

Minimum principles of Social Accountability auditing Standard

The following are the minimum principles of transparency and accountability that are required to be protected and strengthened by any set of standards defined for social audit:

Access to Information (Jaankari)

(i) **Understanding entitlements:** In order to enable and empower citizens- individually and collectively- to effectively perform the function of monitoring the implementation of interventions rolled out in their name, various conditions need to be fulfilled. These include a widespread understanding of the entitlements, of the prescribed time frames, of who's responsible for what, of the prescribed standards and rates, of the decision making processes, of the possibility for appeal, complaint or grievance redressal, and of the reasonably expected outputs and outcomes

(ii) **Transparency and Accountability:** Concepts like transparency and accountability must be framed in a manner in which they are governed by universal and inclusive processes. This is essential to empower every individual or group with the right to monitor a programme and help facilitate beneficiaries' claim their rights

(iii) **Equal and open access to Information:** There must be equal and open access of information to all citizens and should preclude any attempt that may restrict/exclude a citizen from using information or from having to prove their locus standii.

(iv) **Display and Dissemination of Information (*jaankari*):** All relevant information regarding programmes and public institutions must be proactively displayed (Mandatory) and made accessible through different modes and medium, ensuring local language compatibility and keeping in mind the needs of the semi-literate, the illiterate and the differently abled.

Information must be authenticated, updated with reasonable periodicity, and put across in a manner and format that is easy to understand. Towards that end, special proformas and formats need to be developed.

Relevant information must be appropriately displayed at the level of a village, Sub-State, State and National level.

(v) **Multimedia communication (*jaankari*):** Recognising that, despite best efforts, both the modes of providing information and of getting feedback can be corrupted or blocked, multiple modes and routes must be used in order to make it progressively difficult to inhibit the free flow of information to and from the people. Whereas focus must be on using as far as possible culturally appropriate modes of communication, especially traditional modes with which the local people are familiar, the advantages promised by new and emerging technologies must also not be ignored. Of especial relevance are mobile phones and social media which have effectively permeated rural households and promise an innovative, reliable and quick method of simultaneously communicating with a large number of people.

Involvement and participation of citizens in the process of decision making and arriving at justifiable output (Bhagidari)

(vi) **Access to marginalized group:** There may be a need to specially empower and facilitate certain marginalized groups to access information through awareness programmes and educating them. Geographical remoteness is a factor which makes a society marginalized one. This should also be taken in to consideration.

(vii) In all cases of pro-active disclosure or collective monitoring, there is an inherent need for facilitation by external agencies/individuals/groups

(viii) **Open decision making:** It must also be kept in mind that, as far as possible, all decision making should be done in public in the full view of all interested stake holders. This is the best way of ensuring that decisions are not only fair but also appear to be fair.

Protection of citizens (Suraksha)

(ix) It is important to have a secure forum for free and fair discussion for the Gram Sabha. This should be done through liaison with District Administration/Police.

Citizen's right to be heard (Sunwai)

(x) There should be a mechanism to address the grievances of the citizens and to take suitable action. The follow up needs to be intimated to the citizens during the next hearing.

Collective Platform (Janta ka Manch)

(xi) Presence of collective platform to strengthen and substantiate the citizens voice (*Jantakamanch*) which will be a safe and secure forum for free and fair discussion. For this, awareness programmes, wall paintings etc to display and disseminate information will be useful so that participation of public on their own issues will result in development free of any corruption.

Report Dissemination (Prasar)

(xii) The findings of Social Audit should be in access of public knowledge through public platform using traditional needs as well as new and emerging technologies.

(xiii) Therefore, in brief, there is a need to embody the following six non-negotiables to give strength to any collective exercise of monitoring, such as a social audit:

- Access to information (*Jaankari*)
- Involvement and participation of citizens in the process of decision making and arriving at a justifiable outcome (*Bhagidari*)
- Protection of citizens (*Suraksha*)
- Citizen's right to be heard (*Sunwai*)
- Collective Platform (*Janta ka Manch*)
- Report Dissemination (*Prasaar*)