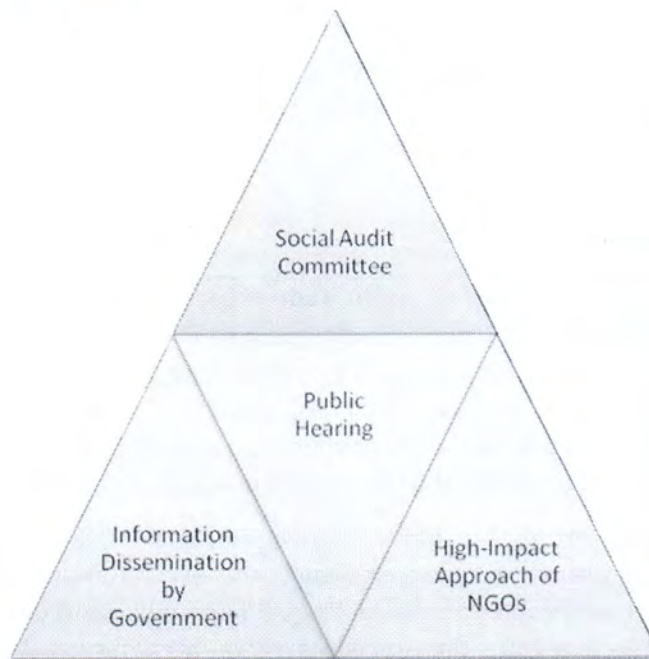
Activating Social Audit in NREGA

The devolution of powers to the Panchayati Raj Institutions through the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, of the Constitution, provided the Panchayat the constitutional status to function as a unit of self-governance. This status was further elevated in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993, which made Social Audits mandatory. This empowered the village communities to conduct social audits of all development work in their respective villages with the concerned authorities duty-bound to facilitate them. As Gram Panchayat (GP) is the lowest planning and administrative unit for development programmes and schemes, empowering and entitling GPs with provisions of social audit would prevent corruption at the first place and check the usual post-project bitterness and backlash in further slowing down processes.

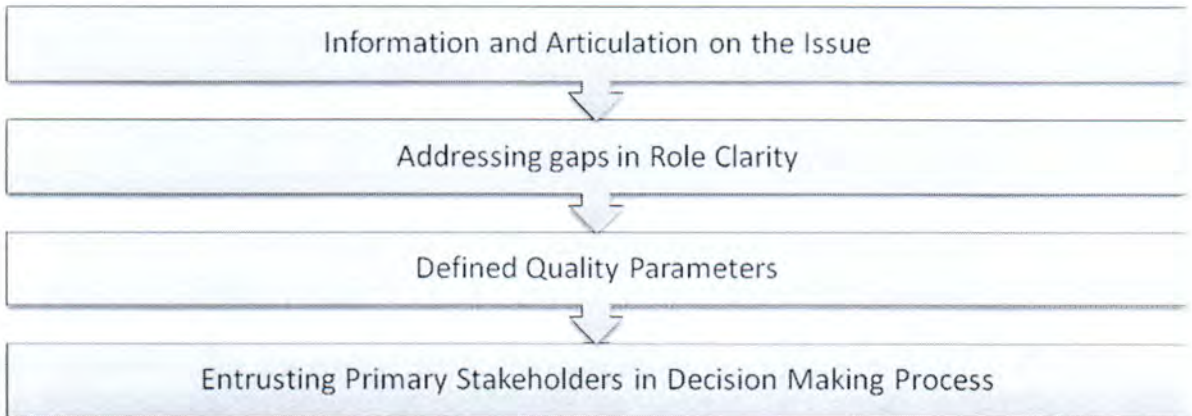
The proposed initiative was taken with the objective of pressurizing the State to Institutionalize the Social Audit mechanism through sound demonstrations addressing gaps in the ongoing community level tribal development activities while meeting priorities of the concerns of the World Bank in upholding social accountability mechanisms of governance.



CYSD in its initiative for bringing about social accountability, proposed a watchdog for identifying gaps, enabling provisions and carrying out mid-course corrections through a mechanism of participatory review. **The “Social Audit Committee” (SAC)** proposed by CYSD was proposed at the Panchayat level with a mission to keep a watch on the already functional Vigilance Monitoring Committees (VMCs) at each project level as regards the operations of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme at the grassroots.



The Social Audit Committees would hence, weed out the causes of failure from the initiation of processes through completion, ensuring a vigilant process of chaos management providing the desired results within the stipulated timeframe. The formations of the Social Audit Committees at the Gram Panchayat level, with its “on-going” process of monitoring the activities of the VMC by potential stakeholders themselves, at each level, would provide for accountability and make institutions more willing to act, answerable and credible to the beneficiaries.



VMC at Project Level

At the project level, the existing VMCs would be facilitated by the SAC to perform on the lines of the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, in addition to its other responsibilities.

SA Forum (Gram Sabha)

Apart from the ongoing process of social audit, there would be a mandatory review of all aspects of the social audit at the Gram Sabha meetings to be held at least once every six months for this purpose. At these ‘Social Audit Forums’ information would be read out publicly, and people will be given an opportunity to question officials, seek and obtain information, verify financial expenditure, examine the provision of entitlements, discuss the priorities reflected in choices made, and critically evaluate the quality of work as well as the services of the programme staff.

Thus, the Social Audit Forum 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. Issues that would be raised in the forum would include information not being made available because of a failure to carry out the transparency requirements, failure to obtain entitlements due and failure to enforce accountability of

officials, inability to get clarifications or answers to queries with regard to the scheme, various aspects of the programme carried out without the people's involvement, failure of Grievance Redressal mechanisms, and lack of opportunity for individuals to review the functioning of all aspects of the project. Redressal mechanisms must be put in place so that complaints are dealt with in a timely, fair and effective manner.

Role of Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha in Social Audit

The Gram Panchayat (GP) is the lowest planning and administrative unit for development programmes and schemes. The scheme guidelines specify that GPs should organise social audit (e.g., NREGS). Sometimes, questions are asked about the credibility and willingness of the GP, which is the implementing agency to organise social audit. The social audit need not always be a specially organised activity or event but an 'on-going process'. The procedures of planning and executing schemes/ works at GP levels prescribed in the various guidelines have inbuilt (though not spelt out specifically) processes for social audit. Some of them are:

- Wide publicity for schemes/ programmes among local community, placing the GP plans, list of beneficiaries, plan estimates, funds receipts and expenditure etc. in the Gram Sabha are part of the social audit process. Instead of making this as a routine stipulation adhering to mechanical exercise, encouraging the community members to discuss and seek clarifications at the Gram Sabha itself can turn out to be a sort of social audit. Social animators and activists should facilitate this.
- Formation of Village level Monitoring Committees (VMCs) with genuinely interested members than vested interests, allowing them to perform their assigned functions and requesting them to present their findings and observations in Gram Sabha is also a form of social audit.
- Keeping all relevant records, registers, documents etc. in proper and updated manner and making it available for anyone who wants to check and scrutinise is one of the functions of GP. This is all the more important and mandatory in the context of Right to Information Act and programmes like NREGS. Public display of planned works, estimates, fund flow, expenses, status of works etc. is also stipulated. Honestly adhering to these expected responsibilities will be facilitating social auditing process in the village.

Public hearing

The forum would give people the opportunity to review compliance with the ongoing requirements of transparency and accountability, and would also serve as an institutional forum where people can conduct a detailed public audit of all NREGS works.

A special meeting of the Sabha would be convened for the Social Audit of Works.

The quorum for the Sabha meeting shall be 1/10th of members of the Palli Sabha. In addition to this, 33 percent of the total workers listed in the muster rolls for that work and residing in the Palli jurisdiction shall be present in the meeting. In the event of there being quorum in the Sabha, it shall stand adjourned to a future date and no quorum shall be necessary for such adjourned meeting.

The meetings would be convened at suitable intervals with a prior notice of 15 days in advance. The Government officials who are associated with any work will also be issued notice to attend the social audit Sabha. Besides that government officials associated with that particular issues/works shall be present in the social audit Gram Sabha meeting. During the 15 days notice period, any member of group members of the Palli Sabha may submit any objection or seek any clarification in writing with regard to any aspect of the work or the document related to the work.

In the Social Audit Sabha, the Gram Panchayat Secretary or in his absence any body authorised by the Gram Panchayat would be responsible to read out each of the documents and explain the details of the documents.

The objection received in writing would then be heard one by one by all. The non official member of officials involved in the implementation of the work would be invited to present any clarification and/or evidence. After all evidences and arguments heard a decision will be arrived at by consensus. In the extent of there being no consensus decision would be by vote by show of hands.

Only if the Sabha convened for social audit passes a resolution by majority of votes that there are no irregularities and the work is satisfactory, then the Gram Panchayat will issue certificate of utilization of funds.

The Plan

To attack the corruption plaguing the anti-poverty missions in the tribal pockets of Orissa and to create pressure on the State to institutionalise the social audit mechanism in the OREGS, CYSD proposed to pilot through Six Gram Panchayats in Orissa. The proposed initiative addressed the gaps in the current and ongoing community level tribal development activities by CYSD pursued with governmental as well as non-governmental support to the areas, while meeting the priorities of the World Bank in upholding social accountability mechanisms in the context of governance in tribal areas as greater measures of concerns with reference to all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and human development measures being promoted by the World Bank.

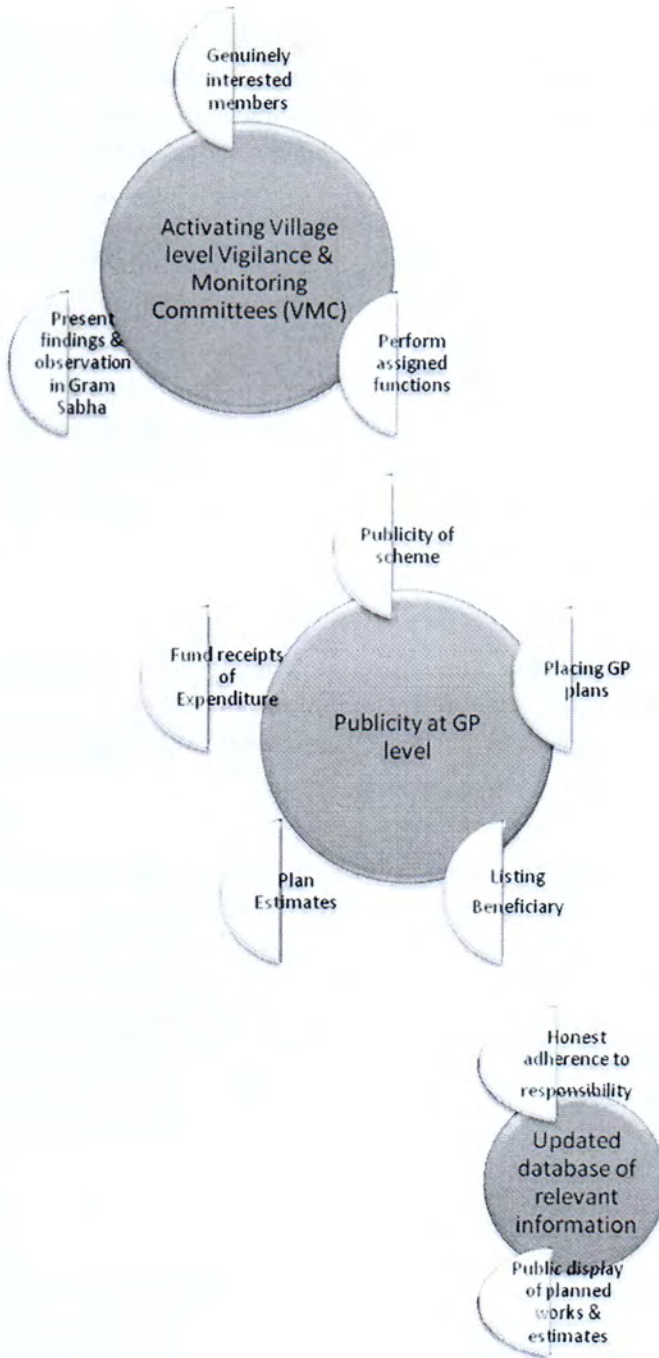
An internal brainstorming exercise followed with discussions on all the aspects of the challenge to incorporate an audit exercise as an edge above the previous audit experiences ensuring complete participation of the community with the three objectives of information disclosure, capacity building and policy influencing in mind.

This brainstorming led to Conception of a Committee at a higher level that included diverse stakeholders who could guide the Vigilance Monitoring Committee as well as take up dialogues at the higher levels to resolve varied challenges pertaining to implementation at NREGA successfully.

It was decided that the proposed initiative would address problems in the implementation of the OREGS through social audit. Against the general belief that social audit process was usually done at the end of a project to evaluate its pros and cons, that meant making a post mortem for the mere sake of identifying the culprit and corruption and punishing them by carrying out an evaluation at the end of any programme/activity without following the participatory audit from the beginning and during the implementation. This usually resulted in a lot of backlash and opposition from people with vested interests. This is the reason why most people have not been able to practice social audit process despite series of debates, discourses and orders. It is a fact that in most parts of rural Orissa are not yet prepared to face and handle this backlash.

Taking note of this, the proposed initiative was to only focus on those OREGS projects that were about to begin, so that each phase of the project, from the start to the finish, could be subjected to social audit. This would help prevent corruption in the first place, as the vested interests and the implementing officials would be careful from the beginning. As a result there would not be much post-project bitterness or backlash.

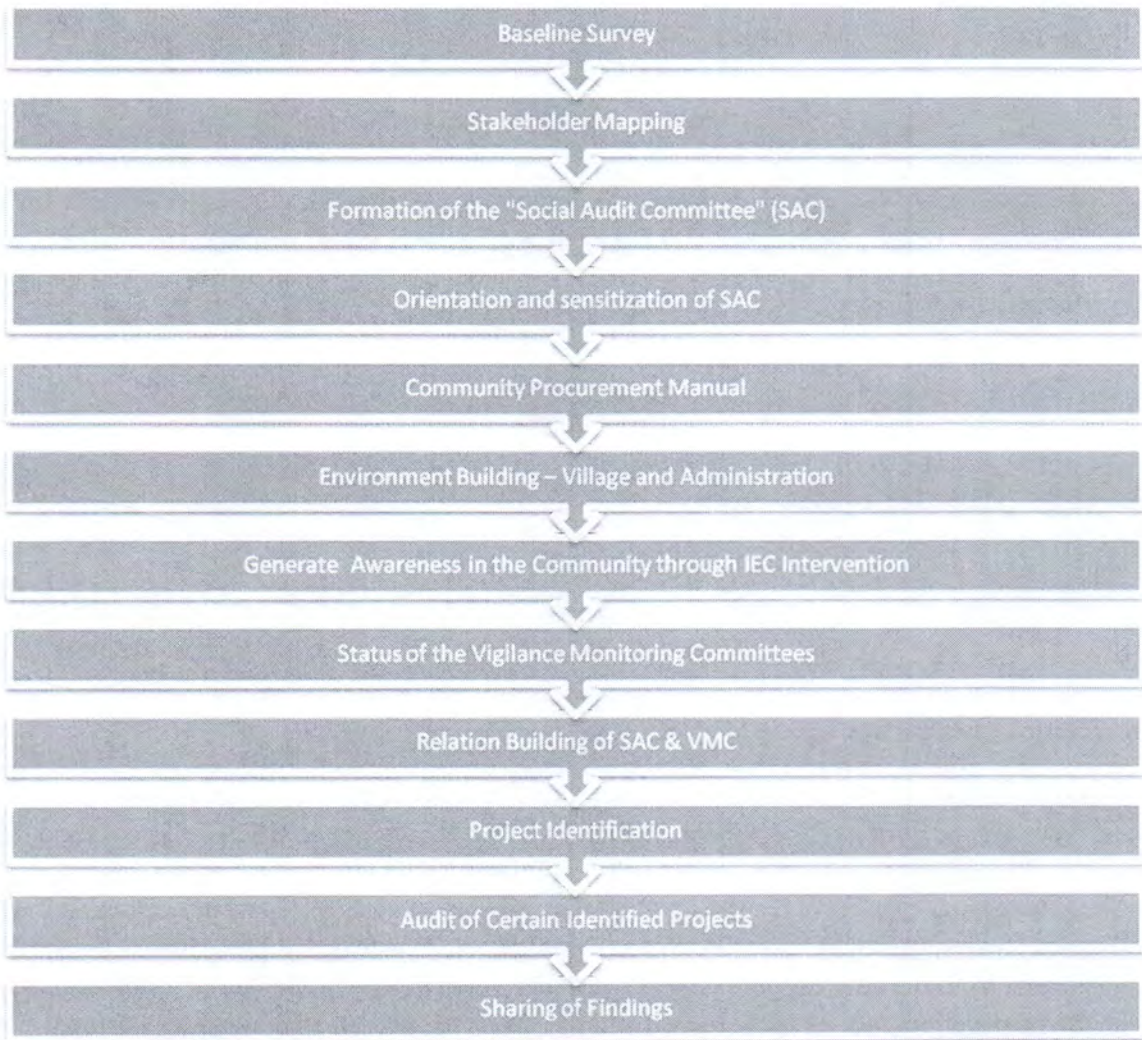
Planning & Execution



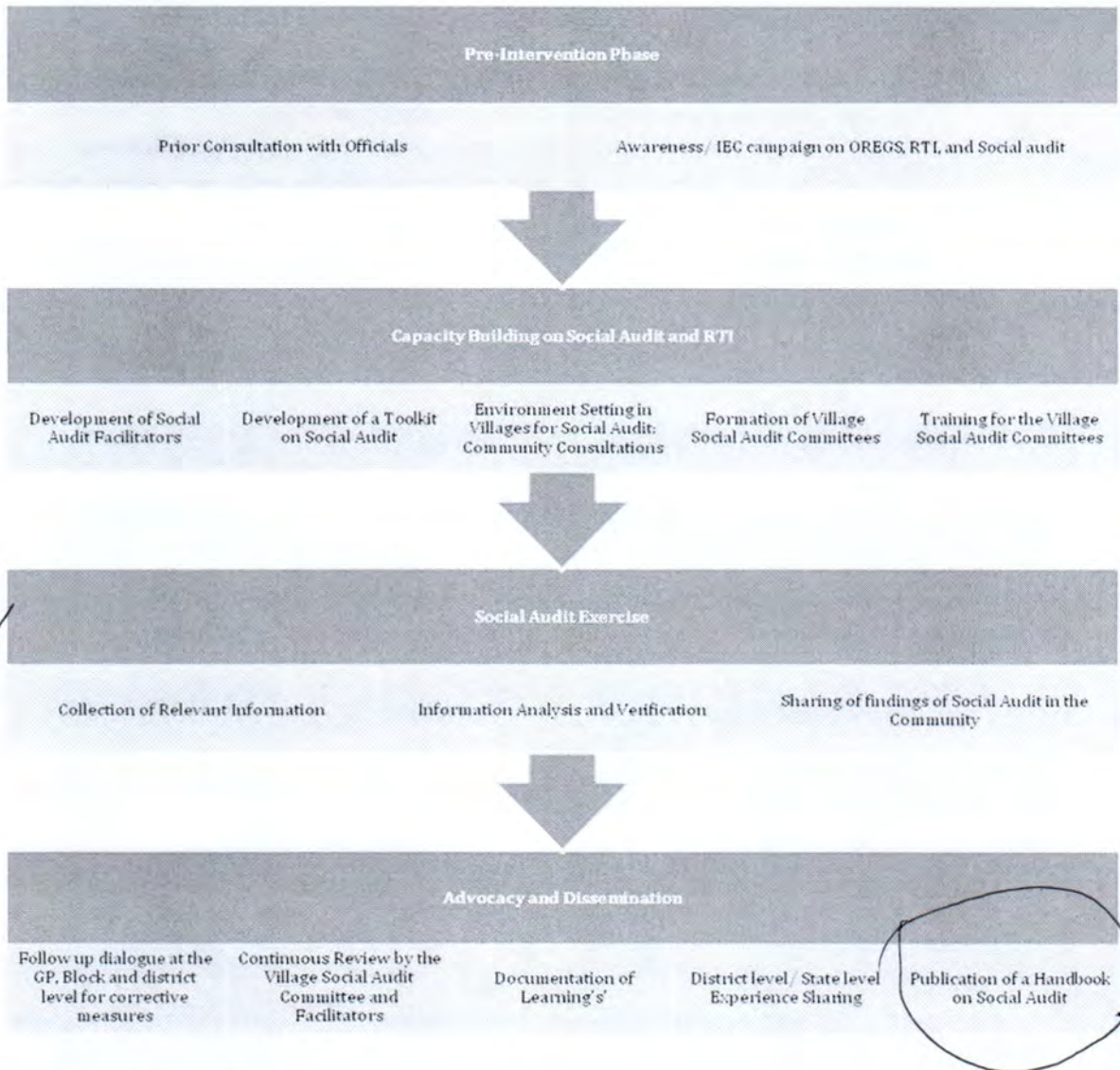
The Outcome Expected on executing the committee planned would be as follow:

- Social audit would be institutionalised as a preventive mechanism rather than a post-mortem, and would ensure transparency and accountability.
- “Social Audit Committee” (SAC) would be recognised by all the stakeholders.
- Cooperative and collaborative environment would be built and established rather than confrontation.
- A scope for Mutual trust and spirit of cooperation would be established.

Process Incorporation



Activities



Description of Activities

Pre-intervention Multi-stakeholder Consultation: Officials at the GP, block and district level and other key stakeholders like the PRI representatives and locally active NGOs will be duly informed about the initiation of such an exercise well in advance. This will be done at the beginning of the project through GP, block and district level consultations where the idea of social audit will be introduced and suggestions from the different stakeholders will be sought. This will ensure their involvement from the very beginning. Moreover, this will help reduce the initial hesitance in them to take the responsibility for ensuring access to official records and commit to taking corrective action on the issues arising out of the audits.

Community Level Awareness Generation: To start with, street plays and other folk media events will be organized to inform people about OREGS, social audit and the Right to Information and that such an audit of the scheme is to be held in their villages. Songs and other folk programmes will be especially composed for this purpose and performances will be arranged in all the villages. The awareness-raising process will start in the month of May. There will be two rounds of awareness programmes in each village to convince people of the importance of the audit.

Development of Social Audit Facilitators: A special training of trainers (TOT) programme will be organized for developing a band of social audit facilitators from among local leaders who will help and train the village social audit committees in collecting and analysing information, undertaking physical verification etc. These facilitators will be continuously accompanying the village committees from the very beginning till the end of the process. In other words, these facilitators will serve as local resource persons.

Development of a Toolkit on OREGS, Social Audit and RTI: A special toolkit comprising information on the various tools, methods and processes of social audit will be developed keeping in view the local context and the specific context of OREGS. Among others, the toolkit will include information on why conduct social audit, the processes and steps involved, guidelines on what aspects of the OREGS should be paid attention to, what kind of information should be sought by the village audit committee, etc. Care will be taken to ensure that the toolkit is predominantly visual in nature.

Environment Setting in Villages for Social Audit: Before initiating social audit, the social audit facilitators will personally visit the village to mobilize people and impress upon them the significance of social audit and the RTI in the specific context of OREGS.

Formation of Village Social Audit Committees: A social audit committee comprising around eight to ten members will be formed taking a specific number of persons from among the direct beneficiaries of the OREGS. Care will be taken to ensure that the committees include members from the most vulnerable groups, women, and people with disabilities and other neglected communities.

Training for the Village Social Audit Committees: Series of training programmes will be organized for the village social audit committee representatives by the Social Audit facilitators on how to go about the social audit process. The members will be provided with the toolkit developed along with important reading material.

Collection of Relevant Information: Once the decision to hold a social audit is taken, the village committees will be facilitated to collect information from the Gram Panchayat and wherever necessary higher-up government offices. Attempts will be made to collect information related to various works being undertaken. The GP officials will be persuaded to make available measurement books and utilization certificates for engineering works. Other relevant documents like sanction letters, resolutions, GP recommendations, work orders to contractors, muster rolls, running account bills and vouchers and estimates of the works will also be collected. Once collected, all the information and records will be sorted and filed.

Information Analysis and Verification: The next step in the process will be to analyse the information available. For instance, muster rolls which come as records of a weeks' work or a fortnight's work will be converted into worker-wise records so that proper verification can be done with individual workers. Similarly, records will be studied for violation of norms and guidelines for minimum and equal wages (men and women), breaching of estimates, cheating in wage payment and so on. Technical data will be converted into information that can be easily triangulated with the villagers, for example, cubic meters of measurement will be converted into locally comprehensible units of measurement.

For this process, a team of facilitators will stay in each village for three to four days in order to i) help the village auditors assess the extent and instances of corruption, by sharing information with the villagers, by physically verifying whether works have taken place, and by cross-checking muster rolls, bills and vouchers with villagers; and instil confidence in people to participate actively in the audit process, and to activate the village-level committees.

During this period, an engineer will check the physical works claimed to have been done, and give his/her own assessment of the expenditure incurred and of deviations from the plans.

Some days before the social audit, representatives from the district administration will be persuaded to visit the villages for appraisal about the preparations for the audit. Efforts will be made to persuade them to publicly commit that there would be action following the audit. This will help instil a great deal of confidence among the villagers.

One or two days before the audit, a last round of publicity will be carried out inviting people to take part in the audit process in large numbers.

Sharing of the findings of Social audit at the community level: The community level sharing will take place at the village level. The village audit committee members will make presentations about their findings. The areas to be covered will include areas like registration of families, distribution of job cards, receipt of work applications, preparation of shelf of project and selection of sites, development and approval of technical estimates and issuance of work order, allotment of work to individual, implementation and supervision of works, payment of unemployment allowance, payment of wages, and evaluation of work. Care will be taken to ensure that people from the marginalized segments, especially women, come forward to speak and testify.

Officials will be called on to respond to the need for taking corrective action, such as taking disciplinary action against deviant functionaries, ordering delayed payments, or initiating enquiries into allegations of corruption. Efforts will be made to extract statements from them about the actions they will take.

Continuous Review by the Village Social Audit Committee and Facilitators: Social Audit will be organized as a regular process and not as a one-time event. It will be organized at any specific interval depending upon people's preparedness and willingness. It may be after each activity or monthly or bi monthly or even once or twice in a year depending on the need.

Documentation of Learning's: Every care will be taken to document the learning's that will be generated during the process for wider sharing at the Block and district level. The team of social audit facilitators will be responsible for conducting this documentation.

GP/ District / State level Experience Sharing: Following the completion of the project, sharing consultations will be organized at the GP, district and state level to disseminate the experience gained in the process, involving community leaders, PRI representatives, OREGS implementing officials, policy makers, media and civil society organizations. These sharing events will also serve as advocacy measures to create pressure on the state to institutionalize social audit in the implementation of the OREGS across the state.

Publication of a Handbook on Social Audit: In order to help others replicate and institutionalize the social audit process in their contexts, a comprehensive all inclusive handbook will be developed and published at the end of the project cycle. The handbook, in addition to including the tools, methods and processes already contained in the toolkit developed at the beginning will capture the entire process and learning.

Other Partners: Strong efforts will be made to enlist the collaboration of the Department of Panchayati Raj, State Information Commission, Government agencies like District Administration/ DRDA/ ITDA and Line Departments, PRIs, CBOs, CSOs, SHGs, and district/ state level resource organizations like State Institute of Rural Development, as the other partners in the project.

Implementation and Monitoring

Subsequent to project approval in principle, CYSD shall take a month to concretize indicators in the SMART framework. The district resource centres (DRCs) of CYSD, located in the district headquarters of Koraput, Keonjhar and Sundargarh will be responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the project. The personnel in the unit will be responsible for preparation of financial and progress reports with the help of project staff. The World Bank may also monitor the programme through field visits and monthly/quarterly progress reports.

Regular and timely monitoring of the programme will be made through matrix-model monitoring schedule for different activities. Each activity will be broken up into its constituent tasks, which will appear in the first column of the matrix. This will be followed by drawing a timeline, which will indicate in which quarter the tasks, would be performed during the three-year duration of the project. Tasks that repeat themselves will appear in different quarters depending on when exactly they are scheduled to happen. The matrix would be prepared at the initiation of the project and would represent the implementation plan.

Monthly report will be prepared by the DRCs will be forwarded to the DRC Coordinator, located centrally. After the study of the report, feedback will be provided to the field. Monthly review meetings will be made on a particular day of a month. In this meeting, report of the monthly activities will be discussed and working plan for the next will be prepared. After every three months, a quarterly progress report with statement of accounts will be submitted to the World Bank. This would indicate the deviations in actual implementation from what was planned at the initiation of the project and represents the monitoring system to be used for the project.

Monitoring Matrix					
Activities Tasks	Time Line			Achievements/ Deviations	Remarks
	Qr 1	Qr 2	Qr 3.12		

There will be an internal review of the project after the first six months. Further, the project would welcome the World Bank to make periodic review visits to the field and participate in different consultation and meets to monitor and guide for the fulfilment of overall objective of the project.

This monitoring matrix will be developed by the project staff in April 2007, in consultation with World Bank which would be monitored through quarterly and mid-term project review meetings.

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Given the ambitious goal towards regime change in style of functioning of government agencies, the initiative may have to face formidable resistance in political and administrative quarters.

There are several challenges involved in the process. To begin with, the administrative machinery which has till date functioned under the Official Secrets Act and in turn used it as a cover for the inefficiencies and misuse of the system will now have to learn to work under the new Right to Information Act where the public has full access to information. They will also have to learn to be accountable to the public instead of just the higher-ups within the administration.

The situation may become tense after the social audit in the villages. Vested interests may issue threats to people actively involved in the audit process. A careful eye will be kept on the village situation to assess the tension around and take pre-emptive action if necessary.

POSSIBILITIES OF SCALING UP

The piloting has a country-wide relevance, since the policy environment is uniform and similar in all the programme districts. Hence the best practices and leanings from the piloting phase may fuel rapid replication across the districts in Orissa and quite surely in the country as well.

Scaling up will require very marginal resources since the Act has already provided for similar activities to be taken up by using contingency grant available under the programme itself.

The Process

CYSD triggered off its experimental structure of accountability, the Social Audit Committee, in the six Gram Panchayats, (two in each districts) of the three districts of Koraput, Keonjhar and Sundergarh as an effective citizen-centric monitoring system with an associated institutional and capacity development framework. Later, the World Bank Officials carried out an exercise of extensive interface meetings with various stakeholders of the newly formed Social Audit Committees at the grass root level of Gram Panchayat to proof-check the model before declaring it as a model for replication, to be adopted in the next phase of their project. This makes the CYSD model, a successful model ready for replication with the potential to provoke a radically different approach to social auditing.

In order to institutionalize social audit as an effective tool of social accountability, CYSD in collaboration with the World Bank initiated a pilot programme to activate Social Audit in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act – Orissa, in 6 different Gram Panchayats of Koraput, Keonjhar and Sundargarh districts (Tileikani and Meghdega in Sundergarh, Gumar and Kutinga in Koraput, Saliabeda and Baikala in Keonjhar). The primary objective of the programme was that the poor and deprived would effectively participate in, and influence the, implementation course of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act – Orissa, by subjecting the programme to social audit and asserting their entitlements. In doing so, CYSD aimed at providing a model to the State for wider replication.

Social Audit attacks the corruption that plagues most anti-poverty missions, as a transparent, participatory, and active evaluative process. The Social Audit mechanism involves a series of players at different levels of governance to keep a vigil on the process under its lens.



A social audit is conducted over the life span of a scheme or programme, and not just in one go or at one stage. The activities that constitute a social audit include making people aware of their rights, entitlements and obligations under the scheme/programme; making them aware of their right to participate in the ongoing process of social audit; making sure that all the forms and documents are in simple, easily understandable language and structure and available in local languages; ensuring that all relevant information is publicly displayed on boards and through posters and is also read out at appropriate times for the convenience of the people, especially those who cannot read; ensuring that the decision-making process, especially for those decisions that are critical and/or vulnerable to distortions, is transparent and open and carried out, as far as

possible, in the presence of the affected persons; making certain that all decisions, along with reasons, as appropriate, are also communicated as soon as they are made to the affected people, and in a manner that makes it easy for them to comprehend.

In addition to this, it involves ensuring that randomly selected individuals, from among the affected persons, are involved on a rotational basis as a need for measuring, inspection or certification. It ensures that members of the public and especially those directly affected, are facilitated to inspect and verify records, inspect works and generally monitor planning and implementation. Where required, the social audit process encourages a formal public hearing where pertinent information is put before the public and verified in consultation with the affected persons. Furthermore, the process ensures that the findings of the social audit process are acted upon, as they become available and that apart from addressing the specific issues, systemic changes are also brought about.

Generate Awareness

Identify Stages

Identify Vulnerability in Stages

Identify functionaries and institutions responsible

Detailed discussions on principles and methods of Social Audit

Ensure institutional compliance with social audit requirements

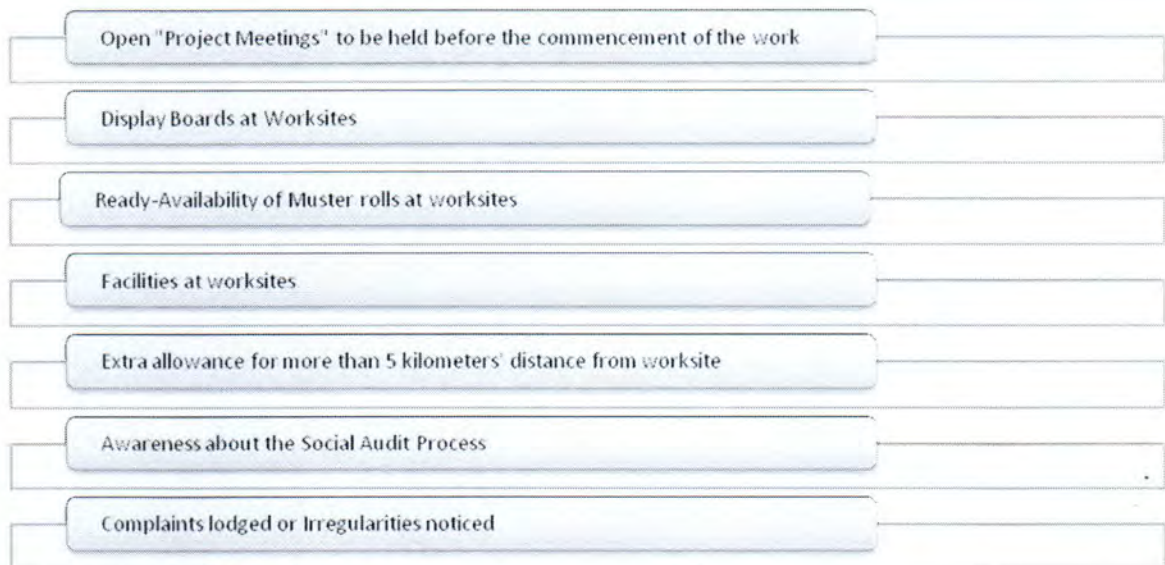
Prepare public hearing – people’s audit meeting - a collective review of the process of social audit

Conduction of Social Audit

The Pre-Audit Scenario:

The community was very less informed about NREGA. Levels of corruption and the non-cooperative attitude of the Panchayat members due to disinterest leading to decisions taken without public consent. Alarming revelations of the data collected from the baseline survey revealed that many of the most important NREGA guidelines were not followed in the Gram Panchayats. This was a matter of concern, more so since no remarkable difference of data were found in the study districts on those lines of implementation. The objective of the employment guarantee scheme was not being met properly in such a scenario. A bigger question of concern was raised on the role of the Vigilance Monitoring Committees (VMCs) to ensure steps of transparency in the social audit process. The pointed fingers revealed the much shocking non-existing Vigilance and Monitoring Committees (either a pen-and-paper existence or dsyfunctional). Many responses revealed that even though the VMCs existed, members did not regularly visit the worksites to monitor the progress and quality of work.

Uniformity of data from all the Gram Panchayats collected during the baseline survey revealed that no open project meetings were held before work commencement. There were no display boards at worksites. Muster-rolls were not readily available for viewing at worksites. Provision of basic facilities were negligible at worksites. Extra allowances were not paid for a more than 5 kilometer distance to the worksite. There were no complaints lodged, neither any reporting of noticed irregularities done by the beneficiaries due to lack of general awarenes about the provisions under the Social Audit process.



Phase-I: Pre-Audit

Pre-Audit Preparations by the “Social Audit Committee” with under-lying responsibilities:

The pre-Intervention phase involved prior consultations with the officials and generating awareness on the IEC campaigns on OREGS, on the RTI Act and on Social Audit. The Capacity Building Programme aimed at the stakeholder capacity building through the Training of Trainers and extension training programmes for the development of the Social Audit Facilitators. This was followed by the development of the toolkit on social audit, and community consultations for setting the environment in villages for the social audit process. The formation of the village “Social Audit Committees” and then the training of the committee members rounded up the pre-intervention phase. With persuasions and publicity, the Social Audit Committee gets ready for the pre-audit preparations of the audit procedure to begin.

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE PRE- AUDIT PHASE:

Officials at the GP, block and district level and other key stakeholders like the PRI representatives and locally active NGOs were duly informed about the initiation of such an exercise well in advance. This was done at the beginning of the project through GP, block and district level consultations where the idea of social audit was introduced and suggestions from the different stakeholders were sought. This ensured their involvement from the very beginning. Moreover, this helped reduce the initial hesitance in them to take the responsibility for ensuring access to official records and commit to taking corrective action on the issues arising out of the audits.

Building up of an Environment:

The purpose behind the formation of the Social Audit Committees was to facilitate a transparent and accountable process of empowering potential stakeholders themselves, at each level, to provide for accountability and make institutions more willing to act, answerable and credible to the beneficiaries.

The Social Audit Committees were to act as institutional forums, formed with various stakeholders including members of the Vigilance and Monitoring Committee, where people (potential beneficiaries) had the scope to conduct a detailed public audit of all the NREGA works that have been carried out in the chosen projects.

The Baseline survey:

The Baseline Study was undertaken in four tribal dominated districts of Orissa namely Koraput, Sundargarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj at the behest of World Bank (WB), with the major objective to examine whether or not, the beneficiaries are genuinely benefited through NREGS. It was carried out

to study the implications for the rural economy as a result of the minimum wage and employment instituted by the Act. Also, the greater bargaining power of the rural workforce and its implications on the job-markets was looked at. Besides this, the effectiveness in implementation of the scheme was studied.

AIM OF THE BASELINE SURVEY:

The data collected would form the baseline for the respective Villages to measure the achievement against its stated objectives.

PURPOSE OF THE BASELINE SURVEY:

The purpose of the baseline for the social audit in NREGS is many -fold:

- The survey will permit estimating the total number of eligible job card holders in the sampled area;
- The survey will permit the grantee to examine whether the target set for the project is a reasonable one;
- To understand the reasons of vulnerability of delay in getting job cards, proper maintenance of muster rolls and receiving the wages and other benefits or not as per the norms in the targeted areas; and
- To understand the overall socio economic condition, the immediate and the outer environment of villagers in the target areas which prevent villagers from participating in an NREGS programme.

METHODOLOGY:

The study was empirical and included collection of data/information from:

- **Primary sources** i.e. from the beneficiaries, local leaders, Panchayat officials, CBO/NGOs etc.
- **Secondary sources** i.e. records, reports, returns, studies, data/figures available with concerned agencies and departments in the State Government, DRDA and BDOs (both published and un-published).
- **Participatory discussions** with community groups.

Collection of primary data was primarily through sample survey and some case studies were taken up to supplement the study. Methodology of the study was both extensive and intensive in nature to ensure that conclusions drawn in the study were representative. For collection of primary data, four teams were formed (one team for one district), each under one experienced team leader. These team leaders besides collecting secondary data from State Government, DRDAs, Blocks and GPs through structured questionnaire had detailed discussions with officials to elicit more qualitative information, their impressions and comments. These team leaders also carried out discussions with beneficiaries who were part of the NREGS programme and observed its actual implementation closely to get value added independent view on the same.

RESEARCH TOOLS USED FOR THE STUDY:

In order to capture the various phenomena under study, a combination of research tools was used. A structured interview schedule was designed by the CYSD team. Checklists were prepared for interviews with officials and other concerned persons and for FGDs with Job card holders.

Field Procedures:

The 4 Team members served as field supervisors in four study districts, each one working with 2-3 interviewers to complete a particular quota category in a district. Following the initial approach, the interviewers asked respondents if they could go to a secluded area in their location where they could speak in privacy. They informed the respondents that all discussion and responses would remain confidential. Each interview took an average of 45 minutes to complete. The field work was carried out in 15 days, from September 1-15, 2008. Close supervision allowed the Team to collect completed questionnaires in the field for immediate coding.

THE BENEFICIARY SURVEY:

The baseline survey at the Panchayat was conducted involving the various stakeholders to understand the awareness level on social audit process on the basis of which the whole intervention could be mounted. This survey was done with the help of different tools like separate questionnaires for the stakeholders and FGD. A questionnaire was designed for gathering information for the baseline study. The information was gathered on the following sections:

Section –I: Background Information

This section covered the names of the Interviewer, the District, the Block, the Gram Panchayat and the Village.

Section –II: General Information

This section covered the name of the respondent, sex and age, caste, educational qualification, category of occupation of the beneficiary, household under BPL category or not, average monthly household income, type of house constructed (Jhupdi, kutchha, semi-pucca, pucca), agriculture land ownership (landless to specified acres), and the number of members in the household.

Section –III: General Awareness about the Scheme

This section tested the level of awareness about the scheme with questions like awareness about implementation, medium of information, type of information received, awareness about the various facilities, and the knowledge about the compensation package for accident at worksite.

Section –IV: Planning and Implementation Process

This section put questions on the process involved in the planning and implementation of the scheme. Questions such as awareness of institutions involved in implementation, earlier participation in Gram

Sabha meetings, discussions on NREGS in the meetings, self and block level officers' participation in the selection of beneficiaries, witnessing open "project meetings" explaining work requirements to workers, and problem raising by self regarding NREGA implementation process.

Section -V: Job Card and Work Applications

This section raised queries about the work applications and the job card, to assess the effective implementation of the NREGA guidelines while guaranteeing employment to the beneficiaries. Questions as receiving help by people/officials (with details of the same) for obtaining job cards/work applications, knowledge of charges or bribes paid, engagement of non-GP members as NREGA workers, instances of machines used for work that could be done by workers, bribes paid by self for items {(with amount) as for job cards, photographs on job cards, allotment of work, or any other}, incomplete, irregular or rare job cards entry updates in the GP, qualitative job card distribution system among labourers, irregularities in job cards, level of self-content on retention of job cards, and of being employed in or outside worksite against work application.

Section -VI: Workers' Entitlements

This section dealt with the most number of questions on entitlement of work by workers. The questions were about employment within fifteen days of submission of work application, receipt of (quantified) unemployment allowance (if any), daily allowance (whether the statutory minimum wage and received within seven days), whether payments were made by implementing agency, place of wage payments, whether self was a witness to proper entries in job cards, wages made in public and muster rolls read-out loud, any due payments, separate wages for men and women and the reason for the same, basis of wage payment (daily or task wage/piece-rate), whether forced to sign blank muster rolls during the time of wage payment and complaints launched (to whom)if any, and any extra payment for distance more than 5 kilometres from place to worksite.

Section -VII: Worksite Environments/Facilities

This section determined whether the facilities available and the worksite environment were conducive to implementation of the employment guarantee scheme. Questions on the board of display (with details of worksite and wage rates), availability of muster rolls for public scrutiny, and of availability of facilities of drinking water, rest shade, child-care and first-aid Kit/medicines, were put under this section.

Section -VIII: Monitoring Mechanism

This section dealt with the monitoring mechanisms of the scheme where varied queries were raised as irregularities/corruption at the worksite, evidence of contractor acting as the implementation agency, formation of the Vigilance Monitoring Committee (VMCs) as per norms, regular visits of VMCs to worksites, instances of VMCs probing into irregularities/corruption at worksites, whether beneficiaries were invited to look at entire records in open project meetings, and whether the Grievance Redressal Authority took action within seven days of lodging complaints by self on irregularities/corruption, and revealed the outcome of the same.

Section –IX: Perception/Attitude and Experience on Social Audit

This final section of the baseline study looked into the experiences gathered on social audit at the end of the study. The questions evoked thoughtful answers while evaluating attitudes and perceptions of the need of a social audit and its relevance in an anti-poverty programme like NREGS. Relevance of Social Audit in the efficacy and transparency of any work, as an important good-governance component (with experiences), and the degrees of community participation, determined the responses obtained by the research investigator on the dated form.

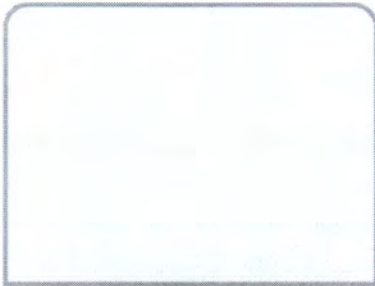
Analysis of Data:

A total of 491 samples were selected from the four districts of Koraput, Sundergarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj for the baseline study. Out of these, 85.33 per cent were male and only 14.67 percent were female. The caste composition of the total samples in percentage terms in the order of SC, ST, OBC, Minorities and General was 12 per cent, 72.91 per cent, 11.81 per cent, 0.40 per cent and 3.04 per cent respectively. The education status among sample beneficiaries was poor with 41.75 per cent of the beneficiaries being illiterate. Majority (45.01%) of them were engaged in agricultural activities as Agriculture Labourer as their occupation, followed by 28.72 per cent engaged in followed by 12 per cent engaged in farm activities as marginal farmers.

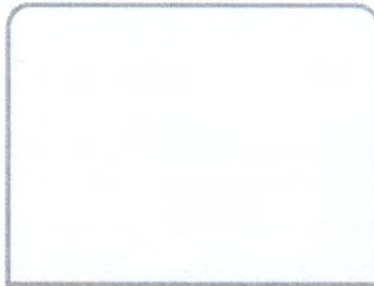
It was interesting to note that 21.38 per cent of the NREGS beneficiaries in the sample were not Below Poverty Line. However, it was found that the majority (61.51%) beneficiaries owned kutcha houses followed by 25.87 per cent beneficiaries owned Jhupdi and very few (1.22%) beneficiaries owned pucca houses, as an indicator of poor economic status of the respondents.

Data on sources of information on NREGS revealed that PRI members played an important role in information dissemination at the Gram Panchayat level. However, majority of the sample beneficiaries were unaware about the worksite facilities, allowances and implementing agency of NREGA. Participation of beneficiaries in the project selection process was low with rare involvement of the Block Development Officer. While filling up job cards, most beneficiaries received help from PRI members and their friends. Some instances of having paid bribes or fees for job cards (0.81%) and of outsiders engaged in the NREGA work (6.92%) were found. Similar instances (6.92%) of use of machines were noted for work that could have done by unskilled manual labourers for wages at the worksite. Irregular and incomplete job cards was a problem to be spotted out (29.33%), with incorrect entries, missing entries, entries with fake information and instances of over-writing.

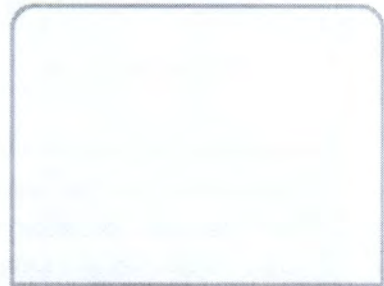
Apart from the expected responses of retaining job cards themselves, some beneficiaries also revealed that they kept their job cards with either the Sarpanch or the Contractor (26.7% revealed the involvement of the contractor as an implementing agency in many cases). Most of the respondents had not got employed as against their applications and in many cases not within 15 days of filing application. This delay entitled them for an unemployment allowance which again most (73.73%) had not received. The wage payments were done on worksites mostly, with instances of payments at other public places, other places and the GP office (19.76%), mostly daily, but in many cases "piece-rate", with instances of forced signatures on blank muster rolls. Payments in few cases were still "due" to be made.



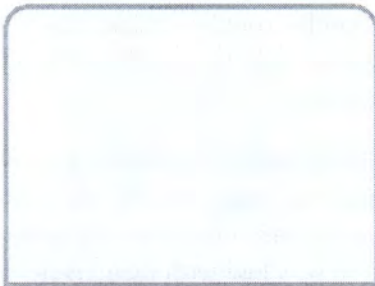
Meghdega
Gram Panchayat,
Sundergarh



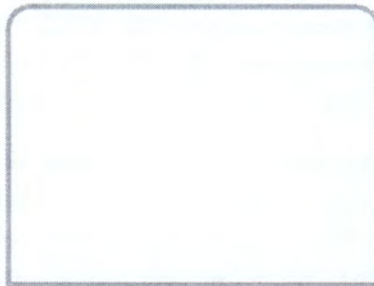
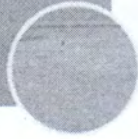
Baikala
Gram Panchayat,
Keonjhar



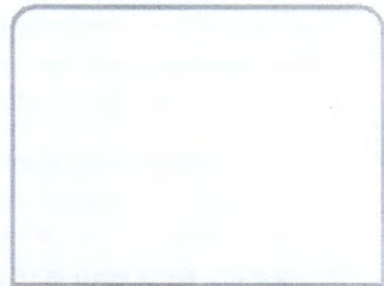
Ghumar
Gram Panchayat,
Koraput



Tileikani
Gram Panchayat,
Sundergarh




Saliebeda
Gram Panchayat,
Mayurbhanj




Kutinga
Gram Panchayat,
Koraput





Sundergarh

- Least Representation of Female & OBC beneficiaries
- Unemployed against applications
- Wages paid in GP office
- Payments Due
- Wage payment in Piece-meal basis
- Forced signatures in blank muster rolls
- No raising of Complaints



Koraput

- Least Representation of Agricultural Labourers
- Highest BPL beneficiaries
- Unawareness about NREGA process
- Non-Issuance of Job Cards
- Irregular job card entries

Mayurbhanj

- Highest representation of Landless Beneficiaries of Kutcha Houses
- Block Officer uninvolved in selection process
- Bribes for photographs in job cards & work allotments
- Unaware about facilities at worksite
- Incorrect, Incomplete, & Fake Job card entries
- No job card retention, unemployment allowances, minimum wages & allowances for extra distance to worksite
- Payments made by other than implementing agencies with evidence of Contractor
- Use of machines instead of beneficiaries' labour entitled for wages

Keonjhar

- Least Representation of ST beneficiaries
- Illiterate
- Crucial role by PRI members
- Least knowledge on compensation package
- Non-participation in the selection process
- Outsiders engaged in implementing process
- Job card entries not in front of beneficiaries
- Wage rates higher for Male beneficiaries
- Importance of social audit unrealized

The Keonjhar District

Saleibeda Gram Panchayat, Keonjhar

(* to be noted: for convenience of analysis and piloting at a later stage, Saleibeda Gram Panchayat was taken up under Keonjhar District instead of the original Mayurbhanj District).

With an 80% ST population, the male dominated (74%) Saleibeda Gram Panchayat has only 33.33% of literates with 67.5% BPL, where 72.5% of the population live in kutcha houses. The PRI members are the major source of information in Saleibeda. It was found that the community was hardly aware about the procedures and places of approach, though they knew whom to contact apart the basics of the Scheme. Since the major section of the community was illiterate, they were not much aware about the worksite facilities and the compensation package. Though with 73.75% participation in the Gram Sabha, only 25% participated in the selection process, with 11.25 % of them agreeing to the fact that the selection process was unfair. 46.25% of the population did not know about any participation of Block Level Officers, with 97.50% not having witnessed any open project meeting. 98.75% of them agreed to the fact that there had not risen up any problems.

While applying for Job cards and work applications, the PRI members provided adequate help (28.75 %) from the PRI members. 86.3% opined that there were outsiders engaged in the work and 55% had no knowledge of job cards being available against bribes. 98.31 percent stated that they had not paid any bribe for the same.

66.25% knew about job cards being issued to all the beneficiaries. 45% had encountered incomplete or irregular entries during the process and 16.25% had noticed wrong/fake information having entered into the job cards. The majority knew about job cards being retained by self, though most of them had not been employed in response to their applications within the stipulated time, with an 82% agreeing of not having received any unemployment wage for the same. The job cards were not entered in front of them (as opined by 78.75%) and the muster rolls were not read aloud (agreed 95%). While 85.25% respondents agreed on daily wages being paid to them, none of them had ever lodged any complaints ever about the irregularities in the process, even in spite of the fact that 98 % people did not receive any extra allowance for higher distance. 76% people agreed that there was no display board in the Gram Panchayat for rates to be mentioned, and 60% said the muster rolls were not readily available. A remarkable 93.75% agreed on no rest shade facilities on worksite while a 100% agreed of no childcare facilities there. Only a 21.25% knew about the details about the social audit process.

Baikala Gram Panchayat, Keonjhar

Though with a 38.33% ST and 10% each of SC and women population, Baikala was a chiefly male dominated area (90%) as found from the survey. In comparison to Saleibeda, the Baikala Gram Panchayat had an additional 5% of literates and a 5% lesser number of agricultural labourer in its 83.33% BPL population. With only 13.33 % of landless community, the source of information for NREGA was chiefly the PRI members, though only 10% knew about the implementing agency and

8.33% about the details of the scheme. While 26.67% of people in the Gram Panchayat had never participated in Gram Sabha meetings, 95% people were certain of never having witnessed an open project meeting for NREGA. When filing job applications, people mostly received help from the PRI members (38.33%), followed by NGO members (23.33%). 13.33% people opined that while some received the job cards free, others had to pay bribe to obtain it. 90% agreed to no outsiders' involvement in the Works. As expected, the use of machines was only 3.33% since the male-dominated Baikala had a large number of hands to do manual labour. Encouragingly enough, very few instances of bribes were reported from the survey in Baikala Gram Panchayat (1.67% for job cards, 3.33% for photographs and a remarkable 0% for allotment). 53.33% of the community reported of regular Job card entries while rare entries updated were 31.67% in the Gram Panchayat. 6.67% declared working without job cards when 86.67% agreed that the job cards were issued to all beneficiaries. 28.33% reported of incorrect job card entries while 25% said that the signature column was left blank. 78.33% people knew about the right to keep the job cards, 100% (unlike any other of the Gram Panchayats) actually retained it with them. An approximately 43% more people were employed in Baikala as compared to Saleibeda in Keonjhar District, in response to their applications (76.67% in Baikala as against 33.75% in Saleibeda). However, only 38.33% applicants received an employment within 15 days of time. While only 8.33% received the unemployment allowance, 81.67% were receiving the minimum prescribed wage though not within 7 days (only 6.67% reportedly received it in time). 35% people reported a payment made by an agency other than the implementing agency. Job cards were not entered in front of 53.33% cases. The muster rolls were not read out aloud in as high as 86.67% of cases. 15 % payments were still due. 35% payments were made as piece-rates while 83.33 % did not receive extra allowance for higher distance. 60% of the of the people had found a display board at worksite where wages could be mentioned and 65% opined that muster rolls were not readily available. Though 81.67% knew of the drinking water facility and 36.67% of the rest shade at the worksite, in emergencies first-aid could be availed only by 20% of them. 65% evidence was provided of a contractor acting as an implementing agency. Only 30% agreed to the existence of the Village Monitoring Committee with only 8.33% agreeing to regular visits by its members. Only 20% of the respondents had lodged a complaint which was hardly addresses (only in 6.67% cases). Action was however never taken against the lodged complaints as in all the six Gram Panchayats. Of all, only 8.33% of the community participated actively in the Social Audit Process, though 86.67% opined that Social Audit was helpful.

The Koraput District

Ghumar Gram Panchayat, Koraput

The Ghumar Gram Panchayat has a 445 of male population followed by 11% each of female and Scheduled Castes, and 37.631% of Scheduled Tribes. Only 10.131% of the population was literate, with chiefly unskilled/non-agricultural labourers (19.393%) in comparison to agricultural labourers and marginal farmers. Most of the population (46.024%) was Below the Poverty Line. Hence the situation provided a potential field of eligible beneficiaries. Progressing further with the survey, it was found that 15.631% of the people were landless with 28.6605% of the population living in kutcha houses.

In the context of NREGA, the major source of information were the PRI members (20.26%) followed by local political leaders (5.20%). 13.32% of the population knew about the implementing agency, 13.16% knew of the benefits, 12.11% about the details of the scheme and only 1.738% knew about the place of approach. Only 9.84% knew about the compensation package under NREGA and 15.631% about the facilities at worksite. 29.52% were aware about the plan and importance of NREGA. 13.39% had participated in discussions on NREGA in Sabhas, though the participation of block level officers was hardly 1.74%. Open Project meetings were not held as agreed by a vast majority. While filling up job applications friends (25.184%) were the most helpful, followed by 15.922% PRI members. 50.95% knew about outsiders engaged in the Work. 0.29% disclosed having paid bribe for job cards in Ghumar Gram Panchayat.

Kutinga Gram Panchayat, Koraput

The Kutinga Gram Panchayat had a very less female (9%) population with none of the population possessing a matric degree and only 8.29% of them literates. 14.21% agricultural labourers, 15.87% unskilled (non-agricultural) labourers and 13.5% marginal farmers, the population believed in earning their bread through hard labour. 37.65% people in the gram panchayat lived below the poverty line, while there were others who owned lands in their names. Information on NREGA was spread mostly by PRI members (16.58%) (and were also mostly helped by them later in the process of filling up job applications), followed by local political leaders and neighbours, especially about the implementing agency and the benefits of the scheme.

While 36.95% people were unaware of the compensation package under the scheme, only 10.95% participated in the discussion about NREGA in Palli Sabha. Only 9% of the community were promised to be issued job cards, and 10.18% were working without a job card. Though there were not much instances of irregularities such as incorrect, incomplete fake and over-written entries in the job cards, only 32.21% people retained their job cards with themselves. Sadly enough, only 12.31% people were employed against their job applications, and only 3.078% people were provided unemployment wages against their man-days. 38.6% people declared the fact that the job cards were not entered in front of them, whereas only 6.39% had actually witnessed it. Discouraging facts about daily allowances (only 25.34%), rest shade (1.01%) and childcare (1.89%) facility at worksite, knowledge of irregularities (7.81%), lodging of complaints (4.97%) and active participation (7.81%), were revealed during the baseline survey in Kutinga Gram Panchayat.

The Sundergarh District

Meghdega Gram Panchayat, Sundergarh

Hardly a 2.6% of Meghdega Gram Panchayat were female, but the ST representation was 52.54%. 19% of them were literates. Agricultural labourers (21.96%) and marginal farmers (21.24%) were more than unskilled workers (11.94%). 46.2% were below the poverty line, with an average income ranging from Rs. 500 – Rs. 2000. 43.2% of them lived in kutcha houses while 14.16% of them

possessed a half an acre land. Members of NGOs played a vital role as communicators of NREGS in Meghdega (54.04%) than PRI members (12.3%). Only 7.08% knew about the details of the scheme and the implementing agency (6.336%) which was relatively lower than other Gram Panchayats. 24.22% knew about the facilities at worksite and 12.3% about the right of compensation under the Act. Participation in NREGS meeting was 34.66% in Meghdega. Officers at the Block Level participated in the selection process most in Meghdega compared to the other Gram Panchayats (7.824%), and so was the raising of problems (8.196%). PRI members were the most active in providing help while applying for job cards (22.11%). Though the use of machines for against the manual work under NREGS was less (1.49%), Outsiders engaged in NREGS works were also not high (only 1.12%). Instances of bribes were less too (0.32% for job cards, 0.37% for photographs and, 0.37% for allotment). Irregular and incomplete entries were found (15.28%) and so cases of rare entries (13.79%) during the survey. Very few beneficiaries (5.6%) were promised of getting job cards issued, while 5.22% were working without it. There were very few instances of fake or wrong entries (0.74%) in job cards in Meghdega, though 1.58% of incomplete or missing entries were still found. Though there were absolutely no instances of retaining the job cards with contractors, job cards were still not retained 100% by the beneficiaries themselves (as unlike Baikala Gram Panchayat of Keonjhar district). Only 43.98% retained it while 10.062% had their job cards with the Sarpanch/Secretary, and 5.96% with the GRS. Only 24.60% people were employed against their applications and 10% got employed within 15 days of applying. Only 2.24% had received an unemployment allowance while 53.30% were receiving the actual minimum wage under NREGS. Only 1.87% had actually received wages within 7 days of work completion. 34.29% agreed that the job cards were entered in front of them. Daily wages were received by 29.8% while 30.19% received it in piece meal. Facilities of drinking water (43.33%), rest shade (2.61%) and childcare (nil) at the workite were a matter of concern. There were 7.08% evidence of contractors acting as an implementing agency. Only 1.86% of the community had ever lodged a written complaint as a grievance, of which 0.74% was addressed but action was never taken. Importance of Social Audit was however realized by 45.09% of the community.

Tileikani Gram Panchayat, Sundergarh

With a least female representation of 1.73%, compared to other Gram Panchayats, Tileikani had 12.67% literates. Unskilled labour was not much in their trend (only 7.96%) with 2.48% into small trades. The BPL population was 30.8%, with an average income ranging from Rs. 500 - Rs. 1000. 28.8% lived in kutcha houses and were mostly landless. 32.424% of the people were informed on NREGS by members of NGOs than the PRI members (8.2%). Tileikani Gram Panchayat knew the least details about the NREG Scheme and the implementing agency (4.224%), though the benefits were known to them (19.13% knew about the benefits of the scheme), in comparison to all other Gram Panchayats. 16.15% knew about the facilities at worksite and 8.2% about the compensation clause. 23.105% participated in discussions on NREGS. Block level officers' participation was next to Meghdega in Tileikani (5.216%) under NREGS and similar was raising of problems (5.464%). PRI members' involvement in helping the beneficiaries make work applications was 14.74% in Tileikani, followed by NGO members (11.924%). Outsiders engaged was thankfully found to be the least in Tileikani (0.745%) and so was a least use of machine (0.99%) as against the manual unskilled labour

that could be used under NREGS. Data of Tileikani had the least instances of bribes (0.24% in job cards, 0.25% for photographs, and, 0.25% for allotment). Incomplete and irregular entries, as well as rare entries made, were again the least found in Tileikani Gram Panchayat (10.18% and 9.19% respectively). Similarly the promises made for issuance of job cards were the least as well (3.73%). A 3.48% people were working without a job card (the least as compared to all the other Gram Panchayats). The least again reporting of missing/incomplete and fake entries were from Tileikani Gram Panchayat of Sundergarh (1.052% and 0.5% respectively). As in Meghdega, Tileikani had no outside contractor retaining the job cards, but job cards were only retained by 29.32% of beneficiaries, followed by 6.7% with Sarpanch/Secretary and 3.98% with GRS. 16.40% were employed in response to their applications and 6.71% got employed within 15 days of their application in Tileikani. The least percentage of people (1.49%) had received unemployment wages and the least (1.24%) had actually received wages within 7 days of work completion. Job card entries had been witnessed by 22.86% of the community. 19.87% received their wages on a dialy basis while 20.18% received it as a piece rate. In Tileikani Gram Panchayat, drinking water facilities (28.82%), rest shade (1.74%) and childcare facilities (nil) were disturbing facts. One matter of encouragement was that only 4.72% reportedly had evidences of any contractor acting as an implementing agency. However, only 1.24% had ever lodged a written complaint of which 0.49% was addressed but when it came to taking action, no action was ever taken. 30.064% of the community did realize the importance of Social Audit.

Alarming revelations of the data collected from the survey revealed that many of the most important NREGA guidelines were not followed in the Gram Panchayats. This was a matter of concern, more so since no remarkable difference of data were found in the study districts on those lines of implementation. The objective of the employment guarantee scheme was not being met properly in such a scenario.

The Status of VMC:

A bigger question of concern was raised on the role of the Vigilance Monitoring Committees (VMCs) to ensure steps of transparency in the social audit process. The pointed fingers revealed the much shocking non-existing Vigilance and Monitoring Committees (either a pen-and-paper existence or dsyfunctional). Many responses revealed that even though the VMCs existed, members did not regularly visit the worksites to monitor the progress and quality of work.

Uniformity of data from all the Gram Panchayats collected during the baseline survey revealed that no open project meetings were held before work commencement. There were no display boards at worksites. Muster-rolls were not readily available for viewing at worksites. Provision of basic facilities were negligible at worksites. Extra allowances were not paid for a more than 5 kilometer distance to the worksite. There were no complaints lodged, neither any reporting of noticed irregularities done by the beneficiaries due to lack of general awarenes about the provisions under the Social Audit process.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The findings from the baseline survey served as the inputs for the “mapping” of stakeholders to initiate the Social Audit mechanism. An analysis was carried out for identifying the stakeholders involved in the process.

Purpose of the Stakeholder Analysis:

The Employment Guarantee Scheme brings with it a guaranteed (within fifteen days of application) employment for people below poverty line. This calls for involvement of and cooperation from people from the community as well as beyond it. It is imperative to understand the role, contributions and potential of different people (stakeholders) involved for the successful implementation of the scheme. An analysis of various stakeholders involved helps identify people, groups and organisations having significant and legitimate interest in the propelling of such a scheme. Stakeholder mapping is useful at a primary stage of an investigation. Areas of common interests between stakeholders are identified to serve as a focus for further investigation. Stakeholder diagrams are easy to draw and understand and thus a good way for stakeholders to visualize identify and analyse their relationships to others. Stakeholder analysis leads to designing of processes and systems for active participation of the stakeholders at appropriate stages of the programme and maximisation of their roles and contributions. It also leads to ruling out possibilities of overlapping activities and thus of preventing confusions and suspicion among the primary stakeholders. Stakeholder analysis is necessary to understand the critical gaps to develop a strategy for scaling up.

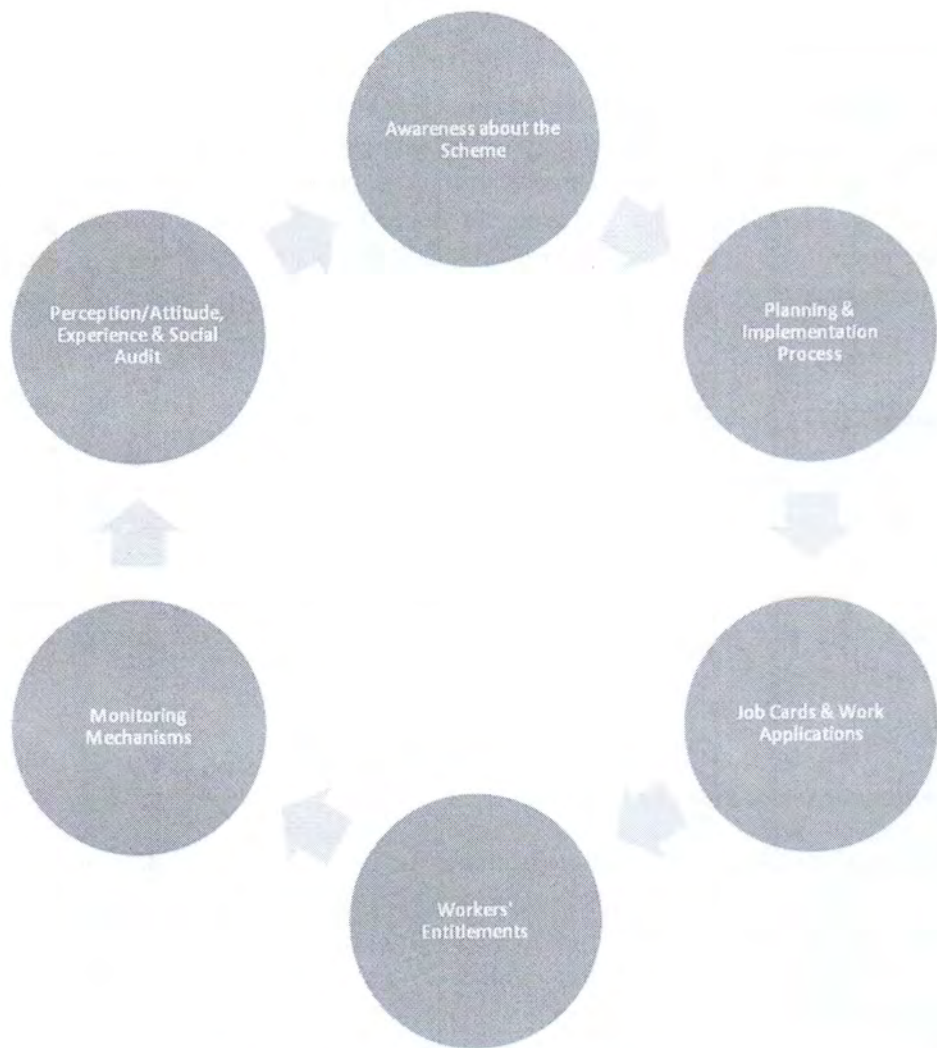
Identification of Stakeholders:

Stakeholders are defined and identified in relation to objectives of the scheme. This is followed by a comprehensive listing of all potential stakeholders who have a stake in the objectives and who can significantly contribute to the realization of those objectives. A stakeholder mapping exercise was undertaken to assess the importance and influence of identified stakeholders against the key objectives. A stakeholder consultation was planned to bring all the identified stakeholders on to one platform to inform and brief them about the scheme. This consultation was also aimed at assigning priority to stakeholders based on the likely impact of their interests on the implementation process. This would also help in securing their commitment and availability for subsequent consultations and events. This would also ensure that no other critical stakeholders are missed out from the implementation process.

Categorization of Stakeholders:

Stakeholders were categorized into primary and secondary stakeholders after identification. Among the key stakeholders were members of the community/beneficiaries, members of the minorities, leaders of the community, members of special groups, existing members of the Vigilance and Monitoring Committee, and government officials.

The Major Stakeholders:



INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

Location and Scope of the Projects:

The project was implemented in 40 remote villages of 6 Gram Panchayats in Koraput, Keonjhar, and Sundargarh districts, in recent project areas to administer the process from the beginning till the end.



The accountability context:

As per the NREGA, two of the key underpinning principles in implementation of the scheme – (a) collaborative partnership and public accountability; and (b) community participation – made it mandatory on the part of the implementers to initiate measures to ensure transparency and public accountability. Accordingly, the Act provided that Social Audit was an on-going process through which the potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders of an activity were involved at every stages of the project cycle.

Community Level Awareness Generation:

To start with, street plays and other folk media events were organized to inform people about OREGS, social audit and the Right to Information and that such an audit of the scheme was to be held in their villages. Songs and other folk programmes were composed especially for this purpose and performances were arranged in all the villages. The awareness-raising process started in the month of May. There were two rounds of awareness programmes in each village to convince people of the importance of the audit.

Development of Social Audit Facilitators:

A special training of trainers (TOT) programme was organized for developing a band of social audit facilitators from among local leaders who were to help and train the village social audit committees in collecting and analysing information, undertaking physical verification etc. These facilitators continuously accompanied the village committees from the very beginning till the end of the process. In other words, these facilitators served as local resource persons.

Development of a Toolkit on OREGS, Social Audit and RTI:

A special toolkit comprising information on the various tools, methods and processes of social audit was developed keeping in view the local context and the specific context of OREGS. Among others, the toolkit included information on why conduct social audit, the processes and steps involved, guidelines on what aspects of the OREGS should be paid attention to, what kind of information should be sought by the village audit committee, etc. Care was taken to ensure that the toolkit was predominantly visual in nature.

Formation of Village Social Audit Committees:

A social audit committee comprising of mostly fifteen members of the OREGS including women was formed. Care was taken to ensure that the committees included members from the most vulnerable groups, women, and people with disabilities and other neglected communities. A memorandum was signed by the members of the Social Audit Committee in all the six Gram Panchayats, with details of the name, registered office, area of operation, and aims and objectives, with rules and regulations defined for solutions to legal disputes, and for management. While following principles of an apolitical, non-religious, non-governmental, and non-profit making committee, the Social Audit Committees (SAC) in all the six Gram Panchayats, pledged to work as pioneer peoples' organisations facilitating the effective implementation of NREGA. The memorandum of association had a clearly defined five-member executive body comprising the President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and two Core members. A General body comprised of eight to ten members with representations from the deprived sections of the society, including women. Clearly defined functions of the Executive and General Body, with details of powers of the members, and set rules for audit and fund management were mentioned for each of the six Gram Panchayats in the Memorandum. The Village Social Audit Committees were formed signing the memorandums in each of the Gram Panchayats.

Meghdega Gram Panchayat, Sundergarh

For the smooth conduction of the NREGA program a Social Audit Committee was formed in Meghdega Gram Panchayat of Sundergarh District, followed by a Panchayat Level Meeting to generate public awareness. Apart from the Chairman and the Secretary, the Committee had 11 other members comprised of people from the marginalized sections of the community. With two meetings every month, discussions were carried out initially for work to be undertaken up and later for the smooth and corruption-free carrying out of the work undertaken. The outcomes of the process were discussed in great detail. The involvement was so deep that the Committee was re-formed with more active members changing the few existing inactive members.

The Social Audit Committee in Meghdega Gram Panchayat facilitated the demand for jobs as under the NREG Act. It committee members ensured that the Panchayat Office was opened every day and the labourers got their wages in time. They discussed about the provisions of the scheme with the community and maintained proper relations with various village level organizations (Village level committee, NGOs, Self help organizations for woman and forest protection committee) intended for working with it, by conducting meetings at different levels (Block, Gram Panchayat and Village). This

included the activation of the existing Village Monitoring Committee sensitizing its members and orienting their efficiency towards performance, since though the Social Audit Committee could still do without VMC for REG works, but could not have carried out the other works that VMC was otherwise supposed to do (other than NREGA). Hence the VMC was to support the purpose of the SAC formed at the Panchayat level as an administrative body.

Tileikani Gram Panchayat

The less informed and primarily cut off community (due to less rural connectivity) in Tileikani Gram Panchayat, triggered off its Social Audit Committee with members who mattered. Party politics and group-ism in the community had divided it into sections that were difficult to mobilize. The SAC in Tileikani made efforts to break through the segregations and unite the community under one common clause of “employment”. Potential beneficiaries were sensitized and oriented to demand for jobs that were available in plenty to them now. Unskilled labour was introduced through a guaranteed source of income against at least 100 days of work a year.

Kutinga Gram Panchayat

The SAC in Kutinga Gram Panchayat was formed with 13 members of whom five were women. Discussions and orientation programmes to sensitize the SAC members were carried out for effective intervention by the members. SAC formed at Panchayat level then carried out discussions involving the Project Officer, the Sarpanch and various ward members and delegated a task force comprising of five members for each village under the Gram Panchayat. Initially the task force involved school teachers however later, influential and important ward members were delegated for the task. The task forces delegated by SAC were to serve the purpose to attaining 100% accountability under the Scheme.

Ghumar Gram Panchayat, Koraput

Like the other Social Audit Committees, the SAC in Ghumar Gram Panchayat was formed with members comprising of the beneficiaries, members of the minorities (SC, ST and even women) and representations from all over the village of interested and capable people including members working for the community, and government officials. A situation analysis before work commencement, with work to be carried out in three steps was discussed and planned in its Panchayat level meetings held at least once in every month. In places where VMCs were not present or inactive, they were formed and activated as per requirements. Efforts were made towards generating public awareness by the SAC members with assistance of three ward members selected exclusively to spread the word, and building up of a rapport with the members of the community, including the Sarpanch, and with the BDO at the Block level, was persistently reassured throughout the process. Work related record maintenance was stressed throughout, along with assistance to beneficiaries to open accounts at the post office against job demands, and moves to make the BDO, Sarpanch and other officials accountable to the purpose. On NREGA Day, the problems of labourers, problems in worksite and quality of work were discussed with the Sarpanch.

Baikala Gram Pan chayat, Keonjhar

As an experimentation of the interactive model, the Social Audit Committee was formed in Baikala Gram Panchayat, to mitigate the loopholes of the previous approaches and attempts on Social Audit and to empower people to demand transparency and accountability of NREGA works. The procedure of formation of the SAC was abided by with varied representations from all over the Panchayat on a date decided after discussions, in spite of initial hassles.

The SACs activated and sensitized the VMCs to actively monitor the process and to exercise vigil over each work undertaken under the Scheme. The SAC acted as a facilitator of the complete process in the Gram Panchayat. Regular village level discussions and meetings and public hearings formed an integral part of SAC facilitation to involve the community in joining hands to ensure transparency and make the people involved in the process accountable towards the purpose.

Saleibeda Gram Panchayat, Keonjhar

A tribal region full of forests, the landlord-ruled chiefly illiterate community of Saleibeda Gram Panchayat was ignorant about the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. To involve the local people and to increase their participation in the process, the Social Audit Committee was formed with the challenge to reduce the prevalent exploitative and corrupt practices, to empower people and to instil an attitude of demanding transparency and accountability in Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

The SAC was formed after discussions with villagers and the Panchayat members, with representations of learned people, minorities, beneficiaries, and people with interest for the same. While rapport building was in the list of priorities of the SAC, ensuring transparency in the process was always highlighted to set examples on accountability. Through discussions with various stakeholders, leaders and members of the Panchayat, SAC established a relationship with the Block and Panchayat for increasing accountability. The SACs activated the VMCs and conducted regular meetings with its members.

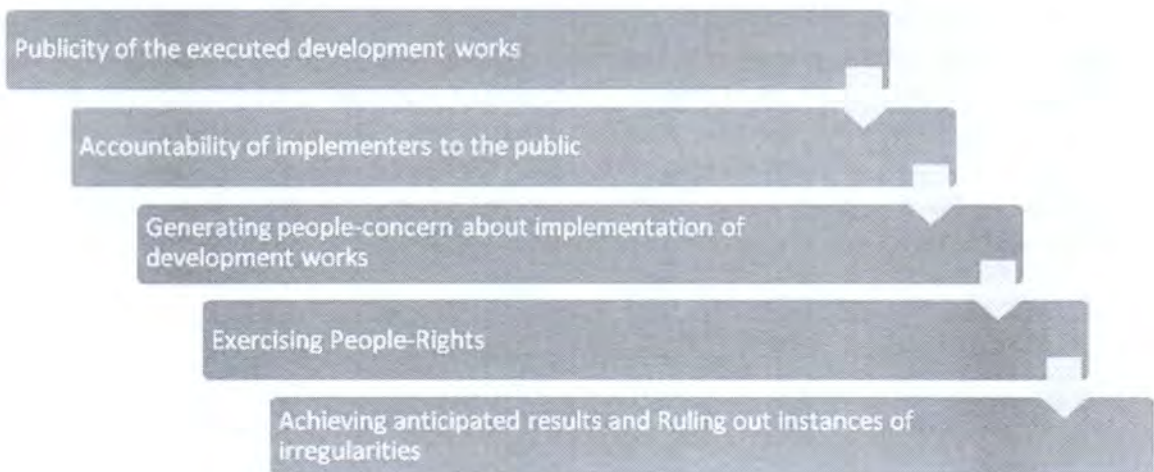


Training for the Village Social Audit Committees:

Series of training programmes were organized for the village social audit committee representatives by the Social Audit facilitators on how to carryout the social audit process. The members were provided with the toolkit developed along with important reading material.

Sensitization of the "SAC" members on their roles and responsibilities:

Training and Orientation programmes on Social Audit were conducted for members of the social audit committee, leaders of CBOs, Members of the PRI, and volunteers to orient the participants on different provisions under NREGA, and the roles, duties and responsibilities in the execution of the Social Audit Process. The programmes was designed with procedural explanations of three phases: pre-audit, social audit and post audit, since the larger objective of institutionalization of the Social Audit Process in the Panchayati Raj System could be met only with a proper understanding of the Social Audit process, steps, methods and tools in the community driven Social Audit Process. Further the members were trained on the Role of Gram Sabha in preparing, prioritizing, technical estimation, approval, job distribution, execution & monitoring, wage distribution, measurement of work, verification of muster roll and, the procedures in public hearing.



The sessions also involved an understanding of the Right to Information Act-2005. The four brainstorming sessions were made interesting with small group discussions, plenary discussions, sharing of experiences, demonstrations, role plays, and the use of cards, posters and charts apart from the detailed lectures on the various subjects. The challenges and concerns of collaborative partnerships and issues of public accountability were weighed during the sessions, and so were the benefits of conducting the Social Audit Process.

Orientation on the Community Procurement Manual:

A Community Procurement Manual designed by CYSD for convenience of the users at worksite to cross-check the technical specifications was to serve as a handbook for the beneficiaries under the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. The Community Procurement Manual had four-sections. While the first section introduced the reader with the provisions under the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the second section provided for technical knowledge/know-how on the various possible works under Act. The third section described all the present-day works under the scheme. This included construction of buildings, road constructions, constructions for water conservation, as well as land improvement techniques. The last section had a mention of the detailed price list and the community supervision aspects of the works. It was to be introduced to the workers with the provisions under the rural employment guarantee scheme while providing guidelines to carry out the various works sanctioned under it. The team of members was provided a "how-to use" orientation on the Community Procurement Manual - a true structural estimate in an easily understandable and accessible format.

RTI: The Pivotal Force:

The NREGA also provided the RTI Act to be followed in letter and in spirit. All information was to be complied within 7 days. No request for information was to be refused under any circumstances. All key documents were for publicly disclosure without waiting for anyone to apply. Public access to key records and key information were to be ensured at all levels. All key information was to be made public in a pre-designed format outside all offices of all agencies involved in implementation. Such information was of being placed before the Gram Shaba by the Gram Panchayat every quarter. The scheme-related accounts of each GP were to be pro-actively displayed and updated 2 times a year. Summary of accounts was to be displayed through, i) painting on walls at the GP office; ii) posting on community notice boards; iii) publication of annual reports.

Environment Setting in Villages for Social Audit:

Before initiating social audit, the social audit facilitators personally visited the village to mobilize people and impress upon them the significance of social audit and the RTI in the specific context of OREGS.

Collection of Relevant Information:

Once the decision to hold a social audit was taken, the village committees were facilitated to collect information from the Gram Panchayat and wherever necessary higher-up government offices. Attempts were made to collect information related to various works being undertaken. The GP officials were persuaded to make available measurement books and utilization certificates for engineering works. Other relevant documents like sanction letters, resolutions, GP recommendations,

work orders to contractors, muster rolls, running account bills and vouchers and estimates of the works were also collected. Once collected, all the information and records were sorted and filed.

Information Analysis and Verification:

The next step in the process was to analyse the information available. For instance, muster rolls which came as records of a weeks' work or a fortnight's work were converted into worker-wise records so that proper verification could be done with individual workers. Similarly, records were studied for violation of norms and guidelines for minimum and equal wages (men and women), breaching of estimates, cheating in wage payment and so on. Technical data was converted into information for easy triangulation with the villagers, for example, cubic meters of measurement were converted into locally comprehensible units of measurement.

For this process, a team of facilitators stayed in each village for three to four days in order to i) help the village auditors assess the extent and instances of corruption, by sharing information with the villagers, by physically verifying whether works have taken place, and by cross-checking muster rolls, bills and vouchers with villagers; and instil confidence in people to participate actively in the audit process, and to activate the village-level committees. During this period, an engineer checked the physical works claimed to be done, and give his/her own assessment of the expenditure incurred and of deviations from the plans.

Some days before the social audit, representatives from the district administration were persuaded to visit the villages for appraisal about the preparations for the audit. Efforts were made to persuade them to publicly commit that there would be action following the audit. This helped instil a great deal of confidence among the villagers. One or two days before the audit, a last round of publicity was carried out inviting people to take part in the audit process in large numbers.

Activation of Public Vigilance and Monitoring:

As per the Act, a Vigilance and Monitoring Committee (VMC) comprising members of locality or villages where works will be undertaken was sanctioned for every work under the scheme. Gram Sabha elected the members of committee ensuring SC/ST and women were represented. The VMCs were appraised by the implementation agency of estimates regarding work, time frame and quality parameters, and prepared a report along with Completion certificate of the work and placed it before the next Gram Sabha. The Procurement Manual prepared by CYSD provided the guidelines for ensuring the quality of work in various works to be undertaken in the six Gram Panchayats. Members of the VMC were trained on how to refer the Procurement Manual while undertaking projects to ensure a check on corruption from the beginning of the process.

Initiation of the Project: The objective of the project was to activate the Social Audit mechanisms within NREGA (OREGS) through demonstration in six selected Gram Panchayats of Koraput, Keonjhar and Sundargarh with reference to best practices from other Indian States.

The purpose of introducing Social Audit Mechanism as an effective implementation tool of OREGS was to generate awareness among the potential stakeholders. Coalitions comprising PRI representatives, CBO/ SHG functionaries and community leaders at village and GP level were organized and capacitated on mainstreaming transparency tools of RTI and Social Audit in 6 GPs. Information that was necessary related to OREGS implementation was disclosed in the 6 GPs. This was inclusive of the input learning for appropriate policy changes during the course of NREGA.

Initial Activity of the Social Audit Committee

Ghumar Gram Panchayat, Koraput

After the Stakeholder Analysis, and formation and sensitization of SACs, the recognized SACs at the Gram Panchayat level were approved by the Block level. A series of processes were conducted for establishing rapport at the various levels.

Stage –I: A survey was carried out for finding out the total population that included the number of BPL, APL, SC, ST, OBC and landlords etc. present in the community. The Survey included a survey of the number of card holders, job demand status, number of jobs provided till date, payment of wages, A/C opening etc. in NREGA. Proper steps were taken to carry out the work procedure of SAC. Guaranteed wage employment was explained in detail to the people. Beneficiaries were included in this group. A dam project was taken up after discussions at the Block and Panchayat level. Selection of site and allocation of time should be discussed. After the dam project, a C.C. road project was taken up. The JE provided the estimation. Rs300000 was to be spent on the road of width 12m and was to be completed within a period of 300 days. Work order was distributed to the people.

Stage – II: Discussions of the project were carried out with people. According to the Junior Engineer's estimation the width of the road was changed from 12ft to 20ft, and length to 280m instead of 300m and finally drains were to be made. A discussion was carried out with beneficiaries of the scheme so that complete care could be taken from carelessness of VMC. It was unanimously decided that the work could be completed in 10 days (22-12-08 to 31-12-08).Discussions were carried out with the BDO about labour wages and repairing of the road. All the accounts were updated for future reference and for discussions in a public hearing.

Stage – III: All the accounts and procedure of the work were taken care of exhibiting accountability and transparency of the project to Panchayat, Block and other institutions so that a word could be spread around. Discussions whereby the performance of the VMC could be enhanced and maintained on a continuous basis were emphasized. All the areas of accountability and transparency were tossed on the table during the discussions whereby SAC could soon become a model to be followed by others.

Kutinga Gram Panchayat, Koraput

An initial round of gathering information was carried out by the SAC after its formation. Information was gathered from the Block about the number of households, the job application status in numbers, etc., for the knowledge of the committee.

The SAC formed in Kutinga Gram Panchayat delegated 5-member task forces in each village comprising of certain important and influential ward members to effectively spread the word about the Scheme. Within three months of their operation, the task forces comprising of mostly GRS, NGO volunteers, PRI members, ward members and the Sarpanch in all the villages of the Gram Panchayat, under the SAC, had fought for the rights to reserve 100% of job card registrations, 100% opening of postal accounts and 100% job demands were created under OREGS. Regular discussions with the BDO though did not yield any results initially, but put a kind of unseen pressure on the administrative mechanism at the village level. 203 new job demands were created as a result of the action taken by the task forces under the SAC.

The need of new demand for jobs by the SAC was however not met even after two months. Hence the SAC took the matter to the higher authorities through written applications for creation of the job demands. After no action from the authorities, the SAC filed applications for the demand of unemployment allowances for people around 3 lacks. The authorities were hence forced to act with a response to the application though with a negative response showing their incapability of being able to arrange for money for the same. This was countered by Panchayat and Block level discussions. The Voice of the Lady Sarpanch was backed by political groups and volunteers, and the members of the SAC. There even arose a situation after this where the SAC was pressurized to withdraw the application. In response to this the SAC filed another application to provide for 7.5 lacks regular allowance instead of the 3 lacks of unemployment allowance. The government declared the availability of total 5 lacks for the purpose. SAC demanded the exact amount and threatened to take the matter to the Media in case of no action. The authorities juggled the papers and the matter was finally hushed up. The de-motivated members of the SAC however succeeded in finally getting two number of works sanctioned for the Gram Panchayat. The Community Procurement Manual was then referred for the sand and cement rates and for cross checking the materials to be procured.

Tileikani Gram Panchayat, Sundergarh

The beneficiaries were chiefly ignorant about the rights entitled upon them to avail the Employment Guarantee Scheme in Tileikani Gram Panchayat until the NREGA festival (mela) was staged. They learned the procedure of applying for jobs here.

Of the other illusions was the VMC that had not been formed. The baseline survey revealed that Muster rolls were not filled up on site and work site facilities (like drinking water, first-aid, rest room and childcare) were very poor in Tileikani Gram Panchayat. Moreover, no postal accounts had been opened by beneficiaries.

CYSD discussed the facts with the beneficiaries. With the help of CYSD and with permission from the Sarpanch SAC was formed which included teachers and low caste people. Some members were unanimously declared as representatives while others were chosen from the public.

The newly formed SAC members guaranteed that they would be responsible for the works carried out. The SAC consisted of 15 members. SAC was formed before WEO, Sarpanch and all the ward members. Two works were sanctioned but could not be started. This no work situation was discussed in a village level meeting with BDO and his staff but it resulted in no improvement in the situation. Hence the matter was taken to the Sarpanch as a troubleshooting effort by the SAC members. However the Sarpanch and the government officials present paid no heed to it. For the solution of the above problem the SAC members again talked to the BDO who this time forwarded the matter to the Collector.

Under the NREGA Act it was decided to take up the two existing works of repair of roads and making of a new pond in the community. The work has not been started since VMC has not been formed till date even after repeated reminders.

Moreover, as there is no money sanctioned for the works in the G.P, the Sarpanch has not been able to provide 250 jobs as per a demand raised by the SAC. For this reason yet another discussion was held but the Sarpanch was helpless as there was no money sanctioned. A solution is being searched by the SAC members for this problem in Tileikani Gram Panchayat.

Meghdega Gram Panchayat, Sundergarh

The baseline survey was conducted in Meghdega Gram Panchayat in which 300 persons from 7 villages were identified as working under NREGA. Information was collected from 60 beneficiaries, BDO, AE, EO and Sarpanch. In the survey it was found that labourers were not given wages at the right time, wages were given at the G.P. office, women were not included in the work, and people were not complaining about the irregularities under NREGA, signatures were taken on blank Master Roll. Moreover, people were unknown about the facilities provided by NREGA.

After the formation of SAC major steps were taken to increase interest in people. Meetings and discussions were carried out throughout the G.P. The three phases of Social Audit were carried out in 7 villages of Meghdega, with pre defined date and time. The work was divided among the SAC members.

1st Phase:

Discussions were made on Registration, Job card, Job Demand, giving of work, wages, unemployment and Social Audit.

2nd Phase:

Complete knowledge about Social Audit and Social Audit Committee was provided.

3rd Phase:

A meeting was held in which responsibilities of SAC and problems of SAC were discussed. Various important members of the Gram Panchayat also helped us in the program.

A meeting at G.P. level was organized in which members of different organizations, Block, SAC and BDO, AE, JE, G.P.O, GRS, G.S were present. In this meeting aim of SAC was discussed in detail. At different times meetings and discussions were held with the community members regularly at a certain interval of time. After the request laid for formation of the SAC at the Gram Panchayat Level, the Sarpanch gave a notice to the people that SAC would be formed. The meeting was held on 2-8-2008 Friday at Meghdega G.P.

Prior to the formation of SAC, CYSD and SEWAK had conducted a meeting in which the advantages of SAC were discussed in detail with the community; a poll was conducted for choosing the members of the committee. The members were chosen from a predefined list of labourers working under NREGA, SC, ST, OBC, NGO, SHG, Forest Group, Women, learned Persons and Panchayat members. Accordingly the group of people was divided into 4 groups: Panchayat member, Learned Persons, Labourers working under NREGA and, Members of different organizations. Every group had to decide the person for SAC member. SC, ST and women were given first chance. After the discussion a committee of 11 members was formed. The members' list was also sent to the BDO and District Magistrate. Its 1st meeting was held on 5th August and decision was taken to organize a training session for the members at SEWAK RBC. A piloting was done by the SAC members and steps were taken to find out solutions to the problems accordingly.

Baikala Gram Panchayat, Keonjhar

The baseline survey revealed certain facts about the NREGA situation in Baikala Gram Panchayat. A population with a majority of illiterates, there was a severe lack of public participation found in the baseline survey. Outside contractors were working on the project. Less number of women labourers were present. The job applications were not filled. No importance was given to the Social Audit. VMC was limited to documents only and did not exist in reality and hence VMC's work was not being carried out properly. People had little knowledge about NREGA. Less wages were provided against more number of signatures on the Muster Rolls. As there was no work, people were migrating to nearby areas like Chandikhola, Bhadrak and Balasore.

For increasing awareness meetings and discussions were held with the literate persons of the village so that they could pass the word at a local level. Orientations and workshops were conducted at village level with the help of Govt. officials to teach and train the stakeholders. At the Block level two different Workshops for the beneficiaries were arranged where one on one discussion was held with them. For Govt. officials block level and Panchayat level meeting were arranged.

At Block level meeting, Sarpanch and ward members had meeting with BDO and GPO. A meeting was called for by the SAC Baikala Gram Panchayat. A detail discussion about SAC was held for SAC formation. As many people were absent so it was decided that the meeting would be carried out in

every village so that people could choose their leaders properly. So finally SAC was formed which consisted of 16 members. Out of 16 members 6 were women. Of all the members 5 belonged to the ST community while 4 were SCs and 7 were OBCs. The committee consisted of retired Govt. employees, Social activists, CBO, SHG, NREGA labourers and ex leaders.

As the committee was formed, its members went from village to village and spread the word about NREGA. They also shared about responsibility of Sarpanch, ward member, BDO, Executive Officer and VMC. They met with BDO and GPO and had a discussion about VMC. They also talked about job demand and jobs. A road construction work was sanctioned from Mangalpur to Bhagbandha. After having a discussion with everyone and Panchayat it was decided to carry on with the work. After the initiation of work, social audit was conducted by SAC members as a continuous process. The quality of work was stressed by SAC members. They also highlighted the delayed payments even after completion of work. SAC conducted regular meetings with Stake holders discussing about various ways to carry out the work properly. With the help of Block and GP, SAC had taken the decision for formation of VMC but even after 10 days of work VMC had not been formed. SAC took the initiative to form the VMC at village level. As a committee over the VMC, SAC made continuous efforts to push the VMC to act on issues of maintaining accountability and transparency of the project.

At first the Govt. officials were not supporting the cause. They were not taking care of the documents (Estimate, Muster Rolls etc), but later as rapport was maintained they started supporting SAC and its cause.

During the work of road construction work from Mangalpur to Bhagbandha SAC had discussions with the VMC. SAC discussed the details of the work to VMC so that they could work properly.

During the work CYSD helped SAC by providing it with a community procurement manual. The committee members read it carefully so that they could understand it and explain it to VMC. A procurement Manual was also given to VMC.

After reading the manual SAC found that the area for road construction is hard soil whose digging rate per Sq ft is Rs135. However the officials were paying the labourers the rate of soft soil which is Rs100/ Sq ft. Then the case was taken to BDO. He then gave order to pay the labourers the original rate. A display board was to be fixed before starting of the work. This work was done by SAC.

Saleibeda Gram Panchayat, Keonjhar

It was clear from the survey that Saleibeda Gram Panchayat had the most number of illiterates in its population as compared to any of the other Gram Panchayats. Sensitizing the community was a challenge since there was no public participation in the process. Outside contractors were working on the project. Women beneficiaries were least visible in worksites. The job applications were incomplete and the community was basically ignorant of the importance of "Social Audit". VMCs were limited to documents only. Irregular and fake job card entries, delayed and low wage payments and more than actual signatures in muster rolls were a rampant practice due to the pseudo existence of VMCs.

Programmes of awareness generation were first carried out targeting literates of the community so as to pass the word at the local level. This was followed by capturing the interests of the illiterates into the Scheme highlighting the fact that literacy was not a hurdle in earning the status of “beneficiaries” under the scheme. The already sensitized and equipped members of the SAC and the various IEC interventions and workshops at the village and Block levels for sensitizing various non-SAC-member-stakeholders, prepared the arena for a charged community, ready to prevent corruption. Meetings were also held with government officials at the Block and Panchayat levels.

The SAC was formed. It conducted regular meetings with beneficiaries and stakeholders involved and discussed about various ways to maintain and ensure quality work preventing corruption from seeping into the work system, since without this initiative accountability and transparency of the project could not be maintained.

A similar state-of-art was found as in Baikala Gram Panchayat in issues of document maintenance. Years of exploitative practices had tuned the officials into repetitive patterns that were successfully broken by rapport building by members of the SAC in Saleibeda Gram Panchayat.

A work of digging a pond at Badmahulidiha was decided. The work started and continued for ten days. During this work SAC had explained each and every specification to the members of the VMC so that they could take care of the project.

The role of the Social Audit Committee began with the process of registration, followed by issuance of Job applications and Cards triggering the initiation of the employment guarantee scheme. A process of need-based awareness was called for through each phase of the complete process of social audit. To ensure maximum participation of all beneficiaries and stakeholders from diverse castes, classes, groups and representative communities, people were intimated sufficiently in advance to take part in the process. Circulation of user-friendly materials of relevance with details about the sources of information, were compiled in local language, with simple and easy-to-understand instructions for the participants. A preferred place of convenience, provided for an environment that was conducive enough to ensure a willing and fearless participation. Participation of government officials was encouraged to ensure that public demands were properly addressed.

Registration of families:

Under the NREGA guidelines, it was mandatory to ensure a transparent registration process, to be carried out publicly, with facilities for people to verify their own details or those of others. Initial registration was to be followed by public reading of the all registered households and eligible adults in each household, in the Gram Sabhas. Later the list was to be put up on the notice board of the Gram Panchayat for beneficiaries to check. A throughout-the-year “open” registration process ensuring that all persons eligible and those who wished to be included in the scheme were to be accounted for, with initial registration by a specially convened Gram Sabha, backed by the prior surveys of adult eligible

members of the Gram Panchayats, ascertaining a more accountable system of registration process, curbing chances of corruption from the beginning.

These guidelines were sincerely abided by under the works undertaken in the six Gram Panchayats. Instances of cases of deviations from the process were fished out as absence of the selected members responsible for registration, denial of registration eligible participants, incomplete list of adults in each household, registration of bogus families/individuals, rejection of 'incomplete' registration forms or, demanding money for registering names/families.

Registrations were done at a public place in all the six Gram Panchayats. There were no registrations of bogus families or individuals found, nor were denials made to register eligible individuals. It was however found that there were denials of registrations to eligible applicants in all the Gram Panchayats. In Meghdega GP of Sundergarh District, the registration process was done in a single paper for number of eligible households and no format was used for this purpose. A public registration with facilities to verify the details was carried out with a special Gram Sabha convened in Meghdega GP for a year-round open registration facility on the 2nd of October, 2008.

Distribution of job card:

According to the NREGA guidelines, it was to be ensured that the Job cards were issued free, within a month of registration, to all eligible applicants, with no pending complaints. The process of preparing, issuing and updating the job cards was to be made transparent with a file containing photocopies available for inspection at the Gram Panchayat Office.

The issues in issuance of job cards checked were issuance delay, issuance of false job cards, and issuance to ineligible members as non-residents, minors or other unlisted members of the family. Issues arose on delay in the issuance of job cards. Though the job cards were issued for free, all the six Gram Panchayats spotted out the delay as the cards were not issued within a month.

Receipt of Work Application:

A tear-away receipt was to be attached to the registration form to be given to the registered person/family which ensured the process of issuing dated receipts for their application for work, as per the guidelines. This was done in all the six GPs.

Preparing the Shelf of Projects and Selecting Work sites:

As per the guidelines, the shelf of projects was to be prepared in the Gram Sabha, and, the issue of worksite selection was to be checked and re-checked to rule out instances of inappropriate work, work serving any vested interest and for work lacking public support.

The works were sanctioned from the shelf of projects as per the norms. The board at the worksite however did not provide the details of the sanctioned amount, work dimensions and other requisite details. The muster rolls bearing unique identity numbers, names of beneficiaries, their job card numbers, with details of days worked and absent, and wages paid, were made available for public scrutiny at all times at the worksite.

Lack of public support for work and poor worksite selections were however found in Kutinga GP of Koraput District. The worksite material register was not maintained in any of the GPs, and hence the scope of verification by at least five workers whenever material came to the site, did not arise.

Technical Estimates and Issuance of Work Order:

Work orders were issued in a fair and transparent manner though with delays in issuance. Instances of exaggerated or inaccurate technical estimate developed with inclusion of estimate of unnecessary expenditure, excessive rates and material were checked, and so were unclear work orders with missing details and scope for misinterpretation. The details of the projects listed and works finalized were listed at the Gram Panchayat office.

Allotment of Work to Individuals:

Work plans and labour and material estimates (as per technical sanctions) and other requirements were explained in detail to all potential workers. A community procurement manual prepared with correct specifications of all sorts of work provide to all the Gram Panchayats, served as the guidelines to check corrupt practices. Dialogues and discussions followed on deviance from specifications in the manual.

There was no document based evidence of VMCs in Meghdega GP of Sundergarh district that had been formed after their claimed formation after the implementation and commencement of works under NREGA. The already existing but dysfunctional Vigilance Monitoring Committees (VMCs) were activated (selected and announced a meeting). The VMCs assured regular visits to the worksite to monitor the implementation of various aspects of the work and exercised their vigil on the works allotted.

Here also arose the issue of unemployment wage payment wherein outstanding unemployment allowances, and the number of late-payment compensations were taken account of in the six GPs. Pending complaints about the receipt of work applications, allotment of work and payment of unemployment allowance were raised and taken to concerned authorities by the SAC in the GPs.

Individual measurement of work was conducted in a transparent manner where piece-rate norms were in force, especially in Saleibeda GP taken under Keonjhar. A check was carried on out-of-turn allotments, and on favouring or discriminating against worksite allocation. Orientations on wage entitlements and provisions of 33 percent employment quota for women , and the 10 percent (of minimum wage) as transport and living allowance to all those working outside a 5-kilometer radius, followed with the process.

Phase-II: Social Audit

The "Social Audit", by the Social Audit Committee (SAC):

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE SOCIAL AUDIT PHASE:

The actual implementation of works undertaken to establish the felt need of following the NREGA guidelines, was exercised in the second and main phase of Social Audit. The responsibility of the Social Audit Committee of keeping a vigil on the non-existing or dysfunctional VMCs started with the activating of the Vigilance and Monitoring Committees (VMCs). This was followed by large scale village-level mobilization and sensitization. The next step was of creating web networks and linkages with PRIs and Government Officials. The final step of facilitation in the Block and District level included the checking and re-checking of disseminated information ensuring channels of appropriately allocated work to applicants, with details on work and schedules, after complete verification of identities.

Implementation and supervision of works:

Various works were undertaken in different villages as project areas under the six Gram Panchayats and as per the guidelines, the applicants were assured a timely supply of materials and other required inputs in all the GPs.

The various works taken to assess the implementation of NREGA guidelines under the six Gram Panchayat were as follows:



Three projects were sanctioned in Koraput District in Dhamanaganda, Pandakapadar and Ganthiaguda villages under the two GPS of Kutinga and Ghumar. A three hundred meter CC road project at Ghumar was rigorously worked at towards completion within eight days in the month of December. A similar CC road project in Pandakapada village was completed within one and a half month. Of the 2 and a half lac of Rupees sanctioned (of a total of 7 lacs), a phase of field canal work reached its completion in Dhamanaganda village of Kutinga GP, Koraput.



Hurlitungudi Village
Demand of work for 250 beneficiaries supposed to have started in January '08
Extended till March and expected to end in December 08



Earthwork from Gailjore to Turungarh, Gailjore Village
Project Initiated on 20th October after Special Gram Sabha on 2nd October

Dhania

Earthwork from Tinkuda to Bhulkupada, Tinkuda Village
Project Initiated on 20th October after Special Gram Sabha on 2nd October

Two projects were selected for Tileikani GP of Sundergarh district with a need created for 250 beneficiaries. However, due to strong alliances of vested interests and non-cooperation of the Sarpanch, the SAC has not been able to initiate the works in spite of repeated official reminders. Moreover, the release of payments still due since three years made it impossible to ensure the would-be beneficiaries of wage benefits under projects. The scenario was encouragingly different in the other (Meghdega) GP of Sundergarh where two similar projects of earthworks in two different villages (Guailjore and Tinkuda) of the Meghdega GP were simultaneously sanctioned eighteen days after a demand submitted to a Special Gram Sabha in October.



New Road from Bhagabanda to Mangalpur village
Project Completed



Excavation of new Tank, Bada Mohuldiaha Village
Project Continuing since 20th February- 09

The Work Project of a new road (all weather roads) from Bhagabanda to Mangalpur village in Baikala GP of Keonjhar District was approved in the Palli Sabha and subsequently by the DPC. As per the priority order it appeared in the lower order of the Priority list. However, it succeeded in harvesting a huge response from the community and other stakeholders as an immediate demand which accounted for its urgency. This urgency of inclusion of SAC in the approved list of projects was felt more so due to the absence of the Vigilance and Monitoring Committee. A three month project of excavation of a new tank in Bada Mohuldiaha Village of the Saleibeda GP of the Keonjhar district duly appeared on the top order of the approved Project list for the current year. The Project also got immense response from the village communities and recommendation of the SAC as well to be

included in the approved Project list. The V & MC existing previously also supported the implementation of the Project thus placing it in the initial priority order.

Payment of unemployment allowance:

If a worker who had applied for work under NREGA was not provided employment within 15 days from the date on which work was requested, he/she got entitled for an unemployment allowance, payable by the State Government at the rate prescribed in the Act. This wage payment was to be made no later than 15 days from the date on which it became due for payment (NREGA, Section 7(5)). In the event of any delay, the recipients were entitled to compensation based on the same principles as wage compensation under the Payment of Wages Act, 1936. Compensation costs were to be borne by the State Government. This compensation (the payment of unemployment allowance) was to be ensured on a weekly basis at the Gram Panchayat level, on the 'employment guarantee day'. The prompt payment of the unemployment allowance was to be censured by the Programme Officer, throughout the block.

The Social Audit Committees in the six GPs looked into the unemployment allowance to enquire and settle instances of late payment, payment to the wrong or non-existent persons, denial by wrongly accusing a person for not reporting for work, and demand of bribe for paying the allowances. Payment of unemployment wages compensating for late payments was not a usual practice in any of the Gram Panchayats. Hence all the GPs initiated an essential probed into the matter. The SAC in Saleibeda GP of Keonjhar noted most of such instances and took initiatives as a pressure group for authorities to act accordingly.

Payment of wages:

The issues to be raised were on non-payments within seven days, late-payments, underpayments, payments to wrong/non-existent workers, and the failure of payment of minimum wages.

Payments were however not made in time even after timely execution of work. As observed in Ghumar Gram Panchayat of Koraput District, the payments of wages were made after repeated pressure on the Junior Engineer through different channels, after forty three days of completion of work. The SAC encouraged the maintenance of proper records with accurately filled job cards in all the Gram Panchayats for initiation of demands for the same.

Implementation & Monitoring:

Subsequent to project approval in principle, CYSD took a month to concretize indicators into the "SMART" framework. The district resource centres (DRCs) of CYSD, located in the district headquarters of Koraput, Keonjhar and Sundargarh were responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the project. The personnel in the unit were responsible for preparation of financial and progress reports with the help of project staff. The World Bank was invited to monitor the programme through field visits and monthly/quarterly progress reports. Regular and timely monitoring of the programme was made through matrix-model monitoring schedule for different activities. Each activity was broken up into its constituent tasks that appeared in the first column of the matrix. This was followed by drawing a timeline, which indicated in which quarter the tasks were performed during the three-year duration of the project. Tasks that repeated themselves appeared in different quarters depending on when exactly they were scheduled to happen. The matrix was prepared at the initiation of the project and represented the implementation plan.

Monthly report was prepared by the DRCs forwarded to the DRC Coordinator, located centrally. After the study of the report, feedback was provided to the field. Monthly review meetings were made on a particular day of a month. In this meeting, report of the monthly activities was discussed and working plan for the next was prepared. After every three months, a quarterly progress report with statement of accounts was submitted to the World Bank. This indicated the deviations in actual implementation from what was planned at the initiation of the project and represented the monitoring system to be used for the project.

Monitoring Matrix					
Activities	Time Line			Achievements/ Deviations	Remarks
Tasks	Qr 1	Qr 2	Qr 3.12		

There was an internal review of the project after the first six months. Further, the project welcomed the World Bank to make periodic review visits to the field and participate in different consultation and meet to monitor and guide for the fulfilment of overall objective of the project.

This monitoring matrix was developed by the project staff in April 2007, in consultation with World Bank which was monitored through quarterly and mid-term project review meetings.

Phase-III: Post Audit

Post-Audit Evaluation of work by the “Social Audit Committee”:

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES IN THE POST-AUDIT PHASE:

The final phase of Post-Audit looked into the crux of the bottlenecks and the means to plow them up through effective mechanisms.

Sharing of the findings of Social audit at the community level and the “Follow-up dialogue” for corrective measures:

The community level sharing took place at the village level. The village audit committee members made presentations about their findings. The areas addressed were findings in the processes of registration of families, distribution of job cards, receipt of work applications, preparation of shelf of project and selection of sites, development and approval of technical estimates and issuance of work order, allotment of work to individual, implementation and supervision of works, payment of unemployment allowance, payment of wages, and evaluation of work. Care was taken to ensure that people from the marginalized segments, especially women, came forward to speak and testify.

Officials were called on to respond to the need for taking corrective action, such as taking disciplinary action against deviant functionaries, ordering delayed payments, or initiating enquiries into allegations of corruption. Efforts were made to extract statements from them about the actions they would take.

Continuous Review by the Village Social Audit Committee as Facilitators:

Social Audit was organized as a regular process and not as a one-time event. It was organized at any specific interval depending upon people’s preparedness and willingness. It could be after each activity or monthly or bi monthly or even once or twice in a year depending on the need.

Documentation of Learning’s:

Every care was taken to document the learning’s that was generated during the process for wider sharing at the Block and district level. The team of social audit facilitators was responsible for conducting this documentation.

GP/ District / State level Experience Sharing:

Following the completion of the project, sharing consultations were organized at the GP, district and state level to disseminate the experience gained in the process, involving community leaders, PRI representatives, OREGS implementing officials, policy makers, media and civil society organizations. These sharing events also served as advocacy measures to create pressure on the state to institutionalize social audit in the implementation of the OREGS across the state.

Publication of a Handbook on Social Audit:

In order to help others replicate and institutionalize the social audit process in their contexts, a comprehensive all inclusive handbook was developed and published at the end of the project cycle. The handbook, in addition to including the tools, methods and processes already contained in the toolkit developed at the beginning, captured the entire process and learning.

Other Partners:

Strong efforts were made to enlist the collaboration of the Department of Panchayati Raj, State Information Commission, Government agencies like District Administration/ DRDA/ ITDA and Line Departments, PRIs, CBOs, CSOs, SHGs, and district/ state level resource organizations like State Institute of Rural Development, as the other partners in the project. The evaluation process looked into the issues of improper measurements, the non-consolidation of information regarding the works in one place, the issue of false completion certificates, works not conforming to specifications/standards, and data recorded in a confusing or incomprehensible manner. At the meeting it was verified whether work was carried out in conformity with the work order, whether the completion date was made public in a people-friendly format, whether no completion certificates were issued in case the project meeting had not taken place and whether its observations were taken into consideration. The aspect of maintenance of the project was also discussed and evaluated.

The Social Audit Forum:

Comprehensive public hearings called as the social audit forums relating to works and individual entitlements were held at the Gram Sabha level for all works done. The forum gave people the opportunity to review compliance with the ongoing requirements of transparency and accountability, while serving as an institutional forum where people could conduct a detailed public audit of all NREGS works carried out in their area. The Social Audit Committee ensured this through preparation and publicity activities, prior to the forum. The organizational and procedural aspects were looked into setting up a mandatory agenda of the NREGS social audit forum. Discussions on unavailable information, failure to enforce accountability of officials and hence obtain due entitlements, issues on people's involvement, non-existing Grievance Redressal mechanisms, lack of opportunity for individuals, and the review of functioning of all aspects of the project by the Gram Sabha, were carried out in the forum. It was ensured that the file had all the documents required, ready for scrutiny before the social audit forum. Availability of charts of summary sheets was ensured for display and scrutiny before and during the social audit forum. The reading aloud of muster rolls, summary of bills, and measurement book summary was encouraged. Photographs taken before, during and after the work were made available for public display and scrutiny during the social audit forum. The Vigilance and Monitoring Committees (VMCs) were formed as per norms and were required to submit their reports.

Reflections

Ghumar Gram Panchayat, Koraput

The carelessness and rigidness of Govt. officials, the vested interest groups, the non-cooperation of the Panchayat members, delayed wage payments were all to be countered simultaneously by the few members of the SAC in the Gram Panchayat level.

The importance of establishing a relationship while carrying out the process was felt in every step of facilitation by the SAC. A public meeting passed on the aim of Social Audit Committee and the importance of NREGA to the community. Public relations were stressed upon between the Govt. organization, Panchayat and the SAC members. Public relations were established with VMC members identified beforehand. A friendly environment was established for smooth running of all the programs. Meetings, teachings and discussion panels were carried out at the Panchayat level so that a friendly environment could be established.

Kutinga Gram Panchayat, Koraput

The opening of postal accounts was a matter of challenge for SAC in Kutinga as the ordinary Post Office did neither have the capacity nor the manpower to arrange the document sets for 10 lakh accounts. SAC provided the deadline to the Post Office, but the lone Post Master showed his helplessness in this regard. SAC then took the initiative to provide for 10 volunteers capable enough to make sets of documents required, ready for opening of accounts of 10,000 potential beneficiaries. The postal accounts were successfully opened.

SAC as a Panchayat level committee was limited to the arena of the Panchayat. For empowering the people in the true sense, the self-sufficiency and principles of transparency and accountability needed to percolate down to the villages. The issues of unavailability of funds for Works at the Panchayat level needed to be dealt with stricture of anti-corruption attempts. SAC as a facilitator lobbied and advocated at the District and State levels where networking made sense.

Baikala Gram Panchayat, Keonjhar

After formation of SAC and VMC a good vibe was felt in NREGA works. People have come to know about that the wages as Rs70 and per Sq ft digging depends on the type of soil. The contractors are now doing their work properly as VMC has always an eye on them. Now everyone knows about NREGA. Job Cards have been rectified. As the work is not complete public hearing has not been done. However due to formation of SAC and VMC the work has been done in full transparency and is accountable. The Procurement Manual has helped a lot and it has also increased specializations of work in the people. The people of the community now want SAC to be given government recognition.

Saleibeda Gram Panchayat, Keonjhar

The committee members had made good use of the CYSD's easy-to-understand community procurement manual that had been provided to them. A copy of the same had also been provided to the VMC to retain it for use in the present works and for future use. The community is in best of spirits after quality deliverance of work both in the interests of the community and of the Employment Guarantee Scheme. As a result of this the VMC has been functioning in full transparency and accountability, starting from the rectification in Job Cards to the proper payment of wages.

The community agreed to the mandatory formation of VMCs in every village under the SAC of a Gram Panchayat to replicate the story of success of the NREG process in other Gram Panchayats of the State of Orissa. Moreover, the reports of experiences generated from the continuous social audit process of the SAC, could set an example for the other States, if archived. This could be made possible with the government recognition of SAC.

Tileikani Gram Panchayat, Sundergarh

The issues of "no money" for NREGA Works in the Tileikani Gram Panchayat, as declared by the Sarpanch could be solved only when the VMCs could come into action, since SAC was a facilitator and not necessarily an implementer. SAC as a body of members could delegate and advise VMCs on the action to be taken, and not take the action itself. In such case there would no longer be a need for VMCs in villages. Instead of running to the BDO and ward members for help in work related issues, the VMCs could monitor the issues at their level once formed. This was explained to the community for activation of the VMCs.

Through the social audit exercise of the SAC, the beneficiaries came to know about the use of Job Cards, Muster Roll and Postal accounts, the work of various officials like the G.R.S and the G.S, the Sarpanch, J.E and A.E., apart from the provisions of the Act. It was unanimously agreed that there was a need of opening the Panchayat office every day for fresh job demand applications could be registered demanding job cards. The daily wages have been hiked to the presently declared Rs. 70/- and signatures would now be taken on the Muster Roll everyday at the site during payment of wages. In the meantime the VMC members will be chosen from the general public (beneficiaries, ward member and Zilla parishad members). As a whole, there has been an improvement in the state of affairs of the Gram Panchayat.

Meghdega Gram Panchayat, Sundergarh

There were not much issues of resistance in Meghdega that could not have been tackled by the SAC. Moreover, creation of job demands and the smooth functioning of the earthwork projects thereafter established a kind of faith in SAC that ended in the fruitful note of timely wage payments. Needless to say, the works undertaken benefited the community as well, enhancing the connectivity options and making them a self-sufficient community ready for more.

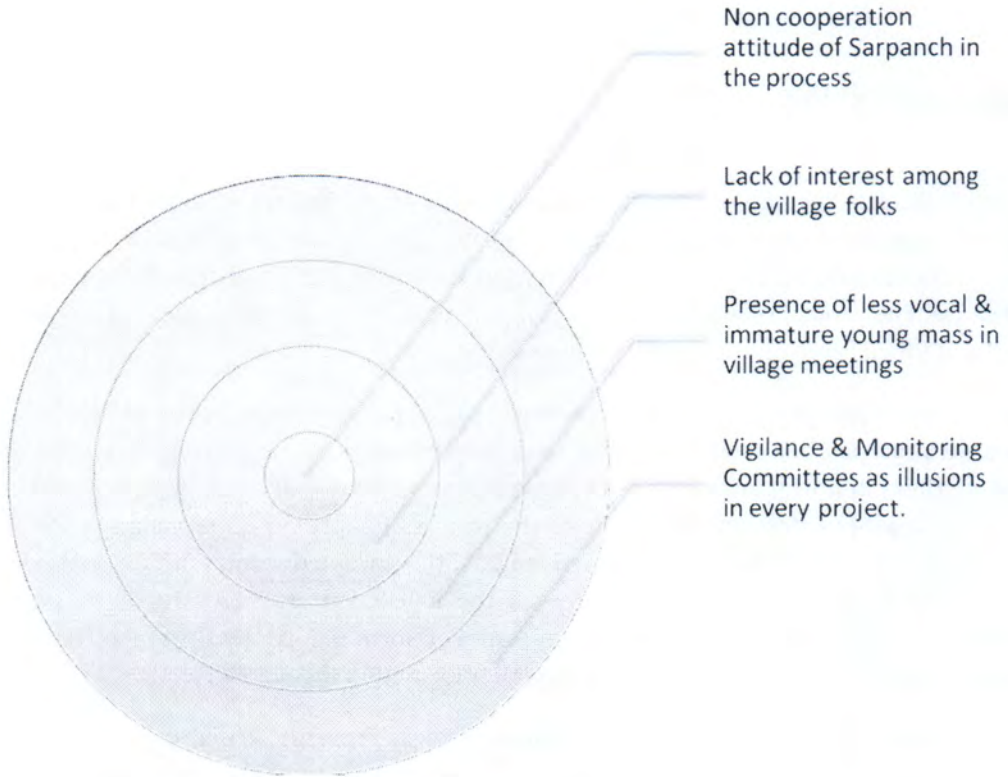
Issues and Challenges

Given the ambitious goal towards regime change in style of functioning of government agencies, it was feared that the initiative may have to face formidable resistance in political and administrative quarters.



There were several challenges involved in the process. To begin with, the administrative machinery which had till date functioned under the Official Secrets Act and in turn used it as a cover for the inefficiencies and misuse of the system now had to learn to work under the new Right to Information Act where the public had full access to information.

They had to learn to be accountable to the public instead of just the higher-ups within the administration. After the social audit in the villages, a careful eye was kept on the village situation to assess whether vested interests issued any kinds of threat to the people actively involved in the audit process, and to take pre-emptive action if necessary.



Experiences and observations related to Programme implementation

Countering the Challenges:

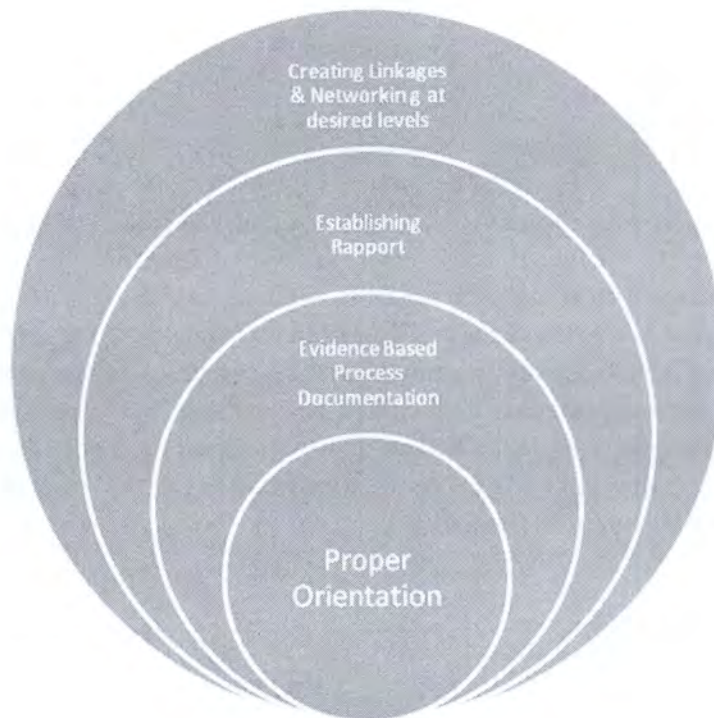
Social Audit process provides for an opportunity to take a proactive stance and to create solutions. It helps understand and anticipate stakeholder concerns. The process acts as a tool that provides essential information about the interests, perspectives and expectations of stakeholders. Social Audit is an inclusive and complete tool of adding credibility to efforts, of reshaping priorities in tune with people's expectations, and of increasing accountability.

Lessons from KEONJHAR

The vested interests of some of the PRI members and certain functionaries of the Gram Panchayat came in the way of progress of the installed process. Their unprecedented moves interrupted the process causing it to be held-up without any reason, debarring the Committee from getting access to the root cause. The project related documents were denied for direct supervision to the SAC members by the GP and Block functionaries and PRI representatives.

The importance of the process was not realized, and hence steps were taken to reach out to those members with focused discussions, seeking their suggestions and integrating them into the process by involving them in a way or two. Interactions with district level officials were brought out to build pressure on the administration and facilitate the process for proper supervision of Project related Official documents. Awareness was created among the targeted communities so that more Job demands could be raised to build pressure on the Panchayat. The SAC regularly presented the abnormalities of the Project both in written and spoken form before the Gram Panchayat and Block representatives and functionaries, demanding vital Information through RTI.

In Saleibeda Gram Panchayat, as the SAC members were from the tribal community, and mostly illiterate, they were not fully capable of taking up responsibilities at the Block and Panchayat level. Moreover, poor rural connectivity restricts communication in its villages. Community people hardly attend meetings in the Block due to this reason. Even members of the SAC were labourers who were once willing to go out for other work. The urgent need of properly functioning VMCs hence became the first priority of the SAC in Saleibeda.

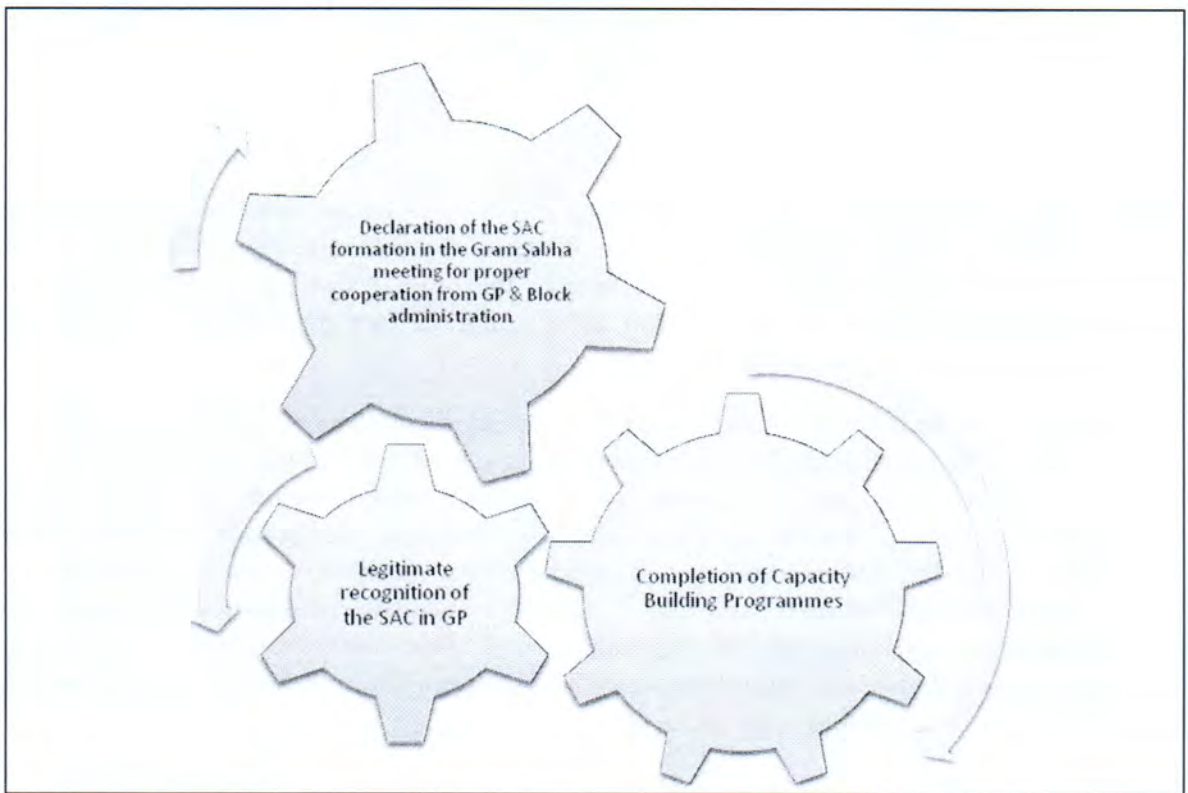


It was not easy for the SAC to get full recognition and approval for its work from the GP and Block. It was thus necessary to establish and ascertain the strict functioning of the VMCs, with cooperation from concerned authorities, as operating both in the Gram Panchayat and the Block level, by empowering the members to cater to their work within the legal jurisdictions of the Social Audit Process.

Within the four months of formation of the SAC, late payment of wages have been minimised to a large extent. The beneficiaries having fallen victim to late payment of their wages after working in similar projects have gathered courage to re-establish their demands before the concerned authorities facilitated by the SAC and have summed up their courage to present their grievance before the APD –DRDA. The concerned GP functionaries have now acknowledged their consent for allowing supervision of essential Project documents and the Panchayat have now started considering the role of SAC and the V & MC seriously. The Communities have taken over the process in a slow and steady manner. A positive environment thus has been created leading towards the transparency measures as expected from the process.

Lessons from KORAPUT

In Kutinga Gram Panchayat of Koraput, the Junior Engineer avoided attending meetings as per his commitment. As a result of which, wage payments to the labourers have been deferred. At the worksite, the absence of a fixed estimate tablet had created confusions. In addition to this, the govt. officials had the apprehension that as it is a community driven program (unlike the traditional Govt. supervised program) the SAC was to contribute some labour (free) for the work, (as is normally seen in NGO sponsored activities). The lady Sarpanch of the Panchayat was largely influenced by the vested groups. The lack of cooperation of the J.E in attending meetings, in paying off wages and in providing “Positive Response” after completion of work (to be provided as the government official involved), had piled up issues to be solved by the SAC.



In Ghumar Gram Panchayat of Koraput, after identification and sensitization on rules and regulations of VMC, the date of formation was agreed upon. However, the formation was deferred and VMC could not be included in the process. Since the Panchayat members were against SAC and the previously formed VMCs consisted anti-NREGA and corrupt officials and local landlords, accounts were not made available directly to SAC or the labourers. The JE and other officials were playing hide and seek when questioned on the specifications based on the community procurement manual. The community had started losing faith on the SAC.

The SAC thus took the matter to the BDO. The SAC met the B.D.O regarding the wage payment irregularity and requested him to visit the place and attend a meeting for full phase discussion. It was decided that the surplus amount would be spent towards the remaining 40 ft. road (as per the previous estimation). Moreover, after completion of the work a sharing workshop would be held in the Panchayat regarding the role & achievement of the SAC. The last formal phase of Social Audit, Post Audit would be done with all stakeholders participation and the complete report would be prepared & shared with all stakeholders.

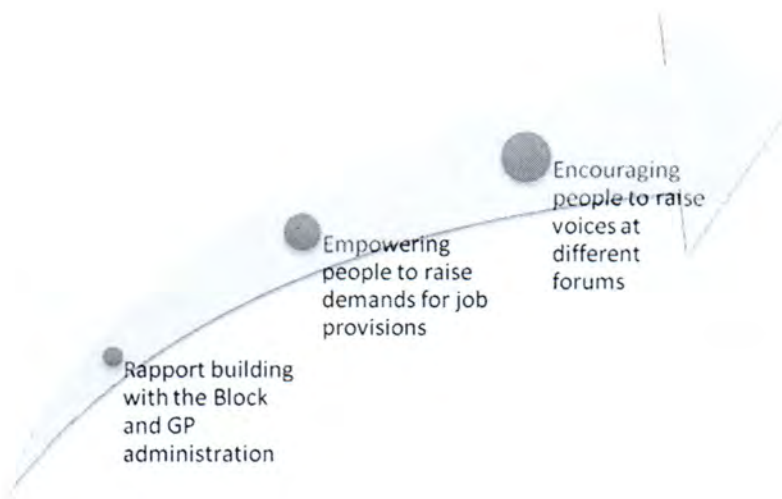
Just after 2 days of the meeting with the BDO, the pending wages were paid to the beneficiaries with the help of an advocate. Finally the SAC gained its' recognition in Ghumar, and people started believing in it again.

Lessons from SUNDERGARH

The process had faced stiff opposition from a section of people from the Community those who are very close to local administration (GP & Block administration). The Block & GP administration were not very supportive towards the proper implementation of this programme.

The status review of NREGA projected that of the total 257 households in Meghdega Gram Panchayat, 103 beneficiaries had been provided work. An additional 48 families were facilitated to register under the NREGS with the efforts of Social Audit Committee. As an initiative by the Social Audit Committee, 126 people have demanded for provisions of job. Two numbers of works have been initiated on the basis on job demand application submitted by the Social Audit Committee to the Gram Panchayat office. The dysfunctional VMCs have been activated. A recent submission of application to the BDO of Tangarpali Block demands unemployment wages for 23 labourers.

The Social Audit Committee has been taking a lead role by encouraging people for raising their voice at different forums i.e. at GP & Block office and in the opening of accounts in the post office encouraging transparency in wage payments.



Social Audit: A tool of Bottom-up Accountability

THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL AUDIT:

Villagers were well sensitized on the social audit process as an accountable and transparency tool for implementing the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. They were sensitized on preparing the plan of projects in Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha to implement, monitor and evaluate the project with community driven approaches collaborating with govt. extension workers, PRI representatives and Civil Society Organization. The Social Audit Committee was formed to encourage the community driven monitoring process and for avoiding corruption and reducing the role of vested interest groups.

The Social Audit Committees were formed with members, mostly comprising of beneficiaries, ranging from 13 to 15 in number, including women, witnessing participation from all revenue villages under the Panchayats. With a series of discussions among GP members, Extension workers and the Block Administration, the Committees got the formal recognition in the Panchayat. This was ensured by identifying a new project for complete administration of the process from its initiation. Work was formally allocated to the Social Audit Committees to monitor, supervise and ensure that the guidelines of NREGA were followed in the process. This was followed by collection of relevant information, analysis and verification of the existing state of affairs. The Vigilance Monitoring Committees were activated in the process, while the Social Audit Committee carried out its continuous review of implementation of the NREGA guidelines.

SOCIAL AUDIT COMMITTEES AS FACILITATORS OF VIGILANCE & MONITORING COMMITTEES:

The Social Audit Committees helped in the formation of new VMCs in all the cases as they had become dysfunctional. In case the selection of members of the VMC was opposed owing to conflicting interests, the existing Committee from the previous Project were officially declared to continue with the new Project. It was ensured that the Panchayat re-endorsed the previously existing Committee as the new V & MC for the Project with a few new faces among the regular members.

The SAC went into different rounds of meetings with the Panchayat for formation of new V& MC. It held several rounds of joint meetings with the PRI representatives and the old V & MC members for reformation of the Committee. With the pressure built by the SAC, the Panchayat finally announced the V & MC for the Project that constituted almost all the members of the old Committee with some exceptions. The SAC trained the V & MC on proper monitoring measures.

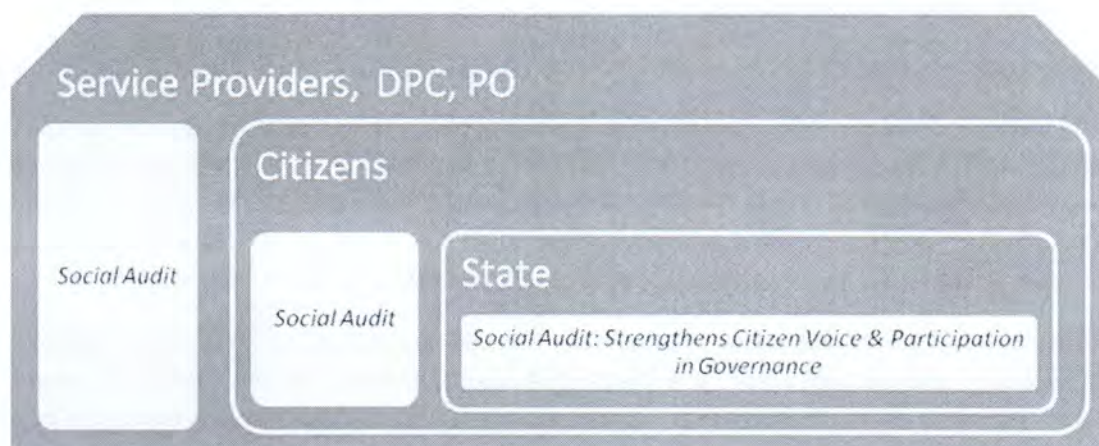
The SAC further imparted the V & MC with a thorough knowledge focusing at the futuristic aspects that the process was anticipated to yield. It oriented the V & MC on different rules and guidelines playing a definite role in the monitoring process.

MAGNIFYING THE MECHANISMS OF INFORMATION DISCLOSURE:

The Social Audit Committee with its wider scope of defining quality parameters, probed at magnified the methods of attaining transparency in the process. The magnification started with the identification of the 6 Gram Panchayats followed by official applications to the Block Development Officer of the concerned Districts and Blocks. Block level interface meetings were organised with similar letters issued to the Gram Panchayat functionaries and PRI representatives. Surveys followed by village level orientations ensuring community interest in the process at every step equipped the community to self-monitor of the intended projects. Through meetings with Stakeholders and with the Director, Special Projects of the Panchayat Raj Department, the idea percolated down to the Panchayat seeping through the Collector and the respective Block Development Officers to the respective Panchayats. This then reached the respective revenue villages and hamlets where the Social Audit Committee was to become a reality. Letters of correspondence seeking cooperation shared the idea. Rigorous and sincere efforts of rapport building followed. Process initiation correspondence, recording and maintenance of regular progress reports, and the regular follow-up of the intervened events pursued by primary stakeholders, ensured the proper implementation, monitoring and streamlining of the process. Involvement of the community provided them with the ownership to re-establish their rights of employment under the NREG Act.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF SCALING UP:

Process of Scaling up required very marginal resources since the Act had already provided for similar activities to be taken up by using contingency grants available under the programme itself.



The piloting had a country-wide relevance, since the policy environment was uniform and similar in all the programme districts. Hence the best practices and learning from the piloting phase were expected to positively fuel rapid replications across the districts in Orissa and quite surely in the country as well.

The Impact

As a successful model for wide scale replication, CYSD's "Social Audit Committee" addresses information gaps, enables provisions and provides for mid-course corrections through a participatory review mechanisms. It has been approved for the next phase by the World Bank after extensive interface meetings with various stakeholders of the newly formed committee. The World Bank has declared the Social Audit Committee as a radically different approach to social auditing. The Future Path is well laden with aspirations of an accountable and a transparent working mechanism of good governance by the people, for the people, and of the people, curbing corruption right from the roots.

THE STORY OF TRIVENI

The Baikala Gram Panchayat is thickly populated by tribal people who believe in toiling hard for a living. Their day starts with work to meet their livelihoods, and ends with the proceeds earned out of the labor put in. The community also has people belonging to the scheduled castes and other backward castes all of whom believe in working as labourers on a daily basis.

A farmer named Triveni, works as a labourer on days when not engaged in her seasonal farming. Triveni was thrilled on getting the job card issued by NREGA, more so because she had a guaranteed job for 100 days that would help her earn and bring back home Rs. 70 every day. The Gram Panchayat asked Triveni to work under the REG Scheme for the State of Orissa by giving her a notice to start the work within a period of fifteen days on the road being constructed from the village Lunga (1km away from Baikala).

With immense enthusiasm Triveni started working everyday at 8'o clock, after finishing her household chores. She was glad and confident that this would bring her, in less than fifteen days, to a position of being able to provide for some financial aid to her family and buy some study materials for her children.

Her confidence dwindled soon, when even after 6 days of work her daily wages were far away from her hands. She did not complain thinking she might get weekly wages in the end. When even after 12 days of work, she did not receive any wages, she inquired. On the site she could not get any type of help. Her fellow workers told her how they have been told to sign a contract that would release payments on the 15th day of work. She then thought it best to wait for 3 more days.

However, even after 15 days, there were no sign of wage earnings for her. She decided to speak out and went with her complaint to the Panchayat Office, and then to the houses of the Sarpanch and the Panchayat editor.

Four months passed. She could do nothing but to see her family suffer. She gathered her courage and went with her anguish to the Block Development Officer of Saharapada Block. No action was taken even after this.

The three subsequent months saw an increase of her family problems. In the mean time a meeting for Social Development was held in Baikala. As Triveni was present in the meeting she forwarded her problem to the concerned officials of the committee. The Sarpanch, the Block Development Officer and the Junior Engineer were interrogated by the SAC members but it was of no use. Instead they said that Triveni had worked less and had not worked properly. On hearing this the SAC Members requested the Officer in charge of General Information to exhibit the muster roll under the RTI Act, so that they could verify whether Triveni had worked or not, which the Officer was unable to provide due to reasons best known to him. When the members of the SAC pressurized the Officer on taking the matter to the Information Commissioner, the General Information Officer was forced to produce the Muster Rolls.

The same night a local builder went to Triveni's house and offered her Rs 200 and asked her to sign on the Muster Rolls. Triveni insisted that she should get Rs 840 as she had worked for 12 days on a daily wage of Rs 70. The builder pestered Triveni to sign on the Muster Roll or else he declared she would get not a single penny. Triveni informed the SAC officials about the problem. The SAC officials then informed the problem to the BDO, which he disagreed to believe.

The SAC officials went to the city to the District Magistrate to tell the story of Triveni. In a written form they submitted all the facts and figures about what had happened in Baikala village. Much to the relief of the members of SAC, the District Magistrate rebuked the BDO the very same day over the phone.

At 3'o clock the BDO, the Sarpanch and the editor went to Triveni's house to give her the wages. However they told her to sign on the actual dates on which the wages were to be given to which Triveni refused. All the officials went away without giving the wage to Triveni. Probing into the matter the Collector ordered APD Sushma Rani Devi to carry on the enquiry. The other day Sushma Rani went to the BDO's office with SAC officials where the BDO, Sarpanch and Editor were present. She enquired about the whole fact and warned them on serious consequences in case they ever repeated the same. After all this, Sushma Rani with all the Officials including SAC officials went to Triveni's house and gave her the wages. The Junior Engineer was transferred and the BDO and the Editor were ordered to show valid reasons as why they were unable to give the wages.

In the end, Triveni did get justice with the help of SAC officials. The story of Triveni was narrated every time as and when it became an example for all further cases taken to the SAC that were all sorted out within a short span of time.

“NO JOB”- JOB GUARANTEE!

With its chief motive to generate awareness about the employment guarantee scheme, the SAC members moved out from one village to another with a mission to sensitize people on the SAC's role in it. As such the community was looking for such a guarantee. When the people filed their applications, strangely however there arose a situation of no work for those eligible.

It was with the help of the SAC that on the 3rd of October, 2008, 129 jobless persons demanded for job. The Panchayat however accepted only 10 job demands. Moreover, much against the NREG Act, jobs that were to be provided within a stipulated period of 15 days, could not be provided by the Panchayat even after 23 days. It was again the SAC members who helped the jobless persons go on a strike on the 25th demanding creation of jobs as per the provisions. In spite of the EO's presence in the Panchayat, steps were not taken to sort out the problem. The EO expressed his helplessness stating that he could not provide any kind of work.

Again, with the help of the SAC members 40 laborers went to the Block office to start a strike. This strength was less due to availability of only two vehicles. The Block Development Officer had a meeting with the people, and issues were raised about the three problems:

- ...that the Panchayat was not able to provide job even after 23 days.
- ...that the EO was not listening to the problems and even not taking any steps for creating any solutions for the problem.
- ...that since according to the NREGA Act if job was not provided within 15 days then the persons would be declared jobless; they had now applied to come under the jobless category.

Immediately, with the very effect, the BDO called the Sarpanch and JE over phone. As they arrived BDO ordered them to search for a job under the regulation and asked them to provide job to everyone. BDO also ordered them to live in peace with everybody at Panchayat. EO and JE requested the BDO to give them some day's time. When they said that they needed work instantly, the EO, JE and Sarpanch started a new work of road construction from Gailjore to Turungagard. BDO then went to Gailjore and asked the Sarpanch there to provide jobs to everyone on the basis of job demand by 5.30 in the evening, the same day. The job demands were catered to and the specifications explained on the road constructions. The newspaper reporter present in the meeting got the issue published as a good article the next day in the local newspaper as a typical case of justice against “no jobs” under the Rural Employment Guarantee. This unique but first ever successful experience of the SAC in Meghdega Gram Panchayat of Sundergarh District strengthened it as a model for replication.



Centre for Youth and Social Development (CYSD)

E-1 Institutional Area, Gangadhar Meher Marg, P.O. RRL

Bhubaneswar 751 013, Odisha, India

Email: cysd@cysd.org, Visti Us: www.cysd.org