**Title** Impact of Social Audit on Village Development – a case study in Ranchi district, Jharkhand

**Topic of the case study:** Social Audit – a pragmatic tool used for raising villagers' awareness of claiming due entitlements and surveillance of government schemes implemented for public welfare.

Name of the researcher/ organisation: Dr.Elyas Majid, Dr.Seema Nath, Shramajivi Unnayan

**Thematic area of the case:** An overview of proper utilization of *Mukhia* fund and status of social security scheme(s) through Social Audit

Name of the Gram Panchayat, District, State: Sodag Panchayat (Namkum block), Ranchi District, Jharkhand

#### **Abbreviation**

SA Social Audit

TISCO Tata Iron and Steel Company
PRI Panchayati Raj Institution

SAU Social Audit Unit

MGNREGS Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

ER Elected Representative
BRP Block Resource Person
DRP District Resource Person

SC Scheduled Caste
ST Scheduled Tribe
BPL Below Poverty Line

HH HouseHold

PS Panchayat Samiti

# Glossary

Chabutara Permanent sitting place mainly for village meeting purposes

Chapakal Hand pump
Dadi Paved road

DobhaShallow water bodyGram PradhanHead of the villageGram SabhaVillage council

Gram Sewak Volunteer working for the village Jal Mitra Local water management volunteer

Kray Samiti Council to look after buying-selling process Krishi Mitra Volunteer working for farmers' welfare

Lal Card Card to avail subsidised publicly distributed food grains

Mukhiya Village council chief

Murram A form of clay material used for road surfaces

Pakki Nalee Permanent drainage system

Panchayat Bhaban Panchayat building

Panchayat Samiti Block level rural local-self government system

Panchayat Sewak Volunteer working for the Panchayat

Pathh Road

Pragya KendraCommon Service Center (CSC) providing digital servicesPradhan MantriGovernment aided rural road construction programme

Gram Sadak Yojana

Sthayee Samiti Authority to implement and monitor programmes and schemes of PS

Yojana Scheme

#### **Executive Summary**

Social Audit (SA), a self-operated audit process by the common people to assess the developmental works entitled for the public has become an important part of development process. Through SA the development works issued in public interest and carrying out by various government departments working in different levels (state, district, block, Panchayat etc.) are observed, analyzed and concluded if the proposed work in selected area is going in appropriate way. SA not only judges the status of the proposed work in designated area but also cover several other factors such as the –i) way, ii) purpose, iii) present status of the work, iv)if completed or not, iv) if not, then how much is left etc. SA covers both quantitative and qualitative facts for analysis as per prescribed indicators and agencies/ individuals responsible for carrying out SA in particular case(s) comes under the process, rules and regulations of the same. It also directs to educate, aware and empower the mass for claiming their due rights. SA helps in fact finding, fault finding and in-finding followed by scheme preparation, awareness building and effective implementation of the same so that beneficiaries get their facilities within due time. It minimizes the gap between the common people and people responsible for carrying out the due work.

The case study presenting success story of SA is carried out in Sodag Panchayat, Namkum block in Ranchi district. SA was done by the *gram sabha* and Panchayat representatives along with SAU appointed by the State Government for assessing various developmental works done under *Mukhiya* Fund in the year 2016-17. Villagers, Panchayat representatives, members of *gram sabha*, Block level personnel participated in the process. The special feature of the SA done in the Panchayat was that auditing was performed serially on each scheme implemented in the Panchayat, physical verification of each construction was observed, feed-backs from the beneficiaries was noted and their view, advices, complaints was documented.

The government schemes carrying out through Sodag Panchayat was closely observed and issues regarding i) construction of Panchayat building, ii) Murram Yojana (scheme to construct dirt roads), iii) absence of register books, iv) inactive Pragya Kendra (Common Service Center or CSC), v) furniture numbering missing in Panchayat office and construction of vi) roads, vii) sewage system, viii) chabutara (sitting platform, mainly for village meeting purposes), ix) handpumps were raised and attended. Also transfer of wages in the wrong bank accounts of workers under MGNREGS were also addressed. Required measures were proposed verbally and directed to complete those within scheduled time. Interaction with the villagers confirmed that part of the due works has been done accordingly. Through this SA, villagers who used to take these schemes as kind acts of the government, are now discussing these as their due entitlements. Due to continuous discussions about the schemes in gram sabha, they are now well aware of the fact that they are the planners of implementing these schemes for their own benefits and they are playing the role of leaders to accomplish the same. Following this awareness they actively participate and share responsibilities among themselves. If the schemes prepared by the gram sabha is changed by block and/or district level personnel, villagers immediately act on it and if the changed scheme get applied in field before villagers can intervene then the issues is raised during SA. In this way the results and effects of SA is working to impart a visible benefits of developmental schemes.

#### Introduction

Social Audit (SA) has become an important part of societal development process. In reality SA is basically a self-operated audit process to assess the developmental works entitled for the public by the common people for themselves. Through SA the development works issued in public interest and carrying out by various government departments in different stages (state, district, block, Panchayat etc.) are observed, analysed and concluded if the proposed work in selected area is going in appropriate way. SA not only judge the status of the proposed work in designated area but also cover several other factors such as –i) the way the work has been carried out, ii) if the aim/ purpose of the work has been fulfilled, iii) the present status of the work, if completed or not, iv) if not, then how much is left. SA covers both quantitative and qualitative facts for analysis as per prescribed indicators and agencies/ individuals responsible for carrying out SA in particular case(s) comes under the process, rules and regulations of the same. Briefly the principles of SA are as follow:

- 1. SA must be carried out by independent institution.
- 2. The responsible agency should not have any interface in the process.
- 3. The implementing agency supports in delivering all necessary information.
- 4. The work done by the Panchayat is observed by gram sabha as SA.
- 5. Representative of the implementing agency must be present during *gram sabha* and public hearing.
- 6. Often SA is carried out by agencies providing the funds.

SA is ought to be carried out with transparency and makes the doer accountable for their activities. The purpose of SA is not only to observe and analyse the quality and quantity of public work but also to educate, aware and empower the mass for claiming their due rights. Through this platform common people are informed about their due entitlements and how to fulfil the same. SA facilitates program implementation by participatory method and this approach in turn assists accomplishing the developmental works to become more useful for public welfare. It minimizes the gap between the common people and people responsible for carrying out the due work. To solve the administrative and technical problems SA is an important tool. It also imposes vigilance to minimize corruption. SA helps in fact finding, fault finding and in-finding followed by scheme preparation, awareness building and effective implementation of the same so that beneficiaries get their facilities within due time. Democracy is strengthened by this effective tool.

It is interesting to note that in 1979, SA was initiated first by Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited (TISCO), Jamshedpur, Jharkhand (then Bihar). But SA gains a legal statue after the 73rd amendment of the Constitution relating to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), wherein power of auditing the accounts of Panchayat are clearly employed. Launching of various government schemes and the decentralized governance both remained unsuccessful in changing the lifestyle of marginalised people of the society for a long time, the prime reason being their lack of awareness and fragile voices to claim their due rights. As a part of State Government initiatives, when SA became mandatory to monitor and verify the social performances using allotted funds by the PRIs the voices were strengthened to demand greater accountability from officials and service providers. As per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in 1993, *gram sabha* is indirectly empowered to conduct SA in addition with other functions. As per the Rule 4 of Audit of Schemes Rules, 2011 "Each State Government

shall identify or establish an independent organization, "Social Audit Unit" (SAU) to facilitate conduct of the Social Audit of MGNREGS works." According to this the SAU in Jharkhand takes part in implementing SA through its organised structure having District and Block Resource Person (DRP and BRP respectively).

# Reason behind choosing the area:

The present case study was carried out in Sodag Panchayat, Namkum Block to assess the impact of SA in villages.

Sodag panchayat is one of the most backward areas in Jharkhand. As per Census 2011 the demographic details of the selected Panchayat consisting of 8 villages are given in Table 1. Most part of the area is surrounded by hills and people are engaged in seasonal agricultural work. The absence of irrigation system, lack of awareness about government social security schemes make them migrants to work as daily labourer for earning their livelihoods. The initiatives of elected representatives (ERs) have catalysed the process of SA for social well-being. The before and after situation of SA in the selected area are observed to bear distinguishable changes in the context of elevated mass awareness. The dissemination of information about the due entitlements to the grass-root level has brought fourth visible changes.

Table 1:

Village	No.	Total		<u>SC</u>		ST		% Litera	acy	Total		Main		Mar.	
Name	<u>of</u>	Popula	ation_	Popula	ation_	Popula	ation_	Rate		Work	<u>ter</u>	Work	<u>cer</u>	Work	<u>cer</u>
	<u>HH</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>
Banda	27	82	71	0	0	82	71	85.71	64.41	64	30	30	29	4	1
Garsul	167	503	459	0	0	488	450	78.64	52.81	247	228	7	7	240	221
Jamgain	165	454	495	0	0	404	445	80.20	61.98	219	201	106	50	113	151
Hethdahu	123	352	342	3	3	349	339	66.22	47.60	158	43	151	28	7	15
Huringdaag	62	181	182	0	0	148	147	65.13	45.81	71	25	47	12	24	13
Ghuthiya	105	293	317	4	8	172	192	80.08	56.57	160	83	42	24	118	59
Sohdag	318	866	805	0	0	816	749	74.86	39.77	439	434	144	31	295	403
Upardahu	54	149	163	0	0	115	134	80.15	70.14	68	8	66	8	2	0

HH: Household; M: Male; F: Female; Mar. Worker: Marginal Worker

As evident from the Census, the Panchayat is ST populated. The term 'Main Worker' suggests people having employment or earning opportunity more than 6-Months while people involved in marginal activity providing livelihood for less than 6-months are categorised under 'Marginal Worker'. The main worker are either cultivators (owner or co-owner) while rest are agricultural labourer. As per the Panchayat Report card prepared under SA-MNREGA 2016-2017, the detail obtained is given in Table 2. The male, female population of ST was not recorded.

#### Methodology

To document the case study on SA, participation of villagers through group discussion was requested. People from all caste irrespective of their gender, age and educational background actively participated in the process and expressed their views on different issues. Primary data was collected from the respondents (PRI members, beneficaries) through structured

questionnaire. Secondary data has been collected from different sources such as muster rolls, registers, articles and official websites. The data was analysed using both text and video versions. It was further verified by cross-questionnaire set before documenting. The details of the persons considered for individual interview are given in Table 3.

Table 3:

Name of the	Age	Social	Economical	Years of experience in the participation of
Interviewee		background	background	social and political institutions and
		_	_	motivating factors
Mrs. Parvati	38	Mukhiya of	Social	She remained member of the Panchayat
Tigga		Sodag	service	Samiti for 5-years before being elected as
		Panchayat		the Mukhiya of Sodag Panchayat in 2015.
				Her quality of connecting with the villagers
				popularises her among them. Being a
				woman, she easily reaches other women of
				her community and better understands their
				needs. She is very active and diligently
				accomplishes the due works. The trust built
				between her and rest of the villagers fasten
				this process and they easily approach her to
				let her know if something goes wrong by
				the responsible agencies while working on
) ( D) (T)	2.5	)	G : 1	government schemes.
Mr.Phagu Tigga	35	Member of	Social	He remained <i>Krishi Mitra</i> for 8-years before
		Panchayat	service	elected as member of Panchayat <i>Samiti</i> in
		Samiti		2015. Coming from a farmer family, he has
				been helping other farmers for uplifting
				their economical condition by providing
				agricultural materials (pump-set, seeds, manure etc.), liasioning with the bank for
				providing loans and trying to make linkages
				for farmers' training programs. He is also
				involved in opening bank accounts for the
				villagers working for MGNREGS.
Mr.Rimish Tirki	39	Gram	Farmer	He has been working as <i>Gram Pradhan</i> in
	57	Pradhan of	1 dillioi	Garsul village, Sodag Panchayat for the last
		Sodag		10-years and is active to look after the
		village		works going on in his village under
				government schemes.
Mr.Shanicharwa	27	Krishi	Service	He is the newly appointed <i>Krishi Mitra</i> and
Tirki		Mitra		has been working with the farmers in Garsul
				and Banda village of Sodag Panchayat for
				the last 2-years.
Mr.Tileswar	52	Ward	Farmer	His active participation in Gram Sabha

Tirki		member		meetings voicing on behalf of other villagers makes him ward member in 2015. He continues to work for village development purposes assessing the need of	
				the villagers.	
Mrs.Pramila	47	Villager	Home-	She is a home-maker and got <i>lal card</i> as	
Tirki			maker	designated for BPL families through the	
				Panchayat.	
Mr.Arjun Tigga	45	22	Farmer	All of them got necessary assistance from	
Mr. Puran Tigga	45	22	Farmer	Krishi Mitra for agricultural purposes an	
Mr.Tetra Gari	35	22	Farmer	the farming scenario has been changed	
				positively.	
Mr.Karma Tigga	27	22	MNREGA	They used to be seasonal farmers and	
			worker	migrate once the agricultural work was	
Mr.Gopal Tirki	30	22	22	over. After applying for the job card they	
Mr.Gondla Tirki	25	22	22	are now working under MGNREGS and	
Mrs.Tetri Tigga	24	22	22	regularly get their due payments.	

# **Case presentation**

# Situation before:

Earlier the utilization of allotted *Mukhiya* fund had been seen to be used in a biased nature. The actual requirement was mostly got unnoticed, instead an unknown mechanism which was preferential in nature, was deployed to embezzle the fund without any prior planning. The result was particular area-based accumulation of assets with/without proper need-assessment of the area and/or beneficiaries. SA performed then was mostly confined to Panchayat office without the mass participation and was devoid of physical verification of infrastructural development. The lack of awareness among the villagers, different committee members allowed the situation to linger for a longer time period.

# Triggering situation:

The grudge of year-long deprivation united the villagers and was manifested as the result of newly elected representatives in the last Panchayat election 2015.

# Changes brought and activities performed by the newly elected *Mukhiya* after assuming her office:

The first priority was given to proper utilization of *Mukhiya* funds for the social welfare of villagers based on their needs. Within the last two years the close interaction of *Mukhiya* with other villagers not only resulted in better implementation of various government schemes for public welfare, but also brought a sense of responsibility among them to look after the infrastructural development carried out under government schemes.

# Support from:

The major support is from the villagers who got benefitted after a long time of deprivation and Panchayat volunteers like *Gram Sewak, Krishi Mitra, Jal Mitra* catalyse the process of reversing the situation. Linkages with the block office also plays major role in conducting the changes. The co-operation offered by the State Government appointed SAU is also helpful.

#### **Outcome**

### Problem faced by the ER:

A power dynamics was seemed to exist earlier causing individual people centric development instead of involving the community and the oppressed voices remained silent for many years due to absence of a appropriate platform. People working for village welfare and having leadership qualities were finally elected as Panchayat representatives.

## Adaptive measures taken:

The newly elected members decided to prioritize proper utilisation of *Mukhiya* Fund after planning, discussion and need-assessment of the area. The problem of misplacement of Panchayat office assets was also addressed. Also the detailed information related to a particular scheme, like describing total road length, area covered, amount of raw materials required, daily labour wages, starting and finishing date for *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* would be made public by writing and displaying signboard at the working place.

#### Outcome:

Implementation of this initiative works as an important tool for information dissemination among the villagers. They have also started taking the responsibility of invigilator to observe the work carrying on in their villages/hamlets. They promptly come in touch with the ERs if any malpractices are found and the concerned ER takes no time to take measures winning the trust of the villagers.

The assets of the Panchayat office were recovered by public demand. During the last summer (2017), the opportunity of conducting SA by State Government appointed SAU was fully explored by both the Panchayat representatives and through *gram sabha* meeting. Physical verification of each construction (construction of shallow water bodies, well, road and drainage system, repairing of Panchayat building and community center etc.) by the SAU was demanded by ERs to assess the status of the same both qualitatively and quantitatively. They also interacted with the beneficiaries for further confirmation. SA was done in collaboration with the *gram sabha* and Panchayat representatives for assessing various developmental works in the year 2016-17. Villagers, Panchayat representatives, members of gram sabha, block level personnel participated in the process. The special characteristic was that auditing was done serially on each scheme implemented in the Panchayat, feed-back from the beneficiaries was noted and their views, advices was also documented, The following points regarding the completed and on-going activities under various schemes in Sodag Panchayat raised, addressed and discussed during the SA are briefly depicted. A brief SA report of *Mukhiya* Fund utilization is given below.

1. SA was done on the mapping and construction of Panchayat *bhaban* (building) and it was found out that the location is well connected by roads. It was both approved physically and

by *gram sabha*. During the public hearing session it was decided that action would be taken against the accused found to be involved in irregularities and wrong-doing.

- 2. *Murram Yojana* was implemented in Upardahu village to Sarna Road, Huringdaag village via Hethdahu and it was physically approved that the work was being out in proper way. 28 labourers worked at a wage rate of rupees one hundred sixty seven. Written documents were also obtained. It was declared in public hearing that 12 labourers who were not paid earlier would be given their due wages within one week.
- 3. Different schemes implemented in the Panchayat are given in Table 4 along with their no.s Table 4:

Scheme Name	Village / Hamlet Name	Scheme Number			
Pakki Nalee Nirmann					
(Construction of drainage	Sohdag	18/16-17			
system)					
Chapakal Nirmann	Banda	7/16-17			
(Construction of Hand pump)	Banda	//10-1/			
Chabutara Nirmann					
(Construction of sitting place	Marsul Ambatoli	11/16-17			
for village meeting purpose)					
Dadi Nirmann	Sohdah	2/16-17			
(Construction of paved road)		2/10-1/			
Pathh Nirmann		19/16-17, 1/16-17, 14/16-17,			
(Construction of road)	Sohdag	20/16-17, 6/16-17, 15/16-17,			
	Solidag	12/16-17, 13/16-17, 3/16-17,			
		10/16-17, 5/16-17, 11/16-17			

All records were found and were verbally approved by the villagers. After approval from the *gram sabha* this was forwarded for public hearing.

- 4. SA was done on the related services under various facilities assumed to be available in Sodag Panchayat and it was verbally approved by the villagers. It was again confirmed in *gram sabha*. During public hearing it was instructed to open the Panchayat office in due time.
- 5. Information was asked about availing internet services to obtain birth, caste and income certificate. The issue was raised in *gram sabha* after villagers approved it and was instructed to update the register regularly.
- 6. The villagers were asked about the *Pragya Kendra*, *Krishi Mitra*, Volunteers, Staffs, Home Guards and toilet system in the Panchayat. All services except *Pragya Kendra* were known working well. Finally it was decided to start *Pragya Kendra* at Panchayat Office within 15-days.
- 7. Selection of different schemes through *gram sabha* was analysed. The information obtained from the villagers was recorded in written format and was approved in *gram sabha*. During the public hearing it was decided that action would be taken for scheme related irregularities and fabricated documents.

- 8. SA was done for assessing the qualities and usefulness of 20 schemes running through the Panchayat. All of them were found to be useful in the area and the quality was also satisfactory. These were physically approved and finally confirmed in *gram sabha*.
- 9. In case of *Chabutara* construction (scheme no 12/16-17), 32 man-days were found to have fabricated data in the name of others person. Verbal statements from the labourers were recorded and the wages allotted in the wrong names were debited from their respective accounts. This issue was approved by the *gram sabha*.
- 10. When different registers were asked for showing during SA inspection book was not found. After approval in the *gram sabha*, it was preceded to public hearing where it was decided to update and maintain all the related documents in 14 types of register as prescribed.
- 11. While observing different register related issues, the existence of *Kray Samiti* (committee responsible for buy-sell) was missing. It was decided and later on approved by the *gram sabha* that the same would be formed within 15 days.
- 12. It was found out during SA that the furniture in Panchayat office (chair, table, fan, generator) were not numbered. After approval from the *gram sabha* it was decided to complete the numbering job within 15 days.
- 13. Village level *Sthayee Samiti* responsible for implementing the schemes and monitoring the activities was not formed in any of the villages. No file was made available to the audit team. Again it was decided in the *gram sabha* that the work would be accomplished within 15 days.
- 14. The complaint of not having notice board describing information of various schemes and related services was lodged earlier. During the SA the board was missing, while bill vouchers where registered in the name supposed to be written on the board. The issue was raised in the *gram sabha* and instructed to do the same at the earliest.
- 15. The 'labour charge' issue was raised. The labourers were questioned individually and the matter was forwarded to public hearing after approval from *gram sabha* where it was decided that the labourer would get their due payments as per government rate.

This study on SA is completely based on people's participation and everyone in the village took the responsibility of actively participating in it. The success was not only limited to this extent, it remained a powerful process encouraging them to express their views and the influential results were clearly seen in the village. People, who used to take these schemes as kind acts of the government, are now discussing these as their due entitlements. Due to continuous discussions about the schemes in *gram sabha*, people are now well aware of the fact that they are the planners of implementing these schemes for their own benefits and they are playing the role of leaders to accomplish the same. Following this awareness they actively participate and share responsibilities among themselves. If the schemes prepared by the *gram sabha* is changed by block and/or district level personnel, villagers immediately act on it and if the changed scheme get applied in field before villagers can intervene then it is closely observed and analysed during SA. In this way the results and effects of SA is working to impart a visible benefits of various developmental schemes.

#### Future plan:

The following advices are given by the villagers during the study.

1. Panchayat samiti and gram sabha should carry out SA regularly.

- 2. Irregularities found during SA should be addressed in the next meeting or public hearing.
- 3. During each public hearing, decisions taken in earlier meetings should be presented as 'Action taken report'.
- 4. If the faults remain unresolved, then action must be taken against the accused personnel/agency.
- 5. Before implementing any new project(s), a thorough discussion should be taken place and network/ linkages with related departments should be established.
- 6. All activities should properly be documented.
- 7. Broadcasting media should be made available during documentation of all types of activities, wherever applicable.

#### **Discussion**

SA can be well regarded as an efficient anti-corruption tool in the context of rural development. The employment of an independent team as SAU for this purpose has proved working successfully for Sodag panchayat. The collaboration between Sodag panchayat ERs and SAU members remained fruitful in achieving the goals. The rule of appointing BRPs of a particular block area in areas other than her/his own widens the possibility of unbiased auditing and the experiences of BRPs may serve to empower the villagers of his/her own block area. SA possesses the feature of exhibiting accountability and transparency of a system working for public welfare. The proposals raised in *gram sabha* meeting may be considered in successive SAs to improve the overall situation.

SA has been proved to be a powerful medium for observing and analysing village activities entitled for the local people. The purpose of SA is not only delivering information about different schemes to them but also informing overviews of those schemes and implementation process. It also ensures that the beneficiaries entitled to get those facilities are actually availing them effortlessly. The following points as learning outcomes are evident from the study.

- 1. Beneficiaries gather information about different schemes and they have learnt the processing and/or organising and analysing the gathered information.
- 2. Investigation of these analysed data was found to be physically correct and the Panchayat is actually implementing the schemes in almost proper way.
- 3. The status of the proposed work whether complete/ incomplete/ on-going and quality of the work are now surveyed by the villagers.

All the stringent factors taken into consideration during this model SA has markedly affected all probable stages responsible for accomplishing their due works and is successful in changing the delivery of public services so far.

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#### Legends

- <u>Table 1.</u> Demographic details of the selected Panchayat
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- Photo7. Anganwadi Center in Garsul village, Sodag Panchayat
- Photo8. Deep-well constructed in the land of a beneficiary under MGNREGS
- Photo9-10. Vegetable cultivation made easy with shallow water-bodies built under
- MGNREGS and an old lady busy to harvest peas from her land
- Photo11-12. Community water tank operated with solar energy constructed in Garsul village, Sodag Panchayat and the details showing about the scheme information are written on the wall

### **Tables**

Table 2:

Panchayat : Sodag; Block : Namkum; District : Ranchi

Total no. of Households (HH)	1236				
Total population	3380	M-1921	F-1459		
Total no. of SC population	16	M-6	F-10		
Total no. ST population	2094	M-n/a	F-n/a		

# **Photographs** Photo1-2





Photo 3



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9-10





Photo 11-12



