



Environment

Water & Environmental Sanitation Network
(WES-Net India)



Solution Exchange for WES-Net India Consolidated Reply

Query: Social audit for traditional wetlands, from Odisha Prakrutika Jalasampad Surakhya Abhijan, Orissa (Comparative Experiences; Examples).

Compiled by Preeti Soni, Resource Person and Moderator; additional research provided by Ramya Gopalan, Research Associate
15 December 2005

Original Query: Arnab Bhattacharjee, Odisha Prakrutika Jalasampad Surakhya Abhijan, Orissa

Posted: 29 November 2005

Dear Members,

I am a social worker engaged in issues related to the traditional wetlands in Orissa. Recently significant development work has been undertaken by various professional agencies including the Government to improve the livelihoods of indigenous groups who are dependent upon traditional wetlands. It is however not clear whether the benefits of these efforts are reaching the poorest among these groups. In this context, we are planning to conduct a social audit of the impacts of the development initiatives for traditional wetlands, where the projects will be especially examined from the perspective of how well they address equity issues.

Unfortunately, however, we have only a limited knowledge of the process and methodologies for social audits with focus on equity. My request to the Network is: to share information, experiences and/or direct me to organizations and persons who have developed and used such methodologies.

Responses received with thanks from:

1. [A. J. James](#), Pragmatix Research & Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon, Haryana
2. [V. Kurian Baby](#), Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF), Kerala
3. [Ritu Kanotra](#), UNDP, New Delhi
4. [Shashidharan Enarth](#), Development Support Centre, Ahemdabad

Further contributions are welcome!

Summary of Responses

This query seeks information on social audit methodologies for assessing the impact of development initiatives for traditional wetlands, with particular focus on equity issues. Although few responses were received, they provide valuable information and insights.

[Social audit](#) was described as one of the respondent as the process of employing participatory tools, both quantitative and qualitative, to assess the impact of development programs in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, equity and sustainability, vis-à-vis stipulated goals and objectives. In designing such a process, it is recommended to identify the social objectives, action plans and indicators. Once these are in place, simple procedures may be worked out to record everyday transactions (social book-keeping); periodically tally the indicators (social accounting) to ensure that it is on target; and recognize and assess the need for interventions in case of any deviations. It may be analyzed whether all process elements as envisaged in the design have been administered in the right manner, quality and in the expected time-frame, and that they meet the social objectives for not only the targeted population but also society at large.

In this context, the key parameters identified in examining equity in particular were described as:

- Participation in decision-making,
- Community voice and choice,
- Equity in horizontal and vertical access to benefits/services,
- Inclusion and gender equity,
- Financial propriety and cost effectiveness,
- Transparency and direct accountability (client power),
- Empowerment and capacity building
- Ownership and sustainability
- Distributional impact

Holistically viewing, it is suggested that the equity issues need to be analyzed not only in terms of the direct impact on the targeted population, but also the impact relative to the total population in the area. For example, in donor supported programmes the equity dimensions may be examined in the backdrop of the operational guidelines for indigenous people, if any.

Members' responses cited relevant methods appearing similar in their broader contexts yet different in their focus and processes. These and the recommended resources may be used to facilitate a more informed choice specific to the required context. The **Qualitative Information Appraisal** is used to assess qualitative issues such as demand-responsiveness, quality and effectiveness of implementation and unequal social access to development benefits. It is a flexible methodology and can be tailored to match local contexts and to address specific issues of concern. Other **participatory approaches** such as the **Participatory Assessment** used in Orissa to assess public services, encompasses a wider scope for local communities to engage in different stages (initial, intermediate and final decision-making stages). The **Development Audit**, which is broader holistic in its scope utilizing core, support and management processes, may include social audits (along with other system, financial and technical audits) as was undertaken for District Poverty Initiative Project (DPIP) in Rajasthan. In addition, the **Social Analysis** methodology involves analysis during a feasible study as a part of the strategy to incorporate social dimensions into a project, and the **Social Rating** is used to assess social impacts and performance particularly of micro-finance institutions. The methods and examples are discussed in greater detail below.

Comparative Experiences and Examples

Qualitative Information Appraisal (from [A. J. James](#), Pragmatix Research & Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon)

This is a self-contained three-step methodology to capture people's perceptions of processes and outcomes, using participatory methods, and to translate this qualitative information into numbers using different methods, especially ordinal scoring. It has been used in **Nepal, Sri Lanka** and **Vietnam**, besides

in donor-funded projects in India including the World Bank-supported District Poverty Initiative Project (DPIP), **Rajasthan**, World Bank's AAA on Urban Public Health in **Tamilnadu**, DFID supported **Andhra Pradesh** Rural Livelihoods Project (APRLP) and **Western India** Rainfed Farming Project (WIRFP), UNICEF-GOI Child's Environment Program, and the Doon Valley Project in **Uttaranchal**. Key feature includes its flexibility, which allows for it to be modified capturing different monitoring, evaluation and assessment issues. Everyone including the poorest are included in the assessment process, which makes it a participatory dialogue thus increasing sustainability. For further information see [Qualitative Information Appraisal: Using People's Perceptions in Large Development Projects](#)

Participatory assessment (Identified by [Ritu Kanotra](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

A Participatory Assessment of the State Government's delivery of public services in **Orissa** was undertaken as an effort to understand people's perceptions about government services and the constraints of the service providers in ensuring effective service delivery. This system has provided people the opportunity to evaluate the impact and benefits of public investments and in its full course is a significant effort towards public accountability and responsible governance. For details see [Participatory Assessment of the Government of Orissa's delivery of services which impact upon Poverty at the village level](#)

Development Audit (Identified by [Ritu Kanotra](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

A Development Audit of the District Poverty Initiative Project (DPIP) in **Rajasthan** was undertaken to enable its findings feed into the mid-term review recommendations. The primary framework entailed a holistic examination of the project for select districts including **Churu, Dausa, Jhalawar, Rajsamand**, as a system consisting of a core process, project outcomes and their alignment with project objectives. This included social audits along with comprehensive audit of systems, financial audit and technical audit. The positive effects observed following the development audit included regularized saving habit, upgradation of skills and provision of opportunities while adverse effects mainly included limited role of women and development agencies. For details see [Development Audit of District Poverty Initiative Project in Rajasthan](#)

Social Rating (Identified by [Shashidharan Enarth](#), Development Support Centre, Ahmedabad)

Particular to micro-finance institutions (MFIs), Social Rating is a tool to assess whether the MFI is achieving or is likely to achieve its development objectives. The method provides a graded assessment of an MFI's ability to reach and serve target markets. It assists investors in making the best use of resources and also provides useful information, enabling the development of more effective systems and services. An example is a pilot study has been done of Bullock Cart Worker's Development Association (BWDA) in **Tamil Nadu**. For more information see [Social Ratings of MFI's](#)

Social Analysis (identified by [V. Kurian Baby](#), Socio-Economic Unit Foundation,, Kerala)

Social Analysis (SA) is useful to identify and incorporate social dimensions into a project. The SA may include assessments of (i) the groups who are expected to benefit from and use services that are provided by the project, (ii) the needs of the group, (iii) their demands, (iv) their absorptive capacity, (v) gender issues and (vi) possible adverse effects on vulnerable groups. Although, the purpose of the SA is to ensure that social dimensions are included in project design, it does have lessons for incorporating these in other stages of the projects as well. For more information see [Handbook for Incorporation of Social Dimensions in Projects](#).

Related Resources

Recommended Organizations

PRAXIS India - Institute for Participatory Practices, New Delhi and Patna, (from [Ritu Kanotra](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

<http://www.praxisindia.org/training.asp>

Contact: Mr. Tom Thomas, CEO, PRAXIS (tomt@praxisindia.org)

PRAXIS has conducted social audits using participatory methodologies & is recommended for their training programs on these methods

From [Shashidharan Enarth](#), Development Support Centre, Ahemdabad

EDA Rural Systems, Gurgaon

<http://www.edarural.com>

Also see <http://www.edarural.com/social%20rating.html> for information on Social Rating of MFIs

Recommended for its longstanding work and information on social audit methodologies and activities.

New Economics Foundation, London

<http://www.neweconomics.org>

and

AccountAbility, London

<http://www.accountability.org.uk>

*These two organizations working at the **international** level in the field of social audit and their websites are recommended for related information..*

Recommended Documentation

Qualitative Information Appraisal: Using People's Perceptions in Large Development Projects

(from [A. J. James](#), Pragmatix Research & Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon) by,

A.J. James et al, available at,

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/environment/cr/res02120501.zip>

This paper describes the Qualitative Information Appraisal methodology developed by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, Delft, Netherlands, and Pragmatix, India

From [V. Kurian Baby](#), Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF), Kerala

Handbook for Incorporation of Social Dimensions in Projects

Asian Development Bank, Manila, 1994

http://www.adb.org/Documents/Handbooks/Social_Dimensions/default.asp (PDF Size: 304 kb)

This ADB handbook provides guidance in terms of incorporation of social dimensions in projects

Word Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for the Poor

<http://web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?menuPK=477704&pagePK=64167702&piPK=64167676&theSitePK=477688>

World Bank, 2004

Links to understand further conceptualizing design tools/methodology to examine equity dimensions in the backdrop of operational guidelines for indigenous people

From [Ritu Kanotra](#), UNDP, New Delhi

Participatory Assessment of the Government of Orissa's delivery of services which impact upon Poverty at the village level

PRAXIS, 2002

<http://www.praxisindia.org/praxisreports.asp> (PDF Size: 34 KB)

This study conducted in 40 locations across six districts in Orissa, looks at the state government's task force taking forward strategic thinking for poverty reduction

Development Audit of District Poverty Initiative Project (DPIP) in Rajasthan

PRAXIS, 2002

<http://www.praxisindia.org/praxisreports.asp> (PDF Size: 34 KB)

This report details the development audit of the DPIIP implemented by the Government of Rajasthan and undertaken for the World Bank.

Additional documentation recommended by [Preeti Soni](#), Resource Person

Social Ratings of MFI's

Micro-Credit Ratings International Limited (M-CRIL) May 2005

<http://www.edarural.com/documents/M-CRIL%20Social%20Rating%20-%202%20pg%20intro%20.pdf>

(Size: 141 KB)

An introduction to Social Rating by M-CRIL, which is credit rating agency offering a social rating product, along with EDA rural systems

An Assessment of the European aided Watershed Development Projects in India from the perspectives of poverty reduction and the poor;

by K N Ninan. Centre for Development Research, Copenhagen. Paper 98.3. 1998

<http://www.nird.org.in/clrc/RRDL79.html>

This paper assesses, with focus on using rapid rural appraisal technique, four watershed development projects in terms of their impact on the poor.

Additional documentation recommended by [Ramya Gopalan](#), Research Associate

Samajik Samikhya: a social audit process in a panchayat in Orissa

ActionAid India, Bolangir Team (2002), PLA Notes 43: 14-17

http://www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla_notes/documents/plan_04304.pdf (Size: 33 KB)

Details the process of pilot social audit process in Jharnipalli and Bolangir in Orissa, indicating challenges in implementing right to information process

Gender-sensitive Local Auditing: Initiatives from India to build accountability to women

by Anne Marie Goetz & Rob Jenkins, Special Report, World Bank Institute, Spring 2001

<http://www1.worldbank.org/devoutreach/spring01/article.asp?id=113>

This report discusses the verification of local and national budgets to ensure accountability particularly spending on areas that concern women

Social Auditing and Community Cohesion: The Co-operative Way

by Dr. Leslie Brown, Co-operatives Secretariat Publications, Canada, February 2001, Executive Summary available at,

http://www.agr.gc.ca/policy/coop/brown_e.phtml

This paper is a report of research on social auditing, credit unions, and social cohesion, and explores two main themes

An Introduction to Gender - Audit Methodology: Its design and Implementation in DFID Malawi

by Caroline Moser, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London, May 2005

http://www.odi.org.uk/pppg/publications/papers_reports/ODI_Moser_gender_audit_methodology.pdf (Size: 214 KB)

This working paper outlines main components of a gender audit methodology specifically designed to implementation of gender policies, programs, projects & strategies

Recommended Consolidated Replies

Engaging Local Bodies in Social Watch Process, from National Social Watch Coalition, New Delhi (Advice; Comparative Experiences).

[Consolidated Reply](#) (Size: 222 KB)

This Consolidated Reply posted on the Decentralization Community of Solution Exchange deals with the 'Social watch' process for monitoring activities of governance institutions.

Responses in Full

[A. J. James](#), Pragmatix Research & Advisory Services Pvt. Ltd., Gurgaon, Haryana

There is a methodology developed by IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, Delft, Netherlands, and Pragmatix in India, called the Qualitative Information Appraisal that has been used to assess qualitative issues such as demand-responsiveness, quality and effectiveness of implementation and unequal social access to development benefits. It has been used in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, besides in donor-funded projects in India (including the World Bank-supported Rajasthan DPIP, World Bank's AAA on Urban Public Health in Tamilnadu, DFID supported APRLP and WIRFP, UNICEF-GOI Child's Environment Program, and the Doon Valley Project in Uttaranchal). As is clear, it is a flexible methodology that can be tailored to fit local contexts, and to address issues of concern to specific clients. I can forward more information, if you like, but [here](#) is a paper that describes the methodology for your information.

[V. Kurian Baby](#), Socio-Economic Unit Foundation (SEUF), Kerala

Social audit is generally restricted across the country to the community audit of procurement, financial transactions and accounting. However, in the context of impact assessment, social audit is the process employing participatory tools, both quantitative and qualitative to assess the impact of development programmes in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, equity, impact and sustainability, vis a vis goals and objectives. If a logframe has already been done, review and rework in the context of its overall impact. Group the programme activity plan into product/progress and process driven (hard and soft). Conduct a process audit by analyzing whether all process elements as envisaged in the design has already gone in the right proportion, quality and in time. One key element (often sidelined) is to examine, whether the programme at large has achieved its social objectives, not only to the targeted population but also to the society at large.

In examining equity, the key parameters are; (a) participation in decision making, (b) community voice and choice (c) equity in horizontal and vertical access to benefits/services (d) inclusion (e) gender equity (f) transparency, (f) financial propriety and cost effectiveness (g) direct accountability (client power), (f) empowerment and capacity building (g) ownership and sustainability and (g) distributional impact. It would be also worthwhile to revisit the social/stakeholder assessment done at the time of programme design and to specifically examine the magnitude of deviation from the design objectives by stake gainers and losers using stakeholder matrix and scatter diagram- game theoretic models(e.g., community contracting has been diluted by outside contractors and binami elements, community contribution paid by vested interests, decision making usurped by elites and even implementation facilitators like NGOs etc.). In donor supported programmes, it would be necessary to examine the equity dimensions in the backdrop of the operational guidelines for indigenous people, if any. Some of the useful links are the websites of ADB and the World Bank.

Inter alia, the ADB publication titled [Handbook for Incorporation of Social Dimensions in Projects](#) and the [World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for the Poor](#), would help further in conceptualizing design tools/methodology.

[Ritu Kanotra](#), UNDP, New Delhi

You could get in touch with PRAXIS, an NGO based in Delhi and Patna, which has conducted several social audits using participatory methodologies. Two of their recent reports viz., '**Participatory Assessment of The Government of Orissa's delivery of services which impact upon Poverty at the village level**' and '**Development Audit of District Poverty Initiative Project (DPIP) in Rajasthan**', posted on their website: www.praxisindia.org/praxisreports.asp for more information on this.

Praxis also conducts regular training programmes on use of participatory methods in various thematic areas (including social audits). You will find more information on this from their website or alternatively you can also e-mail to Mr. Tom Thomas, CEO, PRAXIS at tomt@praxisindia.org

Shashidharan Enarth, Development Support Centre, Ahmedabad

Regarding the specific query: my familiarity with the subject of wetlands is quite poor and therefore my suggestion will only be based on the assumption that this project will have characteristics of an "at-risk" ecosystem.

EDA Rural systems (<http://www.edarural.com>) had worked on social audit methodologies many years ago and I would try them out. At the international level, I am aware of work done by New Economics Foundation (UK) (<http://www.neweconomics.org>) and AccountAbility (<http://www.accountability.org.uk>) in the field of social audit.

From my experience, livelihood activities based on threatened or fragile ecological resources fare quite poorly on sustainability count, for a simple reason that re-development and restoration processes are long drawn and expensive. So long drawn and expensive that indigenous groups are, almost certainly, not (institutionally or financially) equipped to deal with it. Resource users, particularly at the subsistence/livelihood level, have the highest stake but perhaps the least capacity to be stewards of the resource. Therefore any social audit endeavour will have to look at the role of public or external agencies who are charged with the mandate of preserving the integrity of the resource. Forest is a relatively robust resource and yet they have serious problems on this front. Wetlands, to my mind, will be even more complex.

Arnab has a challenge in his hands!

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for WES-Net at se-wes@groups.solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject heading "RE: [se-wes] Query: Social audit for traditional wetlands, from Odisha Prakrutika Jalasampad Surakhya Abhijan, Orissa (Comparative Experiences; Examples)".

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