

1. Details of Module and its Structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Political Science
Paper Name	Public Policy, Governance and Indian Administration
Module Name/Title	Citizen Charter
Pre-requisites	Awareness about the need, spirit and fundamentals of sound citizen charter
Objectives	To study about the evolution of Citizen Charter in India, the role of citizen's charter in achieving Good Governance, initiatives taken by various ministries and departments and current scenario of its implementation
Keywords	Citizen Charter, Good Governance, Quality of services

Structure of Module / Syllabus of a module	
Citizen's Charter	Introduction, International and Indian Scenario, Definition, Principles of Citizen Charter, Components of Citizen Charter,
	Analysis of Research Studies on Citizen's Charter, Impact of Citizen Charter in India, Conclusion

2. Development Teams

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Objectives of the Module

To study the:

- the evolution of Citizen Charter in India;
- the role of citizen's charter in achieving Good Governance;
- initiatives taken by various ministries and departments; and
- current scenario of its implementation.

Summary

A Citizen's Charter, as an essence, is a quality assurance strategy that offers a type of consumer guarantee in order to make providers more responsive to consumers by consultation and more accountable to government and the community through performance monitoring. Although a Citizen's Charter has been implemented but it seems to be a procedural formality rather than an opportunity to introduce organized framework to boost quality of service delivery and enhance accountability. There were serious lapses in the implementation of the Citizen's Charter ranging from design and poor advertising to implementation, timely updates and evaluation. The net outcome is that end-users lack the awareness to apply for services or redress their grievances in time bound manner. It is perceived that only when these roadblocks are addressed, the spirit of a Citizen's Charter would yield the desired results.

1. Introduction

In a churning milieu of reforms in public administration, public service delivery and its efficiency have been major concern across globe. Several attempts have been made to bring desired changes by the governing agencies to make every effort for improvement in delivery of service. With the advent of policy transfer in globalized world, new tools of new public management and Good Governance have stretched all over the world. It is in that backdrop the concept of Citizen Charter was first conceived by John Major of UK in 1991. It is regarded as tool of good governance which aims at addressing the challenge of service delivery and citizen centric administration. The spirit of citizen charter was to empower citizens by making them aware about their rights, privileges and duties, to transform bureaucratic government into citizen centric government. Consequently service delivery mechanism would be enhanced through implementation of Citizen Charter.¹

2. International Scenario

The White Paper *The Citizen's Charter: Raising the Standard* was published in July 1991. Its foreword stated that: 'I want the Citizen's Charter to be one of the central themes of public life in the 1990s.'²The government

¹Zannatun Nayem, "Problems of Implementing Citizen Charter: A Study of Upazila Land Office (A.C Land Office)", 2010. Available at http://mppg nsu.org/attachments/119_Zannat_Citizen%20charter.pdf

²Pollitt Christopher, "The Citizen's Charter: A Preliminary Analysis", *Public Money and Management*, April-June, 1994, 9.

of John Major implemented the Citizen’s Charter Policy in the United Kingdom for the first time, in 1991, with the aim to continuously improve the quality of public services. The Citizen’s Charter based on the model of United Kingdom has been adopted by developed nations and as well as developing nations. The table below depicts the initiations of various nations.

Countries	Initiative	Year
Belgium	Public Service User Charter	1992
Hong Kong	Performance Pledge	1992
France	Service Charter	1993
Malaysia	Clients Charter	1993
Spain	The Quality Observations	1993
Portugal	The Quality Charter in Public Services	1993
Malaysia	Client Charter	1993
Jamaica	Citizen’s Charter	1994
Canada	Service Standards Initiatives	1995
India	Citizen’s Charter	1997
Australia	Service Charter	1997
South Africa	People’s First	1997
Namibia	Public Service Charter	1999
Argentina	Cartas Compromiso	2000
Sweden	Servicedialogue	2001

Source: Centre for Good Governance, 2003³

With the application of a Citizen’s Charter it was anticipated that power will be given to the citizen with the principles of choice, standards, value, accountability and transparency of the rules, procedures and grievance redress system of an institution. The most of above stated initiative has four broad dimensions:

- (i) It must define what standards or qualities of services could be expected.
- (ii) What performance indicators can be used to assess services?
- (iii) Who are responsible for service provision?
- (iii) What mechanisms or procedures are available for customers’ grievances or complaints?

The major objectives of citizen’s charter across the globe have been broadly similar i.e. responsiveness, accountability and transparency.⁴

3. Indian Scenario

The origin of citizen’s charter in India can be traced to national debate on “An Agenda for Effective and Responsive Administration” at the conference of chief secretaries of all states held in New Delhi in 1996. The conference resulted in resolution “Action plan for Effective and Responsive Government” which was later adopted by Chief Ministers of all states/UTs at conference held in 1997. The reform measures mentioned in first report are classified under three broad heads which are as follow:

- (i) Accountable and Citizen-friendly Government.
- (ii) Transparency and right to Information.

³Centre for Good Governance, *A Guide to Developing and Implementing a Citizen's Charter*, Hyderabad: Centre for Good Governance, 2003.

⁴Sanjeev Kumar, “Citizen’s Charter for e-Government Services”, *Management in Government*, XXXXII, No.3, Oct-Dec, 2010,28.

- (iii) Improving the performance and integrity in public service.

The most pertinent fact is that the citizen-centric government has been promised through mechanisms of

- a) Citizens' Charter
- b) Decentralization of Power
- c) Redressal of public grievances
- d) Review of Laws, Acts and regulations.⁵

3.1 Definitions of Citizen Charter

The Citizen's Charter is a document, which articulates the commitment of government organizations towards citizens through clearly specified yardsticks⁶.

“CC is a written, voluntary declaration by service providers that highlights the standards of service delivery that they must subscribe to, availability of choice for consumers, avenues for grievance redressal and other related information”⁷

CC is a new device under the umbrella of good governance to foster effectiveness in public service delivery.⁸

3.2 Principles of Citizen Charter

The prime objective of the Citizen's Charter is to empower the citizens in context to public service delivery. The six principles of the Citizen's Charter movement as originally framed by government of India were following:

- a) **Quality:** Improving the quality of services;
- b) **Choice:** Wherever possible;
- c) **Standards:** Specifying what to expect and how to act if standards are not met;
- d) **Value:** For the taxpayers' money;
- e) **Accountability:** Individuals and Organisations
- f) **Transparency:** Rules/Procedures/Schemes/Grievances.

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in Government of India (DARPG) began the task of coordinating, formulating and operationalizing Citizen's Charters. DARPG formally communicated the guidelines for formulating the Charters as well as a list of do's and don'ts to various government departments and organizations to equip them to bring out effective and fruitful charters. A comprehensive website on Citizen's Charters in Government of India (www.goicharters.nic.in) has been developed and was launched by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances on 31 May, 2002. This contains the Citizen's Charters issued by various Central Government Ministries/Departments/Organizations. The website provides useful information, data and links.

DARPG expected the following elements to be included while formulating a charter:

- (i) Vision and Mission Statements;
- (ii) Details of business transacted by the organization;

⁵B. S. Ghuman and Akshat Mehta, "Policy Transfer and Citizen's Charter: The Indian Experience". *Indian Journal of Public Administration*, LIII, No.4, 2007, 774-787.

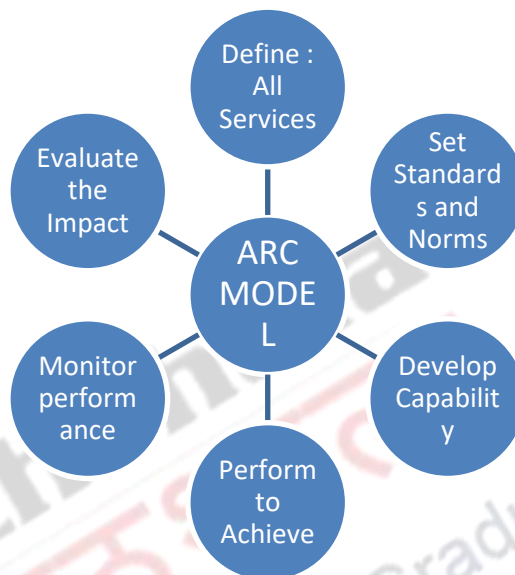
⁶B.S.Ghuman, "Towards a Citizens Charter" 2011 available at <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2011/20110921/edit.htm#6> accessed on 20 September 201.

⁷H.P.Shanker, "Citizen's Charters: An Empirical Study" 2004 accessed from http://www.atimysore.gov.in/pdf/citizen_character.pdf accessed on 29 October 2017.

⁸Vijender S. Beniwal, "Challenges and Prospects of Implementing Citizen's Charter: A Study of Panchkula (Haryana) Municipal Council in India", Unpublished Thesis, University of Bergen 2005.

- (iii) Details of clients;
- (iv) Details of services provided to each client group;
- (v) Details of grievance redressal mechanism and how to access it; and
- (vi) Expectations from the clients.⁹

The Administrative Reforms Commission expects the following from an ideal charter, the chart below depicts the model¹⁰:



In order to achieve and operationalize the above said elements, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances formulated a detailed framework which includes various components discussed below.

4. Components of Citizen’s Charter

Particulars of Component	Brief Description of Component:
Vision Statement	The first pivotal constituent of a thriving Citizen’s Charter is a clarity and specificity in statement of vision. Vision involves the path in which the particular organization seeks to flow. Clarity of vision equips the organization to map, organize and deliver its anticipated results. So it is of utmost for organization to have clear vision.
Mission Statement	The ‘mission’ statement provides with the definite objectives which impel the organization in tune with its visionary statement. Precise and clarity of ‘mission’ is important to enable the organization to move towards its vision. Organization needs to reflect in the manner in which the vision is to be grasped.
Identification of Services	The Charter should clearly classify and categorize the services,

⁹“Citizen’s Charters – A Handbook” <http://goicharters.nic.in/cchandbook.htm> accessed on 29 October 2017.

¹⁰“Extracts from Chapter Four of the Twelfth Report of Second Administrative Reforms Commission – ‘Citizen Centric Administration-The Heart of Governance’” accessed from <http://goicharters.nic.in/arcrep-12-extracts.pdf> accessed on 31st December 2014.

	which would be offered by the organization to accomplish its mission and vision. This should enlist all the services, which would be made available through its various organizations.
Identification of Levels	Organizations manage at various stages and within each organization, distribution of work, responsibilities and ability delineates their obligation to achieve specific client / users/ stakeholders, irrespective of whether the organizations mention ‘details of business’, ‘promises’, ‘domain of services and functions’ in its Charter.
Identification of Client Groups/ Stakeholders/Users	An apparent consideration of the client groups, stakeholders, users by the associations is worthy for a better link with these in matter of policy and administration. This will also facilitate the agency to provide to the requirements of these groups in an organized manner.
Specification of Time-Frames for Each Service	There is a need to have clear assurance about the time bound arrangement for deliverance of particular services in the document. This permits the organization from unjustified outlook and as also facilitates it to plan its competence to deliver services and as well as to work towards it in its own plan of action. Knowledge of time bound manner approach enables the citizen to pick for specific providers where options are available and better recognizable in terms of capacity of organization. For example, there may not be any time-frame for certain services provided by Department of Telecommunications, Indian Railways, Department of Posts, Department of Drinking Water Supply etc. However, in such cases also there is possibility in context of specific time-frames, e.g., for redemption/final payment of postal deposits, installation of telephone connections, reservation/cancellation of reservation of Railway tickets etc.
Specification of Time-Frames at Each Level	It is imperative that time-frames for service delivery are granted at each level at which specific services are delivered. Adherence to these needs to be complied too. This requires a responsibility to provide reports on the extent of obedience to time-frames at each steps. Public sharing of a relativedepictionof various levels in the organization may bring in competitive spirit to improve performance.
Specification of Service Quality Standards	Charter must point out the specific eminent standards to which the organization is committed. This will permit the citizens to use choice where available and raise opinion where required to make sure that quality of service is made available to certain extent. Organization can also exercise internal controls once standards are publicly specified. There is the added advantage for the organization to do a relativereview of performance on symposiums onservice quality standards. Unrealistic expectations from citizens can also be prevented if the citizens understand the quality standard and norms, which the organization is in a position to adhere and deliver. Service standards must also adhere public policy and its objectives.
Specification of Service Delivery Standards	Charter should endow with clear assurance on service delivery standards such as timeliness, access, accuracy, reliability, affordability, responsiveness, fairness, sensitivity, and courtesy in the delivery of service. These standards should be affirmed as clearly as possible and should be in the form realistic commitments

	and not simply ambiguous targets. These should be quantifiable and allow the organization to depict performance in terms of committed standards. These may vary for diverse levels of organization, or special services and different regions. In case of variations, the specific commitments should be revealed and a proportional picture should be offered in order to allow approval of the better performing regions and to create pressure on others for improving upon the same. Standards should be made as evident as possible and organization should consider all possible strategies for publicizing them.
Clear Information about Processes/ Procedures to Access Service Benefits	It is vital that the Charter must offer information about the procedures etc. involved in obtaining the service and facilitates the citizens to access it. Information about the requisite forms, which may have to be submitted or the payment required to access a process or service should be given in the Charter.
Clear Information about Contact Points for Obtaining Service Benefits	The names and addresses of the dealing persons for obtaining particular services should be provided in the Charter. When they can be contacted (office hours) should also be clearly stated. This needs to be done with reference to the specific levels of agencies at specific point and locations.
Clear Information about Information Facilitation Counters (IFC)	The detailed location of the IFC must be stated in the Charter. This will equip citizens to know how they can get their grievances settled.
Clear Information about the Functions of Information Facilitation Counters	The IFC computer needs to be connected to the computers of the unit-heads or section-heads of the organization to facilitate its effective and smooth functioning and this should be provided in the Charter. The IFC should also have a photocopier and preferably a touch-screen. Copies of the organization's Information Handbook brought out under the RTI Act, 2005 and the scheme booklets should be made available at the IFC, which should be manned by well-informed employees. A Visitor's Register should be kept at the IFC. The person in charge of IFCs should be able to give all the necessary information sought and not simply direct the citizens to consult the websites. It should be mentioned in the Charter that all publications, scheme-booklets and copies of Information Handbook of the Department are available in the IFC.
Providing Information about the Public Grievance Redressal Procedures	Responsiveness of grievances is the first step which an organization can take forward in introducing zero defect policy in its functioning. Charter should support the citizens to open up their grievances and organizations should wish to redress the same. Charter should clearly depict the grievance redressal procedures in case citizens/users/ clients/ stakeholders have any grievances and would like to seek redressal.
Providing Information about the Public Grievance Redress Mechanisms	Charter must clearly update about the grievance redress mechanism available to the citizens/ clients at various levels in the organization. An adequately senior officer should be made responsible for dealing grievances for redressal. His/her name, designation, office room and telephone numbers and e-mail id should appear in the Charter. The officer in charge of the grievances redressal mechanism should guarantee that grievances are received, recorded,

	acknowledged in time bound manner. Mechanisms should be developed by the organization to provide redressal, such as, a committee for review, weekly or monthly meetings with concerned officers at various levels, reports on the number and type of grievances received.
Information about the Time-frame for the Public Grievance Redress	Information about the time-frame of the grievance redressal should be an essential feature of all the Charters. The time-frame laid down for grievance redressal should be practical and implementable by the employees and secondly, the organization has to make sure that the timeframe is actually agreed upon. Final reply should be sent to the aggrieved person within the specified period demonstrating the action the organization has taken on his complaint. In case the aggrieved person has been informed that his/her grievance has been accepted, he/ she should also be informed of the action taken by the organization on acceptance of his/ her grievance. In case of the rejection, the reasons for rejection should be communicated to the person. In case of dissatisfaction of the aggrieved, a provision for appeal should be made and the contact person for appeal should be mentioned.
Information about the Time-frame for Acknowledgement	Since grievance-redressal may take time, acknowledgement should be sent on receipt of the grievances. Time-frame for sending acknowledgement on receipt of a grievance should be clearly specified in the Charter.
Information about the Time-frame for Response	The time-frame for settlement of a grievance needs to be specified to the person seeking redress. The Charter can indicate the time-frame for different types of grievances and also adhere to inform the citizen about how the specific grievance has been classified and how much time it will take them to redress the issue.
Information about Systematic Review of all Public Grievances	All grievances should be evaluated and reviewed on regular intervals and information about the periodicity of such reviews as well as the levels at which these reviews are undertaken should be mentioned in the Charter.
Information about Outcome of Review of Grievances	Information about the outcome of reviews and initiatives taken to carry out the recommendations which surface from the review should also be shared with the citizens to win the confidence and even when they were not happy with the conclusion of their personal complaint or grievance.
Information about Procedures for Inviting Suggestions/ Inputs	Charter should encourage suggestions from the public about the activities and functioning of the organization. If the Department is implementing programmes and schemes, the citizens may be contacted and requested to submit their suggestions for retaining or changing the provisions/scope/coverage of the programmes or schemes. They may also be requested to suggest ways of refining the delivery mechanism. The organization should also request the citizens to send suggestions on the ways to improve its own functioning and methods to bring more transparency and accountability.
Information about Time-frame for Review of Suggestions	The Contact Officer for suggestions should be made responsible for letting the suggestion maker know whether his suggestion has been reviewed and if rejected, what the bases for rejection are. For

	suggestions received on-line, responses can also be provided on-line.
Information about Mechanisms for Processing of Suggestions	The 'Contact Officer for Suggestions' should make sure that the Suggestion Boxes of his Department are checked daily and all suggestions are recorded in a separate register on a daily basis. The same register should have columns to indicate disposal of each suggestion and the number and date of the letter by which the suggestion-maker was informed of the acceptance or rejection of his suggestion. The Contact Officer should be made responsible for acknowledging each suggestion, letting the suggestion-maker know whether his suggestion has been accepted or rejected and if rejected, the reasons for rejection. All on-line suggestions should also be processed and responded to on-line by the contact officer and a record of progress made on these should be maintained.
Information about Systematic Review of all Suggestions	All suggestions, whether these are obtained regularly or as a result of special survey, should be reviewed in a systematic manner in order to examine their significance for improving administration and service delivery. Insights obtained from the suggestions regarding policy changes should be evaluated too. This should be argued with the citizens and how the organization proposes to share it should be available in the Charter.
Information about Outcome of Review of Suggestions	If a review of suggestions is dealt, sharing it with the public can add reliability to the organization as well as motivate citizens to supply valuable inputs to the organization for improving its performance. Many times the solutions to a problem are within reach to be resolved, yet these are beyond the imagination of officers in the organization. Many such ideas reach the decision makers through channel of suggestions made by citizens and therefore should be encouraged and duly appraised. In case any surveys are done, the outcome of the review of these should also be discussed with the public.
Information about Monitoring Mechanism to Ensure Compliance with Commitments	There should be specific information in the Charter about the mechanisms evolved for accountability and monitoring by the organization in order to comply that Charter does not remain merely a procedural document, with little capacity to ensure its own implementation. This monitoring mechanism may include citizens from the organization as well those outside- the clients/ stakeholders or pressure groups.
Information about the Website and Relevant Information	The Charter must specify the information/ services, which can be acquired through the website of the Ministry along with the addresses of domain. Forms and other processes available on-line should also be duly informed.
Information about On-line Charter	On-line Charter should also provide as many services as possible on-line and enable link with citizens by creating windows in this regard. The Charter should be made user friendly and information about that should be provided to the citizens through the Charter, which is printed or through other communication methods including displaying ads, at IFCs and at the headquarters.
Information about Right to Information	Every Charter should notify the citizens about their 'Right to Information'. With the enactment of the RTI Act, 2005, implementation of the provisions of the Act has become obligatory.

	In the organization’s Charter there should be a precise statement on how it will assist implementation of the Act’s provisions. The names, room numbers and office telephone numbers of the Coordinating Central Principal Information Officer/CPIO/APIO and the First Appellate Authority of the organization should also be provided.
Information about Information Handbook	Charter must include information about the handbook, its contents, availability and charges, if any, which has to be paid to access it. The date when the ‘Information Handbook’ has been brought out by the organization, and when it is scheduled to be updated should also be mentioned.

Source : <http://goicharters.nic.in/ccframework-new.pdf>

5. Implementation of Citizen Charter in India

There are around 600 Central Departments/Organizations which have formulated citizens’ charter till date which broadly include Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, Department of Atomic Energy, Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Ministry of Coal, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Environment & Forests, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Reserve Bank of India, Public Sector Banks, Ministry of Food Processing Industries, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Ministry of Mines, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Ministry of Power, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of Science and Technology, Department of Space, Ministry of Textiles, Ministry of Urban Development, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports while at state level there are 1120 citizen’s charter formulated by 24 state departments.

6. Analysis of Research Studies on Citizens’ Charter:

With the inception of Citizens Charter and its strategies around the globe and in India, the government of India is under the pressure to deliver the quality services in a responsive, transparent and accountable manner. Thus, the Citizen’s Charter at all the levels is an important tool of good governance. It is in this backdrop that the present section analyzes the major studies carried out on Citizens’ Charter in India. This is specifically done to evaluate the implementation of the Citizens’ Charter which aims to enhance empowerment of the people, the timeframe of deliverance of services and to uproot corruption.

Details of Research	Impact of Citizens’ Charter
<i>Policy Transfer and Citizen Charter: The Indian Experience by B.S.Ghuman and Akshat Mehta published in IJPA VOL.LIIL,NO.4, October-December, 2007</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle of value for money is not fulfilled • Receded bureaucratic commitment • Prepared in haste just for sake of compliance • Vague, less explicit and poorly publicized

<p><i>Citizen's Charters: An Empirical Study</i> by By H.P.Shiva Shankar retrieved from http://www.atimysore.gov.in/PDF/citizen_character.pdf</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of formulation is not available in most of the Charters • Mere listing of programmes are done • Good response from central government and ministries • All components are not given due importance while formulation
<p><i>Challenges and Prospects of Implementing Citizen's Charter: A Study of Panchkula (Haryana) Municipal Council in India</i> Thesis submitted to the Department of Administration and Organization Theory in partial fulfillment of the award of Master of Philosophy in Public Administration (MPA) By Vijender Singh Beniwal, University of Bergen</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited participation by subordinates and citizens • Poor Innovations • Rigid Bureaucratic norms hampering spirit • Inadequate personnel and finance
<p><i>Citizens' Charter as Instrument of good Governance: A Perspective</i> by Ramesh C.Misra published in <i>Management in Government</i>, VOL XLIII, NO.4 January-March 2012</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sevottam complaint charter implemented in 14 organizations • 10 Sevottam got fully functional by January 2010 • Successful implementation in four state governments. • 12 states legislated Right to Public Service.
<p><i>An Evaluation of a Citizen's Charter in Local Government, A Case Study of Chandigarh, India</i> by Deepak Sharma published in <i>Journal of Administration and Governance</i>, VOL.7, No.1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation a mere formality • Poor designing of charter • Poor display of Right to Information Act • Ineffective Public Relations and poor awareness among citizens • No updation of charter
<p><i>Citizen's Charter for e-Government Services</i> by Sanjeev Kumar published in <i>Management in Government</i>, VOL.XXXXII, NO.3, October-December, 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge to evolve charter of all services under one roof. • Poor ICT, infrastructure and digital divide prevented the spirit of charter • Poor sensitization of employees • Budget constraints for the specific requirements

7. Conclusion

A Citizen's Charter, as an essence, is a value assurance strategy that offers a type of citizen-centric governance. The Citizen's Charter, as one of the key approach of New Public Management, intend at delivering quality services in a time bound manner. On the basis of analyzing above studies, it can be stated that there is a need to educate, formulate and train all its stakeholders and beneficiaries very carefully. If carried out with precision, Citizen's Charter will prove to be a panacea to the ills of governance. Therefore, it

is apparent that only when these roadblocks are addressed, the spirit of a Citizen's Charter would achieve the desired objectives.

1. Details of Module and its Structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Political Science
Paper Name	Indian Administration
Module Name/Title	Good Governance Initiatives : Social Audit
Module Id	34 B
Pre-requisites	Concept of Good governance
Objectives	To study the meaning and objectives of social audit, genesis of social audit in India, principles and objectives of social audit, process, benefits and threats to social audit.
Keywords	Social audit, public audit, jansunwai, jan audit manch, public hearing, social audit in India

Structure of Module / Syllabus of a module

Good Governance Initiatives: Social Audit	Introduction to social audit, Meaning of social audit, Social audit and other regular audits, History/genesis of social audit, Objectives of social audit, Principles of social audit, Uses and Functions of social audit, Stakeholders and social audit, Process of social audit, Benefits of social auditing to government departments, Threats to social audit.
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Objectives

The major objective of this module is to acquaint the reader with the concept of social audit and processes involved in its smooth conduct. The module also tends to analyze the role of various stakeholders involved in the process of social audit.

Summary

Social Audit is a tool to provide critical inputs and to correctly assess the impact of government activities on the social well-being of the citizens, assess the social costs and measure the social benefits accrued in the implementation of a government programme. It is carried out by the community of stakeholders which includes the beneficiaries, implementing agency, Gram Panchayat representatives etc. In this process the details of the resources used by the public agencies for development initiatives are shared with the people on a public platform. This allows people to enforce accountability and transparency.

In India the contributions made by various social audit groups has helped in ensuring the accountability of the implementing agencies due to which the Government of India has included social audit in form or the other in almost all the flagship programmes like MGNREGA, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, NRHM, Mid-Day Meal, etc.

1. Introduction to Social Audit

Government is facing an ever-growing demand to be more accountable and socially responsible as the people are becoming more assertive about their right to be informed and to influence governments' decision-making processes. In order to meet these demands, the government is continuously exploring different ways and adopting them in evaluating its performance. Social Audit is one such initiative of evaluating government's performance against the set objectives.

Social Audit gives an understanding of the administrative system from the citizens' perspective for which the very institutional/administrative system is being promoted and legitimised. It means understanding the administrative system and its internal dynamics from people's viewpoint, who may not necessarily be a part of the State or its machinery but for whom the system is meant to work.

Social Audit is an independent evaluation of the performance of an organisation as it relates to the attainment of its social goals. It is a process that enables an organisation to assess and demonstrate its social, economic and environmental benefits. It is a way of measuring the extent to which an organisation lives up to the shared values and objectives it has committed itself to. The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)

emphasised Social Audit for the effective functioning of the Panchayati Raj institutions and for achieving the goal of decentralisation in India.¹¹

Social Audit examines the performance of a department or a programme vis-à-vis its stated core values with respect to the community values and distribution of benefits among different social groups that are often reached through the principles of good governance. Social Audit adds another dimension of key performance measurements by creating social wealth in the form of useful networks and administration which is more accountable and transparent to the stakeholders. Creating social wealth is one of the key contributions of Social Audit. Thus, Social Audit strengthens the legitimacy of the state, as well as trust between the state and the society.¹²

2. Meaning of Social Audit

According to SEEP Social Performance Glossary, Social Audit is “an examination of the records, statements, internal processes and procedures of an organization related to its social performance. It is undertaken with a view to provide assurance as to the quality and meaningfulness of the organization’s claimed social performance.”¹³

According to the Social Economy Network, “Social Auditing is a process which enables organizations and agencies to assess and demonstrate their social, community and environmental benefits and limitations. It is a way to measure the extent to which an organization lives up to the shared values and objectives it has committed itself to promote.”¹⁴

Social Audit is a process in which the details of the resource, both financial and non-financial, used by public agencies for development initiatives are shared with the people, often through a public platform. Social Audits allow people to enforce accountability and transparency, providing the ultimate users an opportunity to scrutinize development initiatives.¹⁵ Therefore, it is also an instrument of social accountability.

In other words, Social Audit may be defined as an in-depth scrutiny and analysis of the working of any public utility vis-a-vis its social relevance. It provides an assessment of the impact of an organisation’s nonfinancial objectives through systematic and regular monitoring based on the views of its stakeholders.¹⁶ The basic input in the process is information availability – willingness of the government officials to provide information and the ability of the people to ask questions. It involves, the following components, i.e.

- a. Availability of information/ details of the resource, financial and non-financial, used by public agencies for development initiatives,
- b. Organising the ultimate users/ beneficiaries / people,
- c. Scrutiny of the information by the end users.¹⁷

3. Social Audit and other regular audits

Social Audit is often misinterpreted as another form of audit to determine the accuracy of financial or statistical statements and reports and the fairness of the facts they present.¹⁸ However, the process of Social

¹¹Centre for Good Governance (2005), Social Audit: A Toolkit A Guide for Performance Improvement and Outcome Measurement, Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad, available through: http://www.cgg.gov.in/publicationdownloads2a/Social_Audit_Toolkit_Final.pdf, accessed on 17th November, 2013.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Woller, Gary; (2008), Social Audit Tool Handbook: Using the Social Audit to Assess the Social Performance of Microfinance Institutions, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Chemonics International Inc., Washington DC, available through: www.microlinks.org/library/social-audit-tool-handbook, accessed on 19th November, 2013.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Vision Foundation (2005), Social Audit – Gram Sabha and Panchayati Raj: Assessment of present status and recommendation of methods for making Social Audit, a viable instrument for sustainable programme delivery, Final Report, Submitted to Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, p. 78.

¹⁶Centre for Good Governance(2005),.

¹⁷Vision Foundation (2005), op.,cit.

¹⁸Centre for Good Governance (2005), op.cit.

Audit is one step ahead of accounting audit as it covers nonfinancial details in addition to the financial details.¹⁹

A conventional financial audit (government or institutional audit) is conducted in-house or through external and professional auditing institutions and ordinarily without the significant involvement of the affected people or the intended beneficiaries²⁰. Financial audit is geared towards verification of reliability and integrity of financial information while the operational audit looks at compliance with policies, plan procedures, laws, regulations, established objectives and efficient use of resources.

On the contrary, the concept of Social Audit is more comprehensive, having a greater scope than that of traditional audit. In general, Social Audit refers to a process for measuring, understanding and improving the social performance of an activity of an organisation. It is also distinct from evaluation as it is an internally generated process whereby the organisation itself shapes the Social Audit process according to its stated objectives. It measures social performance in order to achieve improvement as well as to report accurately on what has been done.²¹

Social Audit acts as a supplement to conventional audit to help Government departments / public agencies to understand and improve their performance as perceived by the stakeholders.²²

Table 1

Financial Audit	Operational Audit	Social Audit
Directed towards recording, processing, summarising and reporting of financial data.	Establishing standards of operation, measuring performance against standards, examining and analysing deviations, taking corrective actions and reappraising standards based on experience.	Provides an assessment of the impact of a department's non-financial objectives through systematic and regular monitoring on the basis of the views of its stakeholders.

Source: Centre for Good Governance (2005), Social Audit: A Toolkit A Guide for Performance Improvement and Outcome Measurement, Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad, available through: http://www.cgg.gov.in/publicationdownloads2a/Social_Audit_Toolkit_Final.pdf, accessed on 17th November, 2013.

4. History / Genesis of Social Audit

The word 'audit' is derived from Latin, which means 'to hear'. In ancient times, emperors used to recruit persons designated as auditors to get feedback about the activities undertaken by the kings in their kingdoms. These auditors used to go to public places to listen to citizens' opinions on various matters like behaviour of employees, incidence of tax, image of local officials etc.

Charles Medawar pioneered the concept of Social Audit in 1972 with the application of the idea in medicine policy, drug safety issues and on matters of corporate, governmental and professional accountability. According to Medawar, the concept of Social Audit starts with the principle that in a democracy the decision makers should account for the use of their powers, which should be used as far as possible with the consent and understanding of all concerned.

Gradually, the concept of Social Audit evolved among corporate groups as a tool for reporting their contribution to society and obtaining people's feedback on their activities to supplement their market and financial performance. In mid 1970s, in UK and Europe, the term Social Audit emerged to describe evaluations that focused on the likely impact on jobs, the community and the environment, if a particular enterprise or industry were to close or relocate. These evaluations used the term Social Audit to clearly make the point that they were concerned with the 'social' and not the 'economic' consequence of a particular action. Trade unions, local government authorities, industry and private companies carried them out.

¹⁹Vision Foundation (2005), op.cit.

²⁰[Online] available through http://nrega.nic.in/circular/So_Audit_I.pdf, accessed on 26 November, 2013.

²¹Centre for Good Governance (2005), op.cit.

²² Ibid.

A number of community organisations began to undertake audits of their community that included physical and social assets, natural resources and stakeholder needs. Most notable of these was the Dunston Social Audit in 1982, which was published and widely distributed; however, many of these organisations did not continue using the method and considered Social Audit as a one-off evaluation.

4.1 Social Audit in India

Social Audit as a term was used as far back as the 1950's. However, the idea of Social Audit was born in the early 1990's out of a larger struggle to ensure minimum wage regulation in drought relief works and availability of subsidized food and other essential commodities to the poorest through the Public Distribution System (PDS) spearheaded by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), a grass-root organization based in Rajasthan. Early in its struggles, the MKSS encountered wide spread corruption both in the provision of wages in relief works and the supply of essential commodities through the PDS system. The MKSS surmised that the reason for large scale unchecked corruption proliferation was that all government programmes were implemented under a shroud of secrecy which masked the misuse of funds. Official records were never shared with citizens as a result of whom they were unable to question officials and demand accountability. Most often, citizen's remained unaware of the quantum of corruption and pilfering that took place in their name. The right of people to know what their governments are doing and how government funds are being spent thus became the central point of the MKSS's struggle.

Through their activism, the MKSS began to demand copies of official records and information related to local development works. With the support of sympathetic officials, or by pressurizing local officials, the MKSS was able to access copies of official records. These records were analyzed and cross checked with the residents of relevant villages and finally shared with the public. An important innovation in this process was the 'jansunwai' or public hearing where details of the official records were read out to the assembled villagers. Local residents that were victims of fraudulent practices were invited to give testimonies as were government officials and local politicians who are given an opportunity to public defend their actions.²³

In India, there are very few organized spaces for citizens to directly participate in regular monitoring and evaluation of government programmes and hold the state officials accountable for their performance. However, using social audits, civil society in India has experimented with a unique model of evidence-based advocacy pioneered by MKSS in Rajasthan. Social audits empower ordinary citizens to turn into auditors, and obtain access to the privileged state documents such as muster rolls and other official documents in order to expose malpractices. Unlike in the earlier years which involved protests to get access to the government records, the process is now facilitated after the passage of the Right to Information Act in 2005 where citizens have uninhibited access to the official documents. It is remarkable as it breaks the state's monopoly over official oversight and legitimizes citizen-participation into the affairs that were earlier considered to be the exclusive domain of the state. Social Audits involve verifying government records and supposed expenditures on entitlements against testimonies of the beneficiaries. The process culminates in public hearings where discrepancies have been exposed, erring officials publicly denounced, and at times embezzled funds even returned. Similar models of public hearings have also been used by groups like *Parivartan* in Delhi to expose corruption in Public Distribution System. The significant contribution by various social audit groups has helped in ensuring accountability of the implementing agencies due to which steps have been taken to institutionalize social audits in government programmes and schemes in the recent years. The Government of India has embedded social audit in almost all the flagship social sector programmes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, National Rural Health Mission, Mid-Day Meal, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, etc. in one form or the other (like village level monitoring committees/vigilance committees). The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, mandates the regular conduct of social audits as a crucial part of the implementation of the Act which has acted as a

²³Aiyar, Yamini and Samji, Salimah, (2009), Transparency and Accountability in NREGA: A case study of Andhra Pradesh, Accountability Initiative, Working Paper No.1, New Delhi, available through: www.accountabilityindia.in, accessed on 19th November, 2013.

catalyst for the emergence of very innovative partnerships between the state and civil society to ensure the objective and regular conduct of social audits.²⁴

5. Objectives of Social Audit

While the direct objective of the social audit process is to expose corruption, the social audit is a critical mechanism to empower citizens and strengthen democracy. Chandoke, in her analysis of the public hearing argued, that the public hearing perform three functions intrinsic to democracy. First, it produces informed citizens. Second, it encourages citizens to participate in local affairs through the provision of information and third, it helps create a sense of civic responsibility by bringing people together to address issues of collective concern. The social audit process enables people to be aware of their rights and entitlements and offers a space and mechanism through which these rights can be exercised.²⁵

The objectives of social audit revolve around empowerment of the beneficiaries and directly affected stakeholders of the public sector programmes in matters of planning, implementation, delivery of services, appraisal, corruption and frauds, impact, etc. The social audit procedures provide a voice to the people to participate and be heard. Above all, it provides close to complete transparency to the entire gamut of programme management and renders the impact sustainable. It enables the people to view the decision making process and criteria adopted for various elements of the programme.

6. Principles of Social Audit

The foremost principle of Social Audit is to achieve continuously improving performances relative to the chosen social objectives. Eight specific key principles have been identified from Social Auditing practices around the world.

- *Multi-Perspective:* Aim to reflect the views (voices) of all those people (stakeholders) involved with or affected by the organisation/department/ programme.
- *Comprehensive:* Aims to (eventually) report on all aspects of the organisation's work and performance.
- *Participatory:* Encourages participation of stakeholders and sharing of their values.
- *Multidirectional:* Stakeholders share and give feedback on multiple aspects.
- *Regular:* Aims to produce social accounts on a regular basis so that the concept and the practice become embedded in the culture of the organisation covering all the activities.
- *Comparative:* Provides a means whereby the organisation can compare its own performance each year and against appropriate external norms or benchmarks; and provide for comparisons to be made between organizations doing similar work and reporting in similar fashion.
- *Verified:* Ensures that the social accounts are audited by a suitably experienced person or agency with no vested interest in the organisation.
- *Disclosed:* Ensures that the audited accounts are disclosed to stakeholders and the wider community in the interests of accountability and transparency.²⁶

7. Uses and Functions of Social Audit

Social Auditing can be used as a tool to provide critical inputs and to correctly assess the impact of government activities on the social well-being of the citizens, assess the social costs and measure the social benefits accrued as a result of any programme implementation. The performance of government departments is monitored through various mechanisms, in different states. However, these practices do not capture adequately the broader social, community and environmental benefits.

²⁴Aiyar, Yamini and Posani, Bala,(2009), State of Accountability: Evolution, Practice and Emerging questions in Public Accountability in India, Accountability Initiative, Working Paper No.2, New Delhi, available through: www.accountabilityindia.in, accessed on 19th November, 2013

²⁵Chandhoke, Neera (2007), Engaging with Civil Society: The democratic Perspective, Non-governmental Public Action Program, Center for Civil Society, London School of Economics and Political Science, available through: <http://www.accountabilityindia.in/article/document-library/484-engaging-civil-society-democratic-perspective>, accessed on 20th November, 2013.

²⁶Centre for Good Governance (2005), op.cit.

Therefore, to generate information on social relevance, costs, and benefits of a programme/activity, Social Audit can be used to provide specific inputs for the following:

- To monitor social and ethical impact and performance of the organisation;
- To provide a basis for shaping management strategy in a socially responsible and accountable way and to design strategies for the future;
- To facilitate organisational learning on how to improve social performance;
- To facilitate the strategic management of institutions (including concern for their influence and social impact on organisations and communities);
- To inform the community, public, other organisations and institutions about the allocation of their resources (time and money); this refers to issues of accountability, ethics (e.g., ethical investment) etc.²⁷

8. Stakeholders and Social Audit

Social Audit uses participatory techniques to involve all stakeholders in measuring, understanding, reporting and improving the social performance of an organisation or activity.

Stakeholders are at the centre of the concept of Social Audit. The term "stakeholder" appeared for the first time in 1963 in an internal document of Stanford Research Institute, which defined stakeholders as the groups without whose support an organisation cannot exist. The term "stakeholder" includes "all those who have an interest in the activity of the organisation, even if the interest is not economic". Therefore, many stakeholders correspond to each organisation, and, according to the reference organisation, they can be the shareholders, the employees, the customers, the community, the state, the local administration, the competitors, the banks, the investors etc.²⁸

Social Audit does not study each group of stakeholders separately. Stakeholders have to be considered as a whole, because their concerns are not limited to the defence of their immediate interest. As a result, the Social Audit will work on the components of an organisation's social policy (ethics, labour, environmental, community, human rights etc.), and for each subject, the Social Auditor will analyse the expectations of all stakeholders. Stakeholders, therefore, provides a foundation and structure for Social Auditing.²⁹ Thus, stakeholders are those:

- whose interests are affected by the issue or those whose activities strongly affect the issue;
- who possess information, resources and expertise needed for strategy formulation and implementation;
- who controls implementation and instruments.

For any department, the stakeholders are the department staff at different levels, other line departments and the beneficiaries in the project area.³⁰

Stakeholders are the extension of the department as they influence, execute or facilitate department functioning. Social Audit thus needs to encompass their views on service delivery as well of those seeking benefits from the department. Thus, it becomes necessary to involve stakeholders in Social Audit.

Their participation in Social Audit would serve following purposes:

- Assessing the benefits as perceived by the beneficiaries;
- Giving the department an opportunity to seek suggestions for optimising efforts;
- Contributing towards initiating ownership among all stakeholders.³¹

Stakeholders' involvement should not be a casual get together or a meeting to seek their feedback as a token involvement. This needs to be integrated into the Social Audit process during the planning stage, and indicators on which information will be sought from the stakeholders need to be detailed out. Not all stakeholders will have information on all aspects of the department's programme and functions. Social Audit

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Centre for Good Governance (2005), op.cit.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

tools of assessment such as public meetings, stakeholders' workshops, beneficiary survey and focus group discussions can be used for obtaining information sought from the stakeholders.³²

9. Process of Social Audit

Social Audit, by definition, is carried out by the community of stakeholders. This will include beneficiaries / participants, implementing agency, Gram Panchayat representatives etc. The entire Gram Sabha is expected to participate in Social Audit. Since this may not be always possible, a group can be formed voluntarily (with encouragement by panchayats and officials) with representatives from beneficiaries, Self Help Groups, village level organisations, respected local/community leaders, youth clubs, marginalised sections (SC/ST/Women) etc. This group along with Gram Panchayat representatives and officials can carry out social audit and present their findings in the Gram Sabha. The social audit need not always be a specially organised activity or event but an 'on-going process'.

(a) Wide publicity for schemes/ programmes among local community, placing the GP plans, list of beneficiaries, plan estimates, funds receipts and expenditure etc. in the gram sabha are part of the social audit process. Instead of making this as a routine stipulation adhering to mechanical exercise, encouraging the community members to discuss and seek clarifications at the Gram Sabha itself can turn out to be a sort of social audit. Social animators and activists should facilitate this.

(b) Formation of Village level Monitoring Committees (VMC) with genuinely interested members than vested interests, allowing them to perform their assigned functions and requesting them to present their findings and observations in Gram Sabha is also a form of social audit.

(c) Keeping all relevant records, registers, documents etc. in proper and updated manner and making it available for anyone who wants to check and scrutinise is one of the functions of GP. This is all the more important and mandatory in the context of Right to Information Act and programmes like MGNREGA. Public display of planned works, estimates, fund flow, expenses, status of works etc. is also stipulated. Honestly adhering to these expected responsibilities will be facilitating social auditing process in the village.³³

9.1 Prerequisites for conducting social audit of a scheme/programme

A social audit is conducted over the life span of a scheme or programme, and not just in one go or at one stage. The activities that constitute a social audit include:

- a. Making people aware of their rights, entitlements and obligations under the scheme/programme.
- b. Specifically, making them aware of their right to participate in the ongoing process of social audit.
- c. Making sure that all the forms and documents are in simple, easily understandable language and structure and available in local languages.
- d. Also ensuring that all relevant information is publicly displayed on boards or through posters and is also read out at appropriate times for the convenience of the people, especially those who cannot read.
- e. Ensuring that the decision-making process, especially for those decisions that are critical and/or vulnerable to distortions, is transparent, open and carried out, as far as possible, in the presence of the affected persons.
- f. Making certain that all decisions, along with reasons, as appropriate, are also communicated as soon as they are made to the affected people and in a manner that makes it easy for them to comprehend.
- g. Where there is a need for measuring, inspection or certification, ensuring that randomly selected individuals, from among the affected persons, are involved on a rotational basis.
- h. Also ensuring that members of the public and especially those directly affected, are facilitated to inspect and verify records, inspect works and generally monitor planning and implementation.
- i. Where required, to have a formal public hearing (jan audit manch) where pertinent information is put before the public and verified in consultation with the affected persons.
- j. Ensuring that the findings of the social audit process are acted upon as they become available and that apart from addressing the specific issues, systemic changes are also brought about.³⁴

10. Benefits of Social Auditing to Government Departments

³² Ibid.

³³[Online] available through http://nrega.nic.in/circular/So_Audit_I.pdf, accessed on 26 November, 2013.

³⁴ Ibid.

Social Audit enables organisations to explore and generate their own values which form the basis for setting criteria for measuring performance. While there are broad based values generated from best practice, individual organisations can set criteria that relate to their stated purpose, their own environment and their stakeholder relationships to customise the Social Audit to their own needs and circumstances. A Social Audit will provide a coherent and clear image of an organisation and plan and execute social objectives in a transparent and fair way.³⁵The following are the benefits of Social Audit:

a. Enhances reputation: The information generated from Social Audit can provide crucial knowledge about the departments'/institutions' ethical performance and how stakeholders perceive the services offered by the government. The social angle in the delivery of services, real or perceived, can be a major factor adding to the reputation of the department and its functionaries. In an era where all the services are benchmarked and where citizens are becoming more aware about the services, the government departments are also aiming towards building their reputations. Social Auditing helps the legislature and executive in identifying the problem areas and provides an opportunity to take a proactive stance and create solutions.

b. Alerts policymakers to stakeholder trends: Social Auditing is a tool that helps managers understand and anticipate stakeholder concerns. This tool provides essential information about the interests, perspectives and expectations of stakeholders facilitating the interdependency that exists between the government and the community.

c. Affects positive organisational change: Social Auditing identifies specific organizational improvement goals and highlights progress on their implementation. Also, by integrating Social Audit into existing management systems, employees responsible for day-to-day decision making can more effectively address stakeholders' issues and concerns.

d. Increases accountability: Due to the strong emphasis on openness and accountability for government departments, the information disclosed needs to be fair and accurate. Social Auditing uses external verification to validate that the Social Audit is inclusive and complete. An externally verified audit can add credibility to the department's efforts. But the greatest demonstration of a Social Audit's authenticity must be seen in how the performance of the department improves over time in relation to its mission, values and objectives.

e. Assists in re-orienting and re-focusing priorities: Social Auditing could be a useful tool to help departments reshape their priorities in tune with people's expectations.

f. Provides increased confidence in social areas: Social Audit can enable departments/institutions to act with greater confidence in social areas that have been neglected in the past or have been given a lower priority.³⁶

11. Threats to Social Audit

Social audit is a community driven tool for transparency and accountability. It unearths corruptions, misappropriations and identifies the perpetrators of such deeds and exposes them and as well as makes them accountable in public forum. It is, therefore, natural that such vested interests will try to scuttle the social audit in all possible ways. Some such threats are briefly illustrated here.

a. Government Sponsored Social Audit: Some officials would initiate social audit with the help of external agency and also with high media glare. When such 'organised' social audits are planned, usually certain Gram Panchayats/ blocks will be identified. All required data, documents and registers would have been updated just for the social audit with a view to get a clean chit. Such 'stage managed' social audits do not really serve the purpose. Nevertheless, the publicity to even such social audit may still generate awareness notwithstanding the fact that such social audits may turn out to be a routine ritual.

b. Disruption: This is a very common feature in social audits, particularly when such audits are done with external facilitators and social activists. The 'mates' under MGNREGA in many places are accomplices of Sarpanches/ Pradhans/ Presidents and officials for fudging records and other misdeeds in employment guarantee schemes. The workers and community members who participate in social audit help in exposing

³⁵Spreckley, Freer, (2008), Social Audit Toolkit, Fourth Edition, Local Livelihoods Ltd., Herefordshire, available through: http://www.socialauditnetwork.org.uk/files/9013/2325/3606/Social_Audit_Toolkit.pdf, accessed on 21st November, 2013.

³⁶Centre for Good Governance (2005), op.cit.

the wrong doings. In the Social Audit Forum, the affected people would be encouraged to speak out and present their grievances. But the mates, supporters of the Sarpanch and other such elements will try and disrupt the proceedings by shouting or threatening people. Under such circumstances, people may not speak out of fear. There are also instances where Pradhans/ Sarpanches or other officials do not present themselves in the social audit or in the Gram Sabha.

c. Post - Social Audit Consequences: Social audits have exposed corruptions and misappropriations everywhere. The culprits have been publicly questioned and this is taken as a humiliation. The follow-up action have led to suspension, criminal proceedings etc. The guilty and accused may threaten, physically harm and harass the whistle blowers and other community members. This is usually very common in social audits conducted with the help of outsiders.³⁷

12. Conclusion

In India, there are a few organized spaces for citizens to directly participate in regular monitoring and evaluation of government programmes and hold the state officials accountable for their performance. However, Social Audit provides them one such platform. The objective of social audit revolves around empowerment of the beneficiaries and directly affected stakeholders in planning, implementation, delivery of services, appraisal, corruption and frauds, impact, etc. Thus, social audit provides a voice to the people to participate and be heard.

³⁷[Online] available through http://nrega.nic.in/circular/So_Audit_I.pdf, accessed on 26 November, 2013.