

Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment
Department of Social Justice & Department
Government of India

Minutes of 1st Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB)

The First meeting of the Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB) under the chairpersonship of Secretary, SJE – Chairperson, SAAB was held at DAIC, New Delhi on 18th January, 2024 for gaining insights, inputs and suggestions to make Social Audit more effective for Schemes under D/o SJE.

2. The meeting commenced with an address by Director – NISD, who extended a warm welcome to all members, representatives of various departments and NRCSA team for a fruitful discussion on the ongoing process of social audits initiated by D/o SJE to make it more effective.

3. After the self-introduction by the members, DDG (Statistics), D/o SJE – Convenor, SAAB presented an overview of social audit journey of the Department and highlighted the importance of Social Audit in establishing accountability and transparency in the implementation of the schemes under D/o SJE as well as creating awareness on the process and entitlements related to the schemes. She informed that 20 out of 26 states have already initiated social audits and almost 50% target out of total target of 1054 for FY-2023-24 has been achieved till date. The important role that the SAAB members had in further strengthening the social audit process of the Department based on the learning, experiences and challenges faced was elaborated. Emphasis was placed on the need for frequent inputs from the members of the advisory body to enhance the robustness of social audit process.

4. Secretary, SJE in his key note address as Chairperson, SAAB congratulated the PD and NRCSA team for taking forward the social audits in the states and completion of 50% of the target. He laid out emphasis on the important aspects and purpose of initiating social audits of the schemes under D/o SJE which included – (i) to ensure transparency of the schemes that are being implemented by D/o SJE; (ii) to provide an oversight mechanism whereby people are made aware and acquainted with the schemes; (iii) to ensure that the voices of citizens are heard and corrective actions are taken based on feedback of people, which adds to the credibility of the

programme in the eyes of the people and establishes faith in governance and (iv) to improve the overall governance related issues and scheme's effectiveness.

5. Joint Secretary and Financial Advisor, D/o SJE - Member, SAAB shared insights into the approach for Social Audit of Schemes under D/o SJE and the challenges and issues faced while designing the approach for different schemes under D/o SJE as each scheme is different in nature and caters to the beneficiaries of different age and social groups. He referred to the important task done by the core committee to finalise the approach based on Social accountability principles laid down by joint task force of C&AG and MoRD in this regard. He also elaborated on the difference between the role of Programme Management Unit (PMU), who conduct surprise inspections for the purpose of providing inputs for release of funds to the institutions and Social Audit Process, which is more comprehensive, participative and backed with evidences. He also lauded the efforts done by NIRD &PR in recruitment and establishment of NRCSA initially and in conducting various activities to take this process forward. He also appreciated valuable feedback and inputs by M/o RD on the approach being adopted now.

6. The NRCSA Team presented the process, impact and challenges of conducting social audits of schemes under D/o SJE. The team also presented the schemes that are being covered for social audits in FY 2023-24. The team informed about the districts identified, the status of social audits completed so far, key processes adopted and new initiatives taken such as framing a media engagement policy, social audit Management Information System (MIS) and Advisory for action. The examples of various challenges and cases of instant impact of social audits were presented where implementation agencies have initiated course corrections during social audit process itself. Besides, special audits conducted and facilitated by NRCSA for one residential school at Karnataka and 'death of sanitation workers', were also mentioned.

7. Fruitful discussions were held with the SAAB Members and representatives from other departments and academic institutions. Many valuable suggestions were provided by them and were requested to also provide wholesome suggestions after the meeting in due course of time. Some inputs are as follows:

- The SAAB Members appreciated the initiative of framing Policy for engagement with media during social audit process under D/o SJE, as dissemination is one of the important principles of social accountability and felt that it should be widely publicised and be made a part of the Auditing Standards which is now in the process of reframing.
- It was suggested that the proposed Advisory for Action is an important initiative but the action taken protocols and the process of review of ATRs should also be developed simultaneously.
- The naming of District level hearing as District Social Justice Assembly was felt to be a good move and it was suggested to develop comprehensive social justice approach for social audits of schemes under D/o SJE in future.
- The components of Information, Education & Communication (IEC) should be linked with social audits to generate more awareness at the grass root level.
- The SAAB Members to be involved in district and state level hearings as well as in Action Taken Review Committees.
- It was suggested that the real objective of social audits should be achieved without compromising on the core principles of social audit and the tangible outcomes of social audit to be analysed and pursued.
- The scope of social audit should also focus on capturing the challenges faced by the implementing agency and the resource persons should be sensible to understand the vulnerability of the marginalised section during process of verification and sharing of reports.
- The Members suggested that there lies the need for making available all the relevant information related to the schemes before the commencement of audits to the teams so that the 'informed auditor' can become an empowered auditor.
- There was a suggestion to conduct a sensitisation training for district social welfare officials for implementing scheme more effectively & providing support in social audit process and to involve social work institutions in the social audit process.
- The Members suggested that the social audit MIS being designed needs to be handled with caution regarding what type of information to be made available for whom, so that the chances of its misuse can be reduced.

- The planning and finalisation of targets before the next financial years was also recommended so that SAUs can plan the audits in a better way.
8. The meeting concluded with remarks from Secretary, SJE encouraging the publication of articles on social audit process and to circulate the annual report with other departments for their suggestion and information.
10. The NRCSA team extended a vote of thanks for the active participation and valuable suggestions from all the Members.

List of attendees attached in Annexure –A

List of participants for the 1st Social Audit Advisory Body (SAAB) Meeting held on 18th January 2024		
Sr.	Name	Designation
1	Sh. Saurabh Garg	Secretary, SJE Chairperson SAAB
2	Sh. Sanjay Pandey	JS&FA, D/o SJE Member SAAB
3	Ms. Pratima Gupta	DDG (Statistics Division) Convenor SAAB
4	Dr. Sidh Kumar	Director-NISD, D/o SJE
5	Prof. (Dr.) Nupur Tiwary	Chair Professor Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Chair in Social Justice, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi Member SAAB
6	Dr. C Dheeraja	Associate Professor and I/C, Centre for Social Audit, NIRD-PR, Hyderabad Member SAAB
7	Mr. Mohd. Tarique	Assistant Professor, TISS Mumbai Member SAAB
8	Dr. Sudhir Maske	Assistant Professor Delhi School of Social Work, Delhi Member SAAB
9	Mr. Suresh Chandra Tamta	Dy. Secretary, D/o PWD – Repr. Member, SAAB
10	Mr. Dinesh Kumar Gupta	Deputy Director, M/o WCD – Repr. Member, SAAB
11	Mr. Chand Ram	Under Secretary, M/o RD – Repr. Member, SAAB
12	Ms. Ranju Tulsi	Project Officer, M/o RD – Repr. Member, SAAB
13	Mr. Vinesh Pachnanda	Dy. Secretary (Statistics Division), D/o SJE
14	Ms. Archana Shukla	Assistant Director (Statistics Division), D/o SJE
15	Mr. Gurjeet Singh	Mission Manager, NRCSA-D/o SJE
16	Mr. Ujjwal Pahurkar	Project Officer, NRCSA-D/o SJE
17	Mr. Karamjit Singh	Project Officer, NRCSA-D/o SJE
18	Ms. Vivika Shohe	Project Officer, NRCSA-D/o SJE
19	Ms. G. Anjali	Project Accountant cum Assistant, NRCSA-D/o SJE