

STRENGTHENING NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

Second round social audits of NFSA in KBK districts of Odisha
(Balangir, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur, Nuapada)

BACKGROUND

The National Food Security Act (NFSA) that has been enacted by Parliament in 2013 aims at providing food and nutrition security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity. It has a range of entitlements for households, pregnant women, lactating mothers as well as children under fourteen through Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Mid Day Meal (MDM) as well as Maternity benefit programmes. The act emphasizes on transparency, accountability, people's participation and grievance redressal for effective implementation and utilization of these services. NFSA mandates for regular social audits to bring transparency, accountability and participation in the implementation of schemes under it. Further the Lancet's framework of nutrition intervention, National Nutrition Strategy and various orders of the Supreme Court of India emphasized on social audit as a process of creating enabling environment and strengthening nutrition governance.

Against this backdrop, Collective Action for Nutrition (CAN), a programme of Society for Promoting Rural Education and Development (SPREAD) in partnership with Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives (APPI), has been working in 240 Gram Panchayats of 24 blocks in six KBK districts, i.e., Balangir, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Nuapada of Odisha. Social audits were conducted under the programme across the intervention areas of all the NFSA schemes including ICDS, TPDS, MDM and Maternity Benefit Scheme-Mamata. SPREAD has used an app based tool for collection, verification, analysis and compilation of information from the right holders as well as institutions. The analyzed findings were then presented in Palli Sabhas and finally in the special Gram Sabha in the respective Panchayats. Abiding by the Panchayat Rule all the Gram Sabha were presided over by the respective Sarpanch and other elected representatives played their role where right holders and service providers sat together to find out ways to improve the delivery of services.

So far two rounds of social audits have been carried out, first during January to May 2018 and second during December 2018 to February 2019. This summary report highlights the social audit findings of second round and presents a comparative picture of both the rounds on critical indicators.

Methodology

SPREAD followed the same methods for organizing the first and second round social audits across 240 Gram Panchayats, where the elected representatives took the lead with hand holding support. Concerned Sarpanch notified for special Gram Sabha and invited service providers to be present during the Gram Sabha. A team of 10-12 social auditors along with a team leader were placed for six to seven days in each Panchayat for facilitating the social audit process.

Social audit process involved beneficiary data collection and verification, institution verification and community meetings. The verification process ended with sharing the findings at the Palli Sabha and culminated at the Gram Sabha on last day where the findings were presented and decisions being taken to improve the services. Anganwadi centres were taken as the unit and all the centres in a Panchayat were verified as an institution providing nutrition services. At each centre level, 20% of beneficiaries from each category (6 months to 3 years children, 3 years to 6 years children, pregnant and lactating women) were verified with a set of questions. At least four Mamata beneficiaries from every AWCs were individually verified. Households verified for Mamata and ICDS were also verified for TPDS. Similarly Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were held with school children for MDM. Mobile based application was used by the team members for verification.

Village meetings/Palli Sabha were conducted in presence of Jaanch Committee, Mothers' Committee, PRIs and community members on functioning of the schemes and to create awareness. Palli Sabhas were presided over by the Ward Members. Panchayat social audit report was prepared after collating and analysing all the information collected during the social audit process. In the last and final day of social audit, the social audit report was presented in the Gram Sabha chaired by the concern Sarpanch in presence of right holders and service providers. Testimonies were collected and presented in Gram Sabha. Grievances were collected from Gram Sabha and submitted to concerned officials. Block and district level reports were prepared and shared at respective levels with PRIs and government officials.

Right holders and institutions verified

Category of right holders and Institutions	First round (January-May 2018)	Second round (December 2018-February 2019)
Pregnant women	4,625	5,744
Lactating mothers	4,779	6,440
Mothers of 6 months to 3 years children	12,295	13,753
3 years to 6 years children	13,377	14,910
Mamata beneficiaries	6,412	7,165
Households verified for TPDS	34,549	40,272
Number of AWCs	1,966	2,102
Number of FPS verified	159	163
Number of schools verified	1,722	1,838

Social audits played a significant role in mobilizing the communities and improving access and utilization of services. While the detail scheme wise findings are given in the following pages, here are some progresses on key indicators from first to second round social audits.

- * Substantial improvement was observed in delivery of full Take Home Ration (Eggs and Chhatua). During first round 24.5% beneficiaries were receiving full entitlement which increased to 39.07% by second round. This is 60.6% increase in beneficiaries getting complete THR from the previous round.
- * The percentage of Mamata beneficiaries getting no installment has gone down indicating that there is an improvement in delivery of Mamata. During the first round audit 57.4% beneficiaries identified not receiving a single entitlement, which has gone down to 37.01%.
- * Improvement was observed in morning snacks delivery at the ICDS centres. It was provided in 60% centres during first round which went up to 70% during second round.
- * There is a substantial improvement in the display of transparency board at the Fair Price Shop (FPS) which was non existence in the first round of social audit. Now a half of the FPSs have it. Improvement was observed in knowledge of the entitlements, especially among the beneficiaries of ICDS.

INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

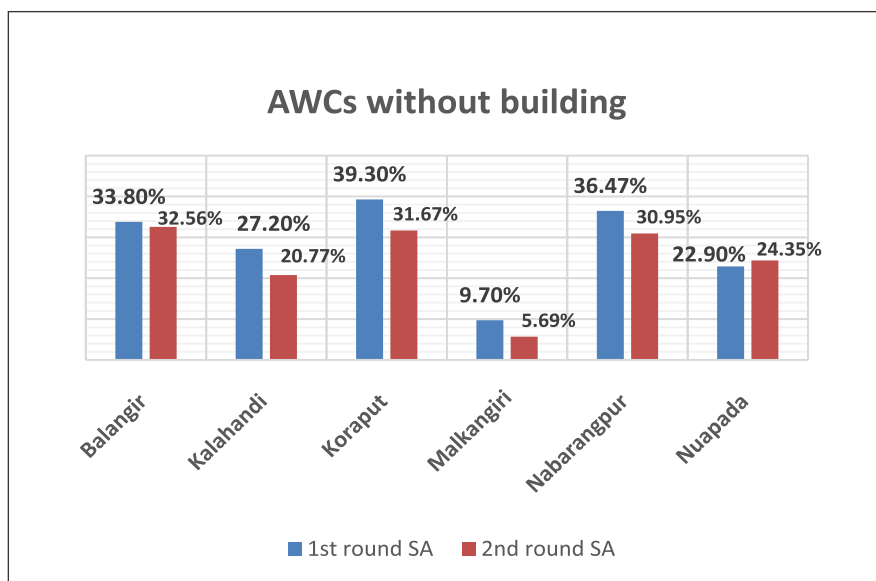
ICDS provides a gamut of integrated services to the children below six years, pregnant women and lactating mothers. During the second round social audit process held between December 2018 to February 2019, a total 2,102 Anganwadi centres and 40,847 beneficiaries were verified. As compared to the first round social audit, there is substantial improvement in both infrastructure and service indicators. At the same time there is improved engagement of PRI members as well as members of Jaanch Committee and Mothers' Committee in the functioning of Anganwadis. However, few critical issues need to be highlighted are as follows:



A. Infrastructure improved

but miles to go: - Almost one fourth (26.07%) Anganwadi centres don't have their own buildings and less than one sixth (15.27%) of the centres have boundary wall. This is a 15% improvement in AWCs having buildings and boundary walls respectively. There are also issues of AWCs not having functional child friendly toilets (78%), storage space (37%), separate kitchen space (45%), etc. It is essential to ensure that AWCs have all essential amenities to make it fully functional. The findings of the

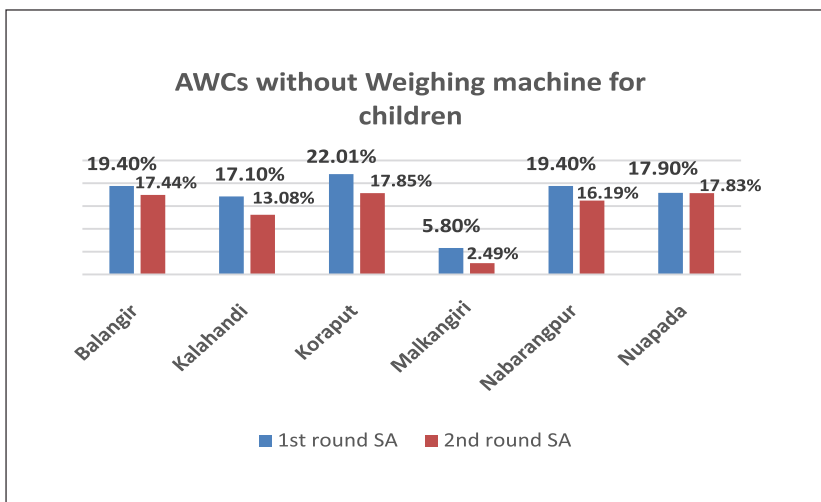
previous round of social audit had highlighted the issues of building and infrastructure bottlenecks with block and district officials which lead to improvement of infrastructural conditions. However, it is essential to ensure that all AWCs have required amenities in a time bound manner.



B. Equipment insufficiency:

- Around 85.2% Anganwadi centres have functional weighing machine for children and 64.2% have functional weighing machine for adults. It was also found that about one tenth of the AWCs didn't have hygiene kit (8.18%), teaching learning materials (10.47%) and play materials (9.32%). As compared to first round of social audit there are around 11% and 12% increase in the availability of functional weighing machine for children and adult respectively. To

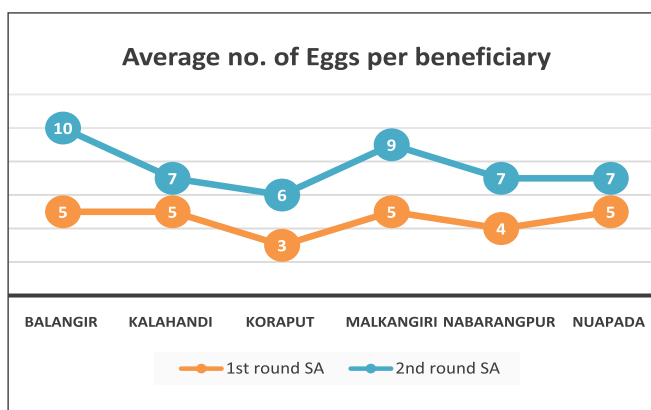
address the issue of malnutrition among children it is essential that growth measurements of children are undertaken every month. At least 14.8% AWCs having no functional weighing machine is a cause of concern. It is essential that Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti Department stipulates that all AWCs have functional weighing machine both for children and adults as early as possible along with hygiene kit, teaching learning materials and play materials.



C. Regular opening of Anganwadi centres:- It is essential that AWCs remain open on all working days for effective delivery of services. It came out from the social audit verification process that around 84.04% AWCs open on all working days. There is an improvement of almost five percentage point in the regular opening of AWCs as compared to first round of social audits. The improvement is across all the districts with highest seven percentage point increase in Malkangiri. At least 1.78% beneficiaries said that AWCs hardly opened during working days. Here also there is a marked 50% decrease in hardly opening AWCs across six districts. The primary reason of not opening of AWCs is non-availability of full time workers or not having both workers and helpers.

D. Take Home Ration:- A total of 39.04% of the beneficiaries got their entitled Take Home Ration (one packet of chhatua and twelve eggs) from the AWCs. There is a substantial 60.6% increase in the percentage of beneficiaries getting their entitled THR from the previous year. In the districts of Balangir and Malkangiri, a whopping 62.78% and 61.22% beneficiaries have received their entitled THR in the second round of social audit. However, the percentage of beneficiaries who didn't get a single packet of chhatua or egg is around 6.99% and 10.9% respectively. On an

average a beneficiary received eight eggs per month out of entitled twelve eggs. It was four eggs per beneficiary out of their entitled eight eggs during first round of social audit. Two third of the beneficiaries (67.02%) said they received their entitled laddu or chikki and 80% of the beneficiaries received halwa as part of the revised THR menu.



When it comes to morning snacks, one third of the beneficiaries (29.14%) never received it, which is a major cause of concern. Distance of the beneficiary household from the AWCs and irregular supervision of the respective AWCs affected the delivery of the entitlement. It is essential that monitoring and supervision of the AWCs are regular and time bound to improve the delivery of services along with beneficiaries being made aware of their entitlement and mandatory display of revised THR chart at the centre respectively.

E. Hot Cooked Meal: - A total of 85.4% of the beneficiaries were of the opinion that Hot Cooked Meal was prepared at the centre on all working days, which is around five percentage point improvement as compared to first round of social audit. However, around a half of the preschool children (54.53%) said they are having HCM at the Anganwadi centre. There is a worrisome 6.35% children who are never having HCM at the Anganwadi centre. It was also found that satisfaction level on quality and quantity of meal served is 76.69% and 86.77% respectively. It also came out from the second round of social audit that around a half (44.49%) of the parents of preschool children were unaware of the revised HCM menu, which is almost similar (43.58%) to the percentage of AWCs who have not displayed revised HCM menu at the centre. This establishes a correlation between awareness among the mothers on the HCM menu and delivery of services. Therefore, it is essential to make mothers aware of the menu through display of revised menu chart at the centre as well as communicate the message through community institutions such as Mothers' Committee and Jaanch Committee.

F. Growth monitoring: - Around a half of the children (50.09%) children were being weighed once in every month at the AWCs, almost five percentage point increase from the previous year. Similarly almost a half of the mothers were neither informed (46.8%) about colour zone (nutrition status) nor growth plotted (54.62%) in the Mother and Child Protection (MCP) card. There is no substantial improvement in both the cases in between both rounds of social audit. The Mid and Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) measurement was done every month with only one third of the children (36.15%). Even when it comes to display of growth chart it is only displayed in 60.56% of the AWCs. It is essential to ensure regular weighing and growth plotting of children on a monthly basis and reflecting the same in the MCP cards. It will help in correct reporting of growth status of children and ensuring effective intervention to reduce the same.

G. Issues of tag villages:- The functioning of ICDS services remains a matter of concern for tag villages. Ground realities show that children of tag villages are deprived of hot cooked meal and preschool. The problem is mostly prevalent in the remote and hilly parts of Koraput, Nabarangpur, Malkangiri and Kalahandi districts.

MATERNITY BENEFIT SCHEME - MAMATA

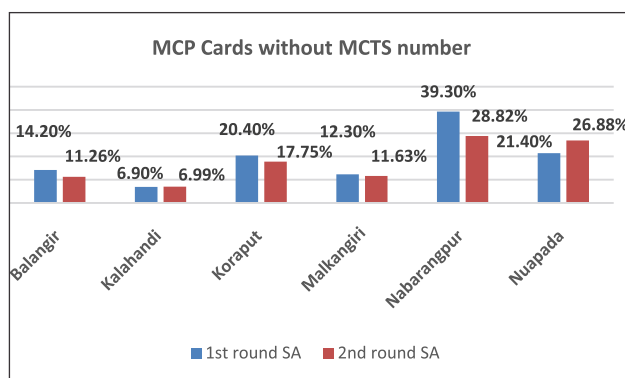
Mamata is a maternity benefit scheme of the State Government that provides conditional cash support of Rs.5,000 to pregnant and lactating women. The provisions of the scheme is comparatively better than Maternity Entitlement under National Food Security Act (Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana – PMMVY) as it has two child norm and for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group there is no limit on the numbers of children whereas PMMVY has one child norm for all. In the absence of PMMVY implementation in Odisha, Mamata scheme was considered for the purpose of social audit. During social audit 7,165 beneficiaries were verified in 240 Panchayats.



The key findings and recommendations for Mamata scheme are as follows:

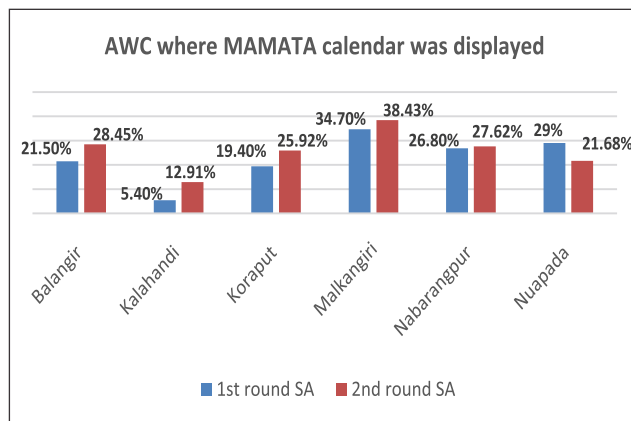
A. Instalments: - Out of 7,165 eligible women verified for Mamata, 2,652 (37.01%) didn't receive any single instalments, which is as high as 44.29% in Malkangiri district. However, in between two rounds of social audit, there is a visible improvement as it was 58.4% in the first round. It was also reported that in case of 38.33% of beneficiaries there were no delay in disbursal of instalments. Half of the beneficiaries were unaware of the reasons for delay in disbursal of instalments who received their instalment late. It is essential to have timely disbursal otherwise the purpose of the scheme gets defeated.

B. MCP cards: - Around 3% of the beneficiaries had been issued with MCP card long after their registration at the AWCs. It was lowest in Balangir with 1.2% and highest in case of Nuapada with 5.05%. It also came out during the second round of social audit that around one sixth (16.62%) of the beneficiaries were not issued MCTS number even though they had MCP cards, which is as high as 28.82% in Nabarangpur. Steps must be taken to ensure timely issuance of MCP cards and MCTS numbers to the beneficiaries.



C. Conditionalities: - Around 83.69% of the beneficiaries had institutional delivery, which is up from 78.9% from the first round of social audit. Institutional delivery found to be highest in Balangir with 97.75% and lowest in Nabarangpur with 74.86%. Again there is a visible increase in the percentage of mother's breastfed exclusively in the first six months of their child, which increased from 52.5% from first round of social audit to 86.6% in the second round of social audit. Exclusive breastfeeding rate was found to be highest in Koraput district with 92.65% and lowest in Nuapada district with 77.59%. It is essential to monitor the conditionalities closely which are the most neglected parts of the scheme.

D. Transparency:- Around one fourth (26.43%) of the beneficiaries were found to be aware of the provision of chart with name and amount disbursed to the beneficiaries being displayed at the AWCs in the second round of social audit, up from 21.5% in the first round of social audit. Mamata chart was displayed in around a half of the AWCs (45.2%) whereas it was highest in case of Malkangiri district with 59.79% and lowest in Kalahandi district with 25.38%. Mamata chart with name and amount disbursed to the beneficiaries should be displayed at the AWCs mandatorily and need to be updated at a regular basis. It is also equally important to make the Mamata data available online by the department for greater transparency.

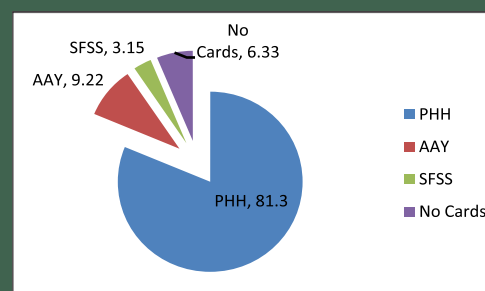


TARGETED PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

Out of four key entitlements under National Food Security Act (NFSA), Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is important in targeting household food and nutrition requirements. The NFSA-TPDS entitlement has two main provisions. Under its Priority Household (PHH) card, each individual in the household, which has a ration card and whose name is entered in the card, gets five kg of food grains (rice/wheat) at Rs1 per kg every month. Secondly, the households having an Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) card gets 35 kg rice per month at the same price. In Odisha almost 99% households have been provided with ration cards out of the total NFSA quota allotted by the Centre to State but the exclusion of eligible household's remains a cause of concern. In this context, the State Government launched its own State Food Security Scheme (SFSS) from October 2018 to benefit 25 lakh poor people who were left out of the NFSA. The entitlement under this scheme is same as the Priority Household.



The second round of social audit covered all the schemes including PHH, AAY and SFSS. Data on the scheme functioning, quantity, quality, regularity, transparency, were collected from 40,272 households and ration shops across 240 Gram Panchayats in six programme districts. The graph shows percentage of verified households having different types of cards.

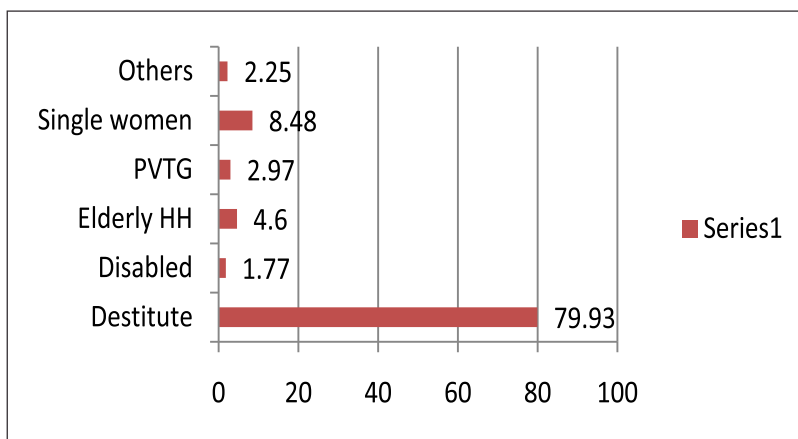


The following are the key findings and progress since the first round of social audits:

A. Households eligible for AAY but having PHH or SFSS cards: -

The AAY scheme is meant for the most marginalized households and there is clear direction of the Supreme Court of India in this regard under the famous Right to Food case. The GoI's guideline indicates the provision of AAY card for destitute, households belonging to particularly vulnerable tribal group, the head of the household being aged, disable and single women. However, social audit

finding reflects that a number of households are given PHH or SFSS cards despite their eligibility for an AAY card. The second round social audit finding reflects that out of 34,011 households having PHH or SFSS cards, 3,505 (10.30%) households are eligible for the AAY cards. The graph depicts the details of categories of those households who are eligible for AAY cards with destitute households continuing on the top, followed by single women and elderly headed households.



B. Intra household exclusion continues as a cause of concern: - The issue of intra household exclusion (household having a PHH/SFSS card but name of all the individuals of the HH not entered) continues to be cause of concern in the State. Although the exclusion process continued, the auto inclusion is not being done as per the norm. The second round social audit finding reflects that in 34,011 PHH/SFSS cards, names of 1, 29,542 individuals are mentioned against the actual of 1, 65,441 actual members in the family. This shows that a total of 35,899 in these households are being left out from TPDS. Therefore the intra household exclusion stands at 21.69%, which is quite high, especially in the context where the State Government is reiterating its commitment on food security.

C. Quantity, quality and regularity has a positive story to tell: - Timely distribution of food grains and adherence to quantity and quality norms are significant indicator of the functioning of TPDS. The social audit finding reflects a very positive progress on this front. During second round of social audit, overall 98.80% households were satisfied with the quality, which increased from 97.75% in first round. Similarly 89.40% households were satisfied with the weight of the food grain during first round which went up to 94.04% during second round audit. Besides, more than 98% households mentioned that the ration is being distributed in regular basis as per the norm. There is a decrease in the percentage of households facing problem due to non seeding of Aadhaar from 10.10% in the first round to 6.57% in the second round audits.

D. Diversification of food grain and commodities not done: - Diversification of TPDS by including millets, edible oil, etc. could not be done even though it is advised under NFSA. The social audit finding shows, people are interested to receive various commodities under the ration system. The State Government has taken a decision to distribute millets under TPDS.

E. Transparency, accountability and grievance redresal is yet to be full-fledged: - NFSA has clear provision of transparency and accountability mechanisms. This plays a significant role in improving the implementation of the scheme. The social audit finding shows that there is an improvement in constitution of the PDS Advisory Committee. Out of 164 fair price shops verified physically, in 52, the committees have been formed. However the awareness and functioning of the committee remain at low level. The display boards are available in a half of the FPS centres. Overall, TPDS gives a mix picture, while substantial improvement is observed on quantity, quality and regularity indicators, inclusion, diversification, transparency and grievance redresal continues as the setbacks. Further, the District Grievance Redresal (DGRO) system/provision is not functional.

MID DAY MEAL SCHEME

Mid Day Meal scheme continued to function better in comparison to three other schemes under NFSA. During the second round social audit a total of 1,824 schools were covered for MDM verification. Out of these total schools, 1,173 were primary, 629 upper primary and 22 schools up to elementary level. As part of MDM verification, focus group discussions were carried out with 15-20 students in each school representing different



classes. Along with it, interview was conducted for the cook cum helper and registers maintained by the teachers were verified. The following are some of the key findings of Mid Day Meal verification process:

A. MDM serving is regular: - Overall in all the 1,824 schools, it has observed that MDM is being served on all the school days and the weekly menu is being followed. In 91.61% schools, children shared that there had never been a shortfall of MDM.

B. Yet all schools yet lacking in basic infrastructure: - There is no substantial improvement when it comes to basic infrastructure in the schools for smooth functioning of MDM. At least 15.46% schools across six districts do not have separate kitchen sheds. Balangir tops the list with 21.08% schools not having kitchen sheds followed by Kalahandi (18.85%), Koraput (16.28%), Nabarangpur (14.53%), Nuapada (11.56%) and Malkangiri (5.62%). Further, separate store room is not available in 41.18% schools out of those schools where kitchen sheds are made. A total of 34.37% schools reported that they do not have sufficient containers for keeping the food items. 26.91% schools reported to not have clean drinking water facilities within or near the school campus.

C. Irregular honorarium but high expectations: - The cook cum helpers are expected to deliver MDM on time and with quality. However they are paid very less and experience irregular payment. More than a half of the CCH reported during the verification (57.07%) that their honorarium is pending for more than two months. Around 5% CCH reported that there honorarium is pending for more than four and five months.

TAKEAWAYS



The experience of two rounds of social audit reflects that it has the potential of mobilizing community, creating mass awareness, bringing transparency and accountability in delivery of the food and nutrition services. It is evident from the findings that the process has a direct impact on improving awareness, access and utilization of entitlements and services. Both pre social audit environment building and post social audit follow up has created a space for local elected representatives, especially Ward Members and Sarpanchs to understand and act for ensuring food and nutrition in their respective areas. In this context, the State Government must take immediate steps for institutionalization of the social audit process.

The experience further reflects that social audit and other downward accountability tools could be used in a larger context. Along with NFSA, social audit could be used to ensure access to other nutrition specific and sensitive entitlements for children. Based on the experience we request the State Government to take following measures.

- * Social audit is an effective tool for downward accountability. So the Government must come up with a rule for the social audit under NFSA and rollout plan for social audits of National Food Security Act as well as other nutrition programmes as mandated under the law.
- * All the information about ICDS, Mamata should be put in public domain for greater transparency.
- * While planning for and executing social audit, emphasis must be given on pre and post social audit, as it is a continuous process. Organizations having experience can play a supportive role. Timely action should be taken based on the Gram Sabha findings.

- * In order to improve nutrition status, along with nutrition specific and sensitive programmes, focus should also be given on nutrition governance as a cross cutting area. Nutrition governance primarily includes awareness, participation, leadership and grievance redresal at all levels.
- * Convergence of different nutrition programmes/schemes at different level is a significant component to improve nutrition. Panchayats are well placed institutions at local level for convergence of nutrition programmes.



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(06.07.1989 - 26.02.2019)

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