

# Social Audit under National Food Security Act

## National Food Security Act 2013

Adequate food and nutrition is every citizen's right. With this in mind and also keeping the note of growing demands to take care of situation of food insecurity among people, the Government of India implemented the National Food Security Act (NFSA) on September 10, 2013 with an aim to provide food security to all citizens of India. With the implementation of this Act, crores of people have received their right to food. Now, people of the country have the right to get food grains at subsidized rates from the fair price shops as per the entitlements or eligibility criteria defined under the act. The provisions of MDM scheme and Supplementary nutrition component of anganwadi services scheme enforced under umbrella ICDS are a part of NFSA viz. provision for hot cooked food for children 6-14 years of age at schools and for children 3-6 years of age at anganwadi centers, and provision of take home ration to children under three years of age, pregnant and lactating women. This Act also ensures provision of maternity benefits of Rs. 6000 to pregnant and lactating mothers.

But enacting a law is another matter and implementing it effectively is a big challenge. It is important to ensure effective implementation of the law in rural and urban sectors and monitor, review and evaluate that the provisions made under the Act are received by the eligible beneficiaries. The Act also contains provisions for setting up of grievance redressal mechanism at the District and State levels. Separate provisions have been made for ensuring transparency and accountability.

## What is Social Audit?

Social audit is an audit of any scheme or program intended at welfare of the society implementation of schemes/programs in reference to the rights and benefits given under government schemes whether they are received by all eligible beneficiaries and results of providing these benefits. Social audit is conducted by the society and beneficiaries themselves to look into questions like whether the systems needed for proper implementation of the schemes have been put in place or not? Whether any eligible person has been deprived of the basic right? Social audit also helps understand whether the problems that are arising are related to implementation or there is a need to make policy-level changes. The basic objective is to ensure the accountability of government and agencies implementing the program. Therefore social audit could be looked upon as a basic tool to make conducive atmosphere for ensuring proper and complete delivery of benefits of schemes and program to the beneficiaries.

Thus, Social audit is actually a democratic process, where government and society together monitor a program and try to ensure that the targets envisaged under a scheme are met. It is also an effective medium for empowerment of deprived sections.

## Provision of Social Audit under NFSA 2013

There is a provision of social audit of all schemes under the National Food Security Act 2013. The Act mentions that:

1. "Social audit means a process where the public can in a group monitor or evaluate the implementation of any program or scheme" (Chapter 1, Section 20)

2. Every local authority or any other authority or body that the state government has authorized, would from time to time conduct or get conducted social audit of fair price shops, targeted public distribution system and other welfare schemes and in case, where the state government so intends, would publicize the results and take suitable action

### **Five Focal Points of Social Audit Process**

1. What are the legal rights of people?
2. Whether people have been informed about their rights and the system for implementation of the law?
3. Whether all the eligible beneficiaries are included in the scheme? Are they facing any impediments?
4. What steps have been taken to ensure food rights to most deprived sections (on basis of caste, gender, livelihood options, poverty and others)?
5. Whether the people have been informed that they can make complaints regarding any problem and where to make such complaints? If complaint was made, what action was taken? Was it resolved? In how many days and what actions were taken against persons responsible?

### **Phases of Social Audit**

Following would be the broad phases for social audit under National Food Security Act 2013 -

1. Everyone should be convinced that social audit is a positive step for proper implementation of law and schemes and to provide actual rights to the people.
2. Social audit should be conducted at least once in a year at Gram Sabha level.
3. Gram Sabha, vigilance committee constituted under the Food Security Act 2013 and community would have to take the initiative for conducting social audit
4. Necessary documents should be obtained from the related department at least 15 days prior to conducting social audit. For this, social audit worker/committee should be formed at all panchayats.
5. So as to conduct social audit, a group (that mandatorily includes beneficiaries, women, and representatives from SC-ST communities) needs to be formed at community level that is ready to be actively associated with the process of social audit.
6. Collecting format required for data collection and gathering necessary information from the process of social audit (there should be clarity about source of information, documents and persons related from where the information would be collected, verifying of the information thus obtained before use, information collection related to beneficiaries, families, community and implementing agencies should be done in details that can be substantiated with optimal proofs and evidences.)
7. Discussion on evidence-based information/verified information and their analysis: Analyzing the information thus collected, taking back the analyzed information with results, conclusions and recommendations of the findings to the communities/related families and disseminating each information in detail. Representatives of department/persons responsible for implementation of the laws or schemes/should also be part of the dissemination process as they should be given fair chance to put their point too.
8. So as to ensure accountability, results and conclusions of the findings to be made public along with evidences and taking suitable action within time limit. Based on the findings of social audit, meetings to be conducted in the presence of officers responsible for taking action on the basis of findings from social audit/vigilance committee/district grievance officer. The results, conclusions

and recommendations of the findings of social audit should be shared with media and the action should be followed up.

## **Main Points for Conducting Social Audit for Different Schemes**

### **■ Social Audit of Public Distribution System**

- Whether the provisions made under Act/scheme/program related to public distribution system are being received by eligible beneficiaries and if not why?
- Who are getting the benefits? How much benefit is being received? Is the benefit in accordance with the Act?
- Is anyone being deprived of ration and other material? If yes, who and why?
- Are the quality standards being taken care of as per the provisions made under the act for the ration and other material distributed through fair price shops?
- If someone has made an application for inclusion of his/her name, whether it has been registered or not? If not, why?
- Is there any kind of discrimination in receiving of entitled rights/benefits or provision of benefits as per the act? Are non-eligible people getting benefits?
- Whether necessary framework, system, training and infrastructure, is available for the proper implementation of the scheme/program?
- Whether the monitoring and vigilance systems constituted under the schemes active and functional? For example, whether the vigilance committee has been formed? Does the members of the constituted vigilance committee have information about the functioning of the committee?
- How much ration was received by the fair price shop in the past months and how much was distributed?

### **■ Social Audit of Anganwadi Services Component under the Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services**

- Whether all eligible children are registered under the scheme? Whether all the children registered are getting the benefit?
- Number of children below six years of age who are registered at anganwadi centers and number of children who have been left out.
- Whether the anganwadi is functioning regularly?
- How is the quantity and quality of hot cooked meal served to children 3-6 years of age and take home ration given to children under three years of age?
- How is the quality and quantity of take home ration served to pregnant women and lactating mothers?
- What is the status of growth monitoring and promotion and identification of malnutrition in children below six years of age?
- What is the situation of safe drinking water and sanitation in anganwadi centers?
- What is the status of efforts put by anganwadi workers to promote breastfeeding?
- How much supplementary nutrition in form of take home ration was received by anganwadi centers in past months and how much was distributed?

## ■ Social Audit of Mid-Day Meal Scheme

- What is the attendance of children in school versus what is the status of distribution of mid-day meal viz. how many children were given the meals?
- How is the quantity and quality of meals and interest of children in the food served?
- Record of the self-help groups engaged in cooking mid-day meals. How much raw material was received and how much used?
- What is the status of equality and discrimination while serving the MDM?

## ■ Social Audit of Maternal Rights (Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojna)

- What is the number of registered pregnant and lactating mothers under the scheme? Is there any denial or was someone deprived from taking benefits of the scheme?
- Whether all the eligible women beneficiaries of village registered? If yes, whether they have received the due installments?
- What is the number of ante-natal and post-natal check-ups done for every registered women? Whether all registered mothers are receiving antenatal and postnatal check-ups?
- What is the status of institutional delivery and quality of delivery/childbirth services?
- What is the status of neonatal care services and immunization?
- Is there is any kind of misbehavior reported?

## Points to Remember

- Social audit is an initiative to be taken by community and beneficiaries themselves.
- Under social audit each point is examined in front of the people on the basis of the evidence.
- It is duty of all the departments responsible for implementation of the act/scheme/program for providing all the scheme related information and documents to community / beneficiaries / social audit groups.
- Social audit should be conducted every year.
- Each point/complaint that has emerged out during the process of social audit should be resolved within time limit.

**The National Food Security Act is for you.**

**Take responsibility of social audit for its proper and optimal implementation.**



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