

Progress and Challenges of the social audit in MGNREGS

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Context- Fresh data from the Social Audit Management Information System (MIS) managed by the Ministry of Rural Development sheds light on the **progress and challenges of the social audit of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)**.

What is the Progress of Social Audits in MGNREGS?

- According to social audit MIS, only six out of 34 states and union territories have crossed the 50% mark in gram panchayats for conducting social audits of works under MGNREGS.
- Kerala is a pioneer in achieving 100% gram panchayat coverage in social audits by adopting a comprehensive and inclusive approach.
- Apart from Kerala, five more states have crossed the 50% mark in social control coverage namely Bihar (64.4%), Gujarat (58.8%), Jammu and Kashmir (64.1%), Odisha (60.42%) and Uttar Pradesh (54.97%).
- Only three states covered 40% or more of villages : Telangana (40.5%), Himachal Pradesh (45.32%) and Andhra Pradesh (49.7%). Apart from Telangana, the figures of poll-bound states are very low – Madhya Pradesh (1.73%), Mizoram (17.5%), Chhattisgarh (25.06%) and Rajasthan (34.74%).

What is a social audit?

- **Information:**
 - Social auditing is the process of looking at official records and determining

whether government-reported expenditures match the actual money spent on the ground.

- Social audit is an anti-corruption mechanism built into the MGNREGA Act, 2005.
- This includes quality control of the infrastructure created under the MGNREGA Act, financial rules for wages and checking of procedural irregularities.

- **Objectives:**

- Social audits aimed at empowering local communities empower citizens to review and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of government initiatives.

- **Legal framework:**

- In the context of MGNREGS, Section 17 of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) obliges the Gram Sabha to monitor the execution of works, providing a legal basis for social audits.
- Audit of Scheme Rules, 2011, also known as Audit of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Rules, 2011, was developed by the Ministry of Rural Development in collaboration with the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India.
- These rules define social audit procedures and responsibilities of various agencies including Social Audit Unit (SAU), state government and MGNREGA field workers to be followed nationwide.
- Social audit units operate independently of executive authorities and ensure impartial evaluation of programs.
- To ensure the autonomy of social audit units, they are entitled to funds equal to 0.5% of the government's MGNREGA expenditure in the previous year.
- In cases where states do not conduct regular social audits, the Center is empowered to withhold funds allocated under the MGNREGS programme.

- **Challenges in implementation:**

- Limited awareness of the legal framework for social audits, especially among local communities, can prevent their active participation in the process.
- The limited financial resources of social control units can threaten their ability to carry out thorough and effective control and limit the scope of their activities.
- The onslaught of political influence can hinder the impartiality of social audits and affect the authenticity and objectivity of the evaluation process.
- Lack of cooperation and coordination between the administrative and social control units.
- Lack of follow-up and action on findings and recommendations of social audit reports.
- There is no protection and support for social inspectors and whistleblowers who are threatened and harassed for their own benefit.

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Practice question:

Q. Write a note on MGNREGA and its implementational gaps.