# Social Audit

## A handy tool for promoting Transparency and Accountability in Public Service

Social Audit is a citizen-led process for verifying effectiveness of an action. It is used for overseeing implementation, evaluating results, reporting on and improving organizations' performance and behavior- the way it deals with the clients. The process ensures people's participation as well as effective engagement. It is implemented through specific methodologies and emphasizes on program rather than financial aspects. The process promotes transparency at different levels. Social Audit identifies the errors or limitations of the development project or the service and suggests for necessary changes for the results it expects.

### Advantages of Social Audit

- The community is aware of their rights to access any information from their concerned agencies.
- Creating a culture of openness in the local government, by enabling the participants to expect and demand the same from other agencies, including government.
- Institutionalize the practice of good governance by incorporating the principles of transparency and accountability.
- Create objective and strategic pressure on development actors to deliver public good
- Citizens become aware about their rights and collective strength.
- The development agencies are made accountable
- Raises the voice of the community, supports good initiatives, and creates social pressure against corruption and financial misuse.
- The development actors are aware about their weaknesses
- Reduces miss-trust and negativism because it makes all information in the public domain
- Prevents financial miss-use & corruption
- Increase people's confidence in development process
- Resolves conflicts, if conflicts exist due to lack of transparency
- Creates a. sense of community ownership

- Supports the process of de-centralization

### Steps of Social Audit

**MJF has customized SA process to make this compatible to the institutional services, projects and communities of Bangladesh. Find below the steps are being followed in Social Audit Process:**

1. Preparatory work such as selection of project, selection of stakeholders, the audit materials and methodology of social audit.
2. To select particular scheme or organization.
3. Formation of audit team –preferable volunteer engagement and conducting survey.
4. Developing tools for information collection, prepare checklist.
5. Information collection, analysis and preservation.
6. Organize citizen dialogue for sharing the data.
7. Implementation of the dialogue outputs.

MJF has been conducting SA on 100s of public service delivery units every year. It quickly adds value to a project's internal monitoring and evaluation, and feeds valuable information to project management and decision makers to make changes as necessary. MJF exercised social accountability tools for the World Bank financed projects in Bangladesh implemented in 2011 to 2015 on infrastructure development, health, education and local government. Although these projects differed in scope, the actions were focused on empowering beneficiaries to demand greater transparency and accountability in resource use, delivery of services and grievance resolution. In COPE and EPR projects, 2012-2022, MJF applied Social Accountability for improving local governance and public services including social security programs, health, agriculture, WASH, primary education, women development, fisheries, and livestock services. MJF gained a very positive experience in utilizing Social

Audit by the local citizen groups and concerned service delivery institutions in resolving most of the problems and limitations related to services. It is an effective process for empowering the marginalized people who often remain unheard.

### Below is an example of Social Audit that helps attaining recognition of ideal community clinic.

Rakudia "Community Clinic (CC), one out of 23 CC was established in 2000 at Rakudia village of Dehergati union in Babuganj upazila.



The citizen led social audit (Dec 2020) findings reported unhygienic toilets, crisis of safe drinking water, unhygienic premises, no seating arrangement, lack of accessibility of disabled and visually impaired people, broken floor, and absence of breast-feeding corner etc.

Therefore, citizens have raised these issues in a dialogue with upazila administration. The upazila administration has implemented few projects to solve the issues.  For instance, a deep tube well was installed to ensure safe drinking water; ensured infrastructural maintenance; installed ramp to ensure accessibility of disables; and breast-feeding corner.

Collaboration among the LG representatives, Health officials, CHCP, community clinic management committees and patients has led a better health care services to the community people.

The social audit is proved as an effective tool for better service delivery. The MJF experience and learning contributed towards transparency and accountability in project areas and this can be replicated by the others.

Being an easy-to-implement social accountability process, MJF and some other NGOs and development partners have been using Social Audit for the local level public services and project management in Bangladesh for many years.  However, like public



hearing or citizen charter, Government of Bangladesh has yet to circulate a guidance about the implementation of the Social Audit.

### Challenges of holding an effective Social Audit

- Making the duty bearers of the front line offices understand the benefits of Social Audit.
- Forming the Social Audit Team with competent and reasonable persons.
- Setting a guideline for social auditing.
- Making the team members oriented on the guideline and the scopes of the institution as well
- Reporting on the findings
- Linking with the interface and advocacy dialogue

**Recommendations**

- Social Audit can be accepted as a mandatory option in the operational manual of  public services, development projects and social security schemes.
- IMED can include Social Audit as mandatory criteria for its evaluation to social protection schemes/programs.
- Social Security training manuals to be developed by the GoB agencies/NGOs can include Social Audit for better understanding on this issue by the beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

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