

A Guide to Conducting

# SOCIAL AUDITS

in South Africa



“In many countries, there is an increased emphasis  
on words such as participation, transparency,  
and accountability in governance –  
social audits bring these words to life.”

*Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey*

*Founder members of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan*

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## Who is this guide for and how can it be used?

This is a guide for community activists and organised civil society interested in conducting social audits in South Africa. It aims to help these groups think about, conduct, and reflect on social audits. The Guide may also be of use to other stakeholders (such as government) that want to better understand a process they may be requested to participate in.

The Guide can be used by civil society organisations wishing to conduct a social audit, or adapted to train community members or civil society organizations on the social audit methodology. It could also be given to government officials or independent observers when requesting their participation in a social audit process.



# Preface

In the year 2002 I had the opportunity to travel to Cape Town, South Africa for the very first time to attend a Freedom of Information conference, where I shared the story of the Public Audits and Jan Sunwai (Public Hearings) conducted in rural Rajasthan, India by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS). Almost all the South Africans in the room were excited by the concept but felt that it would be difficult to replicate given the circumstances of their country.

Eleven years later, not only did I have the privilege of conducting a training for the first ever social audit in South Africa, but I was also able to participate in it. The social audit exercise was undertaken by the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) on portable chemical toilets in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. Clearly, it was an idea and process whose time had come and nothing could have stopped it!

Subsequently, the SJC and other organisations have conducted social audit exercises of various public programmes meant for the most underprivileged and marginalised sections of society and social audits are fast emerging as a popular social accountability tool. Social audits seek to engage citizens and communities directly in monitoring the delivery of public services and holding government to account for poor performance, mismanagement or, in some cases, outright corruption.

Social audits are governed by certain principles that apply to it no matter where in the world the exercise is carried out and by whom. These principles are important because they ensure that not everything is passed off as a social audit and that the exercise can realise its full potential. The minimum principles are – having access to information, demystification of official records, providing a collective platform for sharing and reflecting on information, citizens being the auditors and ensuring that the social audit is independent and above partisan influence.

It is in this context that this guide will be an invaluable resource for any group that would like to conduct a social audit. The guide presents the principles to be followed in a social audit and presents learning from audits undertaken in South Africa and elsewhere. One hopes that the process that has begun as a small civil society initiative will be spread across South Africa so that all citizens across the country will have a chance to regularly audit programmes meant for them.

*Sowmya Kidambi*



# SECTION 1

**What is a  
Social Audit?**

**WHAT IS  
A SOCIAL  
AUDIT?**



**A social audit is a community-led process that facilitates public participation in the monitoring of government service delivery and expenditure.**

**During the social audit process, communities study government documents and compare them to their experiences as recipients of a public service.**

**Evidence and experiences are collected, presented, and then discussed with government officials at a public hearing.**

## Why do we Need Social Audits?

South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world. More than 30% of South Africans are unemployed and sadly the gap between rich and poor is growing.

Most South African cities remain segregated. A large portion of the population live in townships on the periphery. Home to 1.5 million households, informal settlements suffer from high levels of unemployment, poor service delivery, and violent crime. People living in these communities lack access to basic public services such as clean drinking water, regular and reliable refuse collection, and safe electricity. Many families are forced to share poor and undignified sanitation facilities run by outsourced contractors who are unreliable, unresponsive, and unaccountable to the communities they should be serving.

The right of all South Africans to participate in the political life of the country, however, is enshrined in the Constitution and is an integral aspect of post-apartheid South African law. Section 195 of the Constitution requires that every sphere of government, organ of state, and public enterprise ensure the following:

- People's needs must be responded to.
- The public must be encouraged to participate in policymaking.
- Public administration must be accountable.
- Government must be transparent and provide the public with timely, accessible, and accurate information.

Yet the gap between this right and the everyday experiences of poor South Africans is stark: In practice poor and working class communities are largely excluded from the government decision-making processes that affect them. At the local government level, council or ward committees have generally failed to establish mechanisms for real community participation and access to the information that people need to participate in government decisions is often lacking. The situation is no better at national and provincial levels. The heart of the problem is that government is not open, responsive, or accountable to the communities that they ostensibly serve. Poor and working class people are left struggling to make their voices heard.

Communities that try to initiate engagement with government are often ignored or treated with contempt. Violent protests, the destruction of infrastructure, and land occupations are manifestations of a simmering rage caused by broken promises around jobs, inadequate housing, poor service delivery, unjust social and economic exclusion, and political disempowerment.

Engagement by the government largely follows a top down approach and assumes that officials are well placed to assess the needs of the public. Participation is often limited to informing the community of decisions that have already been made.

Empowerment begins with the community taking the initiative to engage government. There are daily examples of communities mobilising and reaching out to government in innovative ways, through petitions, letters, marches, and meetings. Too often, however, these attempts at participation are misconstrued, attacked, or ignored because the government has not developed the capacity to respond to community-led participation in ways that are equally innovative.

Evidence shows that meaningful community participation and deliberation on all aspects of service delivery – from budgets to contract specifications and performance reviews – can significantly improve service delivery. Communities and civil society organisations must persist in their efforts to establish community participation. Tools such as social audits are essential for engaging effectively with government.

**Social audits are a powerful tool for communities to engage constructively with government in contexts where formal participation spaces are largely dysfunctional. A community-led social audit is a vehicle for community organisation and empowerment. It is also a process of serious investigation and participation in governance. Social audits offer a forum for communities to articulate their demands and turn public participation and democracy into a reality.**

## SOCIAL AUDITS VERSUS FINANCIAL AUDITS

The government has at times questioned the legitimacy of social audits by arguing that these investigations are not truly audits. While there are important differences between social audits and financial audits, social audits are indeed a legitimate audit exercise.

Financial audits assess whether the financial statements produced by a government agency accurately portray the financial condition and activities of that agency. In contrast, social audits assess whether government records reflect the actual expenditure and delivery of services to communities. Thus we can see that both financial and social audits scrutinise official government documentation related to expenditure and delivery, but with very different ends in mind.

Social audits also go one step further than other kinds of audits. They not only result in the production of a document, but also provide the opportunity to hold government to account. Unlike other audits, a social audit concludes with a public hearing where the audit findings are presented, often showing discrepancies between records and reality. Through these public hearings a community can hold government authorities to account.

FINANCIAL AUDITS	SOCIAL AUDITS
Compare documents for consistency	Compare documents to reality
Conducted by government	Conducted by communities
Only reports, no accountability	Accountability built into the process



## What is a Social Audit?

A social audit is a community-led process of reviewing official documents to determine whether the public expenditure and service delivery outcomes reported by the government really reflect the public money spent and the services received by the community. Members of the community collectively participate in a process of verifying government (or private company) documents by comparing them with the realities on the ground and the experiences of the community. Evidence collected during the audit is then reported to the responsible authorities at a public hearing. Community testimony, knowledge, and experience are a legitimate and central part of this evidence. Government documents may include budgets and reported expenditure, tenders or contracts, invoices and receipts, as well as supporting laws, reports, policies, plans, or norms and standards.

A social audit provides a way to build effective and meaningful public participation in poor and working class communities by providing a means for the community to engage with the governance processes that affect their lives. Social audits empower communities to gather and legitimise evidence of their experience of service delivery, and through this process enables them to claim and realise their constitutional rights to democratic participation and accountable government. Social audits build community power, deepening the culture of participatory democracy and public deliberation. They provide an opportunity for vulnerable and marginalised voices to be heard, and a space for people who have been excluded and discriminated against to achieve a measure of justice and to hold government to account.



## Where do Social Audits Come From?

The methods and principles of social auditing that have been adopted in South Africa follow the traditions established by the Mazdoor Kishan Shakti Sangathan (Association for the Empowerment of Workers and Peasants, or MKSS).

MKSS was established in Rajasthan, India in 1990 with the objective of strengthening participatory democratic practices. It is one of the most effective social movements in India, best known for successfully achieving the enactment of the Right to Information Act. The demand for this act grew out of the struggle of workers in the Rajasthan state public works programme for a minimum wage. Sowmya Kidambi, an activist in MKSS, remembers how they posed one question: “When government spends public money, why can’t those records be made public?”

The MKSS social audit methodology grew from this right to information campaign. The records that MKSS managed to secure were closely examined by workers in each village. They found that many of the infrastructure projects only existed on paper, were not completed, or that the quality was very poor. Discrepancies between what the records said the workers had been paid and the hours they had worked, and the workers’ actual work time and wages, were also discovered.



One of the most significant innovations of MKSS was its use of public hearings which government officials were invited to attend. Detailed documents containing official expenditure records were read aloud at community gatherings and community members gave individual and collective testimonies of their experiences of government service delivery. Through this process, differences between official records and peoples' experiences began to surface. In this way, the power of the social audit to mobilise the community to achieve transparency and accountability began to emerge.

In 2005 MKSS secured national legislation in India guaranteeing access to state records under the Right to Information Act (RTA). In the same year MKSS helped to establish the right to work across India through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The MGNREGA scheme provides rural households with the right to demand at least 100 days of work a year at the minimum wage. Under the act, each scheme must undergo two social audits annually in each local area.

The MKSS example of social auditing has been adapted in many places around the world. Some social audits, such as those conducted by Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI) in Kenya, are firmly rooted in civil society campaigns; others, such as those conducted by the Society for Social Audits, Accountability and Transparency (SSAAT) in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, have evolved into large scale state-supported social audits.

The first social audit in South Africa was conducted in April 2013 by the Social Justice Coalition (SJC) and Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU), with support from the International Budget Partnership (IBP) and two pioneers of social audits in India, Vivek Ramkumar and Sowmya Kidambi. The audit looked into the provision of communal chemical toilets in the large township of Khayelitsha in Cape Town.

Since April 2013 the SJC has partnered with NU in conducting three more social audits in Khayelitsha. An audit of refuse removal and area cleaning was conducted in August 2013, and the janitorial service for communal flush toilets was audited in July 2014. In November of 2014 SJC and NU, along with a number of other South African civil society organisations, participated in a social audit learning exchange to India. From discussions during and after this trip, two important learnings emerged. The first was that social audits need to be more community owned and the second was that social audits need to address specific injustices rather than just systemic issues. Based on this learning and further processes of reflection, SJC and NU implemented a revised approach with their fourth social audit in August 2015. This was the first in a series of planned localised audits which explore issues within individual sections of Khayelitsha in greater depth, rather than investigating a single issue across a number of sections. The SJC aims to develop greater community involvement through their localised audits.

Equal Education, a South African membership-based community organisation, has recently begun conducting social audits. In February and March of 2015, they audited sanitation in 200 schools across the Gauteng province in partnership with other community organisations.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIAL AUDITS

### **Social Audits are Led by the Community**

Social audits are conducted by residents living in a community and are concerned with issues identified by that community. They are conducted in the language of residents and are inclusive processes in which everybody, especially women and young people, can participate.

### **Social Audits Help to Realise Constitutional Rights and Build Community Power**

Social audits promote active citizenship and help those who are most vulnerable to exercise their constitutional rights. In a highly unequal society, where so many live without access to decent health care, employment, or education, social audits create opportunities for communities to organise themselves and build community power. They are a way for the marginalised to make themselves heard. In the face of unfulfilled promises of justice and equality, social audits allow communities to claim their constitutional right to participate in governance and improve government accountability and performance. In this way, community-led social audits can help poor and working class people contribute to deepening democracy and improving the lives of all people.

### **Social Audits Should be Part of a Broader Advocacy Campaign**

Social audits are typically carried out as part of a broader advocacy campaign and cannot be used as an isolated strategy for social change. Social change takes time and single events seldom make a significant and lasting impact. Social audits are most effective when used alongside other advocacy tactics, to draw attention to problems and to build legitimacy for demands.

### **Social Audits Gather Evidence and Legitimise Community Experience**

Social audits aim to legitimise the experiences and knowledge of the community as forms of evidence. Personal stories and testimonies are central to the evidence base of a social audit. They challenge the hegemonic and technocratic approach of government administrations by placing community experience and knowledge at the centre of participation and deliberation. This is an important element of community empowerment which lies at the heart of the social audit methodology. It is also one of the key differences between a survey of a community by outsiders, and a community-led social audit.



## **Social Audits Examine and Verify Government Documents**

Social audits require access to official government (or private company) documents. This may include budgets and reported expenditure, tenders and contracts, invoices and receipts, as well as supporting laws, reports, policies, plans, and norms and standards. By gathering evidence and forming an understanding of what to expect from government, communities can verify official obligations and commitments against their own experiences of a particular service. Verification of official records includes interviews with community members about their experiences of a particular service and direct observations of infrastructure and service delivery. This process can require a significant investment of time and resources from community organisations and community members.

## **Social Audits Hold Government Accountable Through Public Hearings and Follow up**

Social audits include a public hearing where community members can present their findings and experiences, and where government officials have an opportunity to respond. This creates a forum for residents to openly raise and deliberate on the issues that affect their everyday lives in the presence of the government officials who are responsible for service delivery. This process can promote government accountability and bring about justice for people whose rights have been violated. Ideally it should be a space for community and government stakeholders to engage constructively about issues and come up with solutions.

Government officials are held accountable at the meeting by being pressed to make commitments to take remedial action and to report back to residents within a specified timeframe. This most often requires follow-up strategies to ensure that officials are held to these commitments and that those who took part in the process are regularly informed of progress.

## **Social Audits are Nonpartisan**

Social audits may be political but are explicitly not based on party politics. They should facilitate broad public scrutiny of local, provincial, and national government irrespective of which party is in power. Being nonpartisan is crucial if the social audits and public hearings are to be open spaces that are free of coercion. Being open and clear about this will also help to counter claims by political leaders that the social audit process is a witch-hunt or driven by organisations with political party affiliations or agendas.

# Stakeholders in a Social Audit

There are three groups of stakeholders that are central to the social audit process: the **Community**, **Organised Civil Society** and the **Government**. For clarity, we define these groups upfront and discuss the terms used to refer to them in this Guide.

## Community

**Community** refers to a group of people, community members, or residents who are affected by failures in a government service within a particular area and want to help the government to improve this service. Members of this broader community may interact intermittently with the social audit process as interviewees during the evidence-gathering or they may attend the public hearing and share their experiences of the service. The terms **participants** and **participant group** refer to those who participate in the day-to-day implementation of the social audit throughout the process. This is an elected group of individuals, some of whom will come from the affected community, who represent the interests of the wider community. Participants can also include individuals from other communities.





## Organised Civil Society

In South Africa, **organised civil society** also plays an important role in the social audit process. Civil society organisations act as intermediaries, facilitating and supporting the social audit process. Organisations fulfilling this role work closely with communities to assist them during each step of the social audit process. This role can be played by a single organisation or by a network of organisations. In this Guide these intermediary organisations are most often referred to as **organisers** and can include social movements, nongovernment organisations, community-based organisations, churches, or trade unions.

## Government

**Government** can refer to government officials or politicians who are responsible for, or somehow involved in, the delivery of a service to the relevant community. **Politicians** are elected officials. This includes councillors in local government, for example the Mayoral Committee member responsible for Utility Services, and provincial politicians, for example the Member of Executive Council for Education. The term **government official** refers to those in the public administration who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of a public service. For example, the head of the provincial education department and all the officials working to deliver education. An example at local level would be the Executive Director of Utility Services and all the government officials responsible for delivering water and sanitation services to the public within that municipality.

While the government is ultimately responsible for all public services, the delivery of the service is often outsourced to a **private company** or an **external service provider**. This means that social audits often need to investigate the quality of a service delivered by a private company.







# SECTION 2

## Conducting a Social Audit

# PHASE 1

# Preparing and Planning a Social Audit

Before conducting a social audit, organisers need to conduct extensive preparations. You will need to establish the necessary links in the relevant community, identify a focus for the social audit, access the necessary government documents, and plan logistics for the audit.



# PHASE 1:

## Preparing and Planning a Social Audit

### PREPARE



#### ESTABLISH LEGITIMACY IN THE COMMUNITY

*Identify and engage with appropriate community structures and leaders*



#### IDENTIFY A FOCUS

*Work with the community to identify an issue to audit*



#### OBTAIN GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

*Determine who in government is responsible for delivering the service and gather relevant government documents*



### PLAN

- *Constitute a core group of organisers*
- *Mobilise participants*
- *Engage other relevant stakeholders*
- *Decide on dates and organise logistics*



## Preparing For a Social Audit: Establishing Legitimacy in the Community

Any organisation or group of people that intends to facilitate a social audit must establish legitimacy in the relevant community or communities. This should be done by forging links with both community leaders and residents. As the social audit process relies heavily on the involvement of the community, and their willingness to share their experiences of the services being audited, it is crucial to first establish legitimacy for the audit process itself and those organising it. There is no hard and fast rule about how long this process of building a relationship of trust takes. But the need to do so is non-negotiable.

Organisations that are based in poor and working class communities, or those who have established relationships with people, networks, and organisations in these communities, are best placed to facilitate social audits.

### Engaging with Existing Community Structures and Leaders

It is critical to ascertain the most appropriate community organisations, networks, and leaders to work with. Building the necessary relationships depends on establishing a relationship of trust in the community. Residents need to feel that they have been consulted about your presence in their community and about your intentions regarding the social audit.

Some authorities, such as street committees in informal settlements or traditional leaders in rural areas, require consultation and a form of consent because they exercise power and have established a watching brief on activities and resources within a community. Others, such as churches and school governing boards, are important to approach because they have established communication networks and forums for consultation.

Some communities may lack established structures and leaders. It may be possible for organisers to use the social audit itself to help organise residents around their experiences of a particular government service. Coming together to engage with government over a shared problem can be a powerful collective experience.

## Fostering a Democratic and Inclusive Culture

Having established links in the relevant community, it is important to consider how to engage with these groups and individuals for the purpose of planning and implementing a social audit. The organisers of a social audit need to build and demonstrate a culture of inclusiveness and participatory democracy by fostering processes of consultation, consensus, relationship building, and public deliberation. A well-facilitated discussion, where opinions can be heard, can lead to consensus or compromise. Specific efforts should be made to include women, young people, the elderly, and people with disabilities, in the social audit process. In this way the experience of a social audit challenges top-down government models of governance and decision making.

Numerous decisions will be taken during the social audit process and organisations need to carefully consider who should be involved in which kinds of decisions. Sometimes decisions are operational and can be made by the organisers of the social audit. Some decisions require consultation and collective decision making within the community.

## Being Open and Honest About Political Risks

Social audits attract attention. They draw media attention to issues that powerful people may prefer to keep out of the public domain. They also put the spotlight on the performance of private companies, government and incumbent political parties.

Even though your social audit exposes issues through a non-partisan platform, you may be met with antagonistic and aggressive political party responses. For communities that have established relationships with political parties this may be uncomfortable or untenable. It can be particularly challenging where individuals with power are hostile to the social audit and have extensive patronage networks in a community.

Individual politicians, and officials who are responsible for services in a community, may also feel threatened by a social audit, especially if it presents evidence of delays, corruption, or maladministration. On the one hand, such authorities may ignore the social audit and refuse to respond, thereby undermining the principle of public accountability. On the other hand, they may seek to discredit the social audit or try to attack organisers and participants.

These risks must be discussed with the community before and during the social audit. It is crucial to openly establish the nonpartisan nature of the social audit, to help the community understand the potentially difficult dynamics as they arise, and to hopefully resolve them as they occur.

## Identifying a Focus for the Social Audit

A social audit process must be community led. Residents should carry out the audit on an issue of service delivery that they have identified as needing investigation. Assisting a community to identify such an issue requires that you are either based in the community, or that you have built a relationship of familiarity and trust with the community. Once you have established these links you then need to facilitate a collaborative and inclusive process of identifying and selecting an appropriate focus for the social audit. This process must explore issues of greatest concern to the community but a social audit is not a stand-alone activity and should be part of a broader advocacy campaign.



*Refuse removal*



*Sanitation*



*Flooding*

## Engaging With Local Issues

Social audits should ideally address the immediate and most pressing concerns of residents. It is not possible to cover every government service being delivered to a community, at least not in a single social audit. Your social audit will therefore need to focus on a particular service, or group of related services, that are of greatest concern to the community. If the community is already mobilising itself around problems related to services, then the social audit needs to connect with this. The principles of the community leading the process, and using the social audit to build community power, are important here.

The best way to decide on the focus for a social audit is to convene a few large meetings with community members or, depending on the number of residents or communities involved, a series of smaller focus group meetings. Organisers must facilitate discussions amongst residents about their experiences of particular services. These discussions should include details of how the provision of these services is impacting on their daily lives, and information about their past interactions with government or others involved in the delivery of these services.

## Conducting Social Audits Within a Broader Campaign for Change

It is important that a social audit be part of a broader advocacy campaign. For example, a number of the SJC's social audits have been located within their Clean and Safe Sanitation Campaign; and Equal Education's school sanitation social audit was part of their broader school infrastructure campaign.

Advocacy campaigns can take on various forms but it is important to ensure that a social audit is not used as a standalone strategy. It should be combined with a number of other relevant advocacy tactics. Ideally, a social audit should seek to link an attempt to resolve immediate issues facing the community with broader efforts towards systemic change. Integrating the two requires dialogue and a constant balancing of short and longer term goals.

Organisers have an obligation to discuss with the community, what is possible and achievable through the social audit, and what will be required afterwards. Social audits on their own cannot carry the full burden of solving the difficult structural and systemic problems that communities face. They can, however, be a catalyst for change along with other tactics, such as exposure through the media, using the courts, and challenging or negotiating with government directly.

## Identifying a Suitable Focus for a Social Audit

Social audits that have been carried out in South Africa between 2013 and 2015 have focused on basic services, like sanitation and education. But there are many other services that could be the focus of a social audit.

Some services lend themselves to a social audit more than others, because they are more visible and easier to observe and measure. Services that involve physical infrastructure allow a community to verify the government's claims against the reality on the ground. For example, the number of taps or toilets that have been installed against the number that government said have been installed; or the quality of housing against the building specifications. An example of a service that would be harder to audit is a counselling service for victims of crime – it is more difficult to publicly verify whether the service has been delivered at the appropriate standard.

It can also be effective to audit a specific component of a service rather than the whole service. For example, in 2013 the SJC focused their social audit on Mshengu chemical toilets, just one of a number of toilet technologies provided in informal settlements. In 2014, the SJC only audited the janitorial service for communal flush toilets in informal settlements.

## Defining the Scope of the Social Audit

When deciding which geographical areas should be covered by a social audit, a number of factors need to be considered. These include the responsible sphere of government (local, provincial, or national); the nature of the broader advocacy campaign that the social audit is a part; and the size and type of the civil society organisation supporting the audit.

A larger geographical scope for your social audit can lend greater credibility to the process and the broader advocacy campaign it is supporting. However, it is important to consider your capacity to deliver a social audit that is of a high quality and has legitimacy. These things can be compromised with larger social audits. On this basis you may choose to start on a smaller scale and then expand to other communities incrementally.

If your organisation has decided to audit a service that is the responsibility of a province, for example health care or education services, then a social audit that covers a larger area and more health care facilities or schools may put you in a better position to engage with provincial government on the issue. An example of a social audit covering a wide geographical area is that of Equal Education Gauteng. They audited 200 schools across the province. Social audits of this scale require considerable planning and preparation, specifically with regards to linking into existing networks, establishing legitimacy, and mobilising across a wide range of communities.

In the MKSS tradition, social audits were mostly conducted in rural villages. This had a number of benefits. These social audits were conducted in cohesive communities with established geographical and administrative boundaries and leadership. This helped to define the scale and scope of the audit and made it easier to consult, mobilise, and to carry out audits that had significant impact. Many of the social audits conducted in South Africa have been in informal settlements within urban areas. Unlike rural villages, urban informal settlements are densely populated and are often divided into a number of smaller informal settlement areas or sections. The social audits conducted by the SJC and NU have tended to focus on a few sections within Khayelitsha township in Cape Town. Their audits have similarly benefited from having geographical and administrative boundaries and leadership structures, even if these are mostly informal. Establishing the necessary legitimacy and links across a large township like Khayelitsha, which is made up of a diverse range of people with complex relationships, would be more difficult.





## SOCIAL AUDITS IN THE SJC'S CLEAN AND SAFE SANITATION CAMPAIGN

*Sanitation was a bitterly contested issue during the 2011 local government election. Following her election as mayor, Patricia de Lille met with us and displayed a willingness to engage constructively. After the meeting, the mayor said publicly that, “We want the SJC to be our partners in service delivery and show their commitment to helping the people of Cape Town by positively engaging with government”.*

*One of the outcomes of the meeting was the idea that we would host a sanitation summit and it was later during this summit that a janitorial service for communal flush toilets was first discussed. In 2012 the mayor took up our demand for a janitorial service which was a victory because it would have an immediate impact on thousands of households using communal flush toilets in informal settlements.*



*Unfortunately the janitorial service was rolled out hurriedly, without any consultation or input from communities. From the beginning we noticed there were a number of problems as the service was implemented in a chaotic manner and so we began to regularly monitor the service.*

*By September 2012, we made a public demand for an implementation plan. This led to Mayor de Lille publicly admitting that the City had not done a very good job and she apologised. She promised a plan would be developed, but it didn't materialise.*

*In early 2013, we conducted our first social audit on the provision of Mshengu chemical toilets to certain sections in Khayelitsha. We did it together with the help of Sowmya Kidambi and Vivek Ramkumar, both previous activists with MKSS who had pioneered the social audit method.*

*The audit revealed systemic problems in the monitoring of service providers, substantial differences between the number of toilets paid for and the numbers available, and evidence of poor maintenance and cleanliness. The “Mshengu Report” eventually became the subject of a complaint that we took to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC).*

*In response, Mayor Patricia de Lille reacted aggressively and defensively, attacking both the accuracy of the findings and us – a strategy that the City has repeated at all our social audits.*

*In June 2013, hundreds of Khayelitsha residents and the SJC members marched to the Civic Centre and presented a memorandum to the mayor’s office demanding an urgent timeline for the development of a plan to monitor contractors such as Mshengu and an implementation plan for the janitorial service.*

*Eventually, after the mayor had refused another request to meet and discuss the plan, on 11 September 2013 the SJC activists and leaders staged an act of civil disobedience by chaining themselves to the railings outside the Civic Centre. We demanded that the mayor of Cape Town uphold her commitment to develop a plan for the janitorial service and those involved refused to leave until she addressed them. Twenty-one people were arrested. Eleven were eventually convicted but have since appealed the ruling based on what we argue is the unconstitutionality of the law relating to public gatherings.*

*Following the civil disobedience, the mayor agreed to host a janitorial services summit in order to develop the janitorial plan. The summit, held on 28 February 2014 (more than 18 months after she first promised to do so), was to be an important step forward.*

*But on the day, Councillor Ernest Sonnenberg, MAYCO member for Utility Services, refused to develop an implementation plan and proposed instead the formation of an advisory committee. The summit ended in heated disagreements. The advisory committee was never formed, nor was an implementation plan produced.*

*Four months later in July 2014, still with no plan and after more stalling from the City, we undertook a social audit on the janitorial service in Khayelitsha.*

*Through the years before this, we wrote a constant stream of letters and emails to City officials and made countless telephone calls to all levels of the City – from the mayor’s office to the faceless call centres. We attended meetings and organised protests. The anger, desperation, and frustration of our members and the community at large at being forced to use dehumanising, degrading and unequal toilet facilities, and in many instances, no facilities at all, cannot be underestimated.*

**Dustin Kramer, Social Justice Coalition**

# Identifying, Obtaining and Working With the relevant Government Documents

The provision of all public services, irrespective of the sphere of government, are guided by laws, policies, plans, and budgets. This means that information about the delivery of these services is recorded in documents produced by government. A core principle of social audits is that communities verify these government (or private company) documents against community experiences of what is actually happening.

The process of obtaining and interacting with government documents includes:

- Identifying who is responsible for the delivery of the relevant service.
- Determining what government documents you need access to.
- Obtaining and analysing the documents.
- Making the documents accessible to community members involved in the audit.

If you are unable to access information about the service, then a social audit may not be the most suitable tool. You might consider using another method for monitoring the service.

## Identifying the Responsible Sphere of Government

In South Africa, there are three autonomous spheres of government: local, provincial, and national. Some areas are simultaneously governed through traditional councils.

Different spheres of government are responsible for the delivery of different services or different parts of the same service. For example, health and education are the mandate of provinces, while water and sanitation, electricity, and solid waste are primarily the responsibility of municipalities.

When conducting a social audit you first need to establish which sphere of government is responsible for the delivery of the service that you want to audit. You will then know which sphere of government has produced the relevant documents and who you should approach in order to obtain them.

## Identifying Responsible Individuals and Entities

Once you have identified the responsible sphere of government you can conduct a more detailed analysis of the different roles involved in the delivery of the service. Many public services are provided directly by government, but external service providers are increasingly contracted by government to provide services on their behalf.



For this reason it will not always be clear at first glance who in government (which departments, directorates, units, and/or officials) is responsible for providing a particular service, and who is responsible for actually delivering the service (it could be a private contractor). It may therefore be necessary to carry out research to find out who plays what role in service provision to the relevant community.

There are many ways you can do this research. In the SJC and NU's experience, the people who often know the most are the residents themselves. It may be worthwhile to start by meeting with community members and leaders to draw on their knowledge of all of the relevant players in the delivery of the service in question, and of the officials or representatives they deal with. Your organisation can add its own knowledge to this picture, and then you can conduct further research to gather additional information to fill the gaps.

## Accessing the Type of Information You Need

Once you have an understanding of the key players in the delivery of the relevant service, the next step is to collect official government information about the service.

Remember that the primary reason for using government documents is to build the power of the community involved. Most residents have never seen a government document. Accessing information and reading about how a service is provided can be exciting and empowering.

This task may also seem daunting. Sometimes it is difficult to know where to start and it is not always clear which documents, if any, will include the information that you need for your social audit. Often the information included in these documents is not disaggregated to the level that you would need.

In our experience many of the documents that are publicly available do not provide adequate and accessible local level information. You can use two strategies to address this challenge.

**Broad to specific** – Sometimes it is worthwhile to access broader documents to immerse yourself in the legal, budget, and policy environment. This may give you an understanding and basis for requesting more specific information. The benefit of this approach is that you may be able to identify specific gaps and ask for further information using the language of government. The risk of this approach is that you may become overwhelmed and confused, and lose sight of the relevance of all this information.

**Specific to broad** – Sometimes it is worthwhile to work directly with the community, starting with the documents that they already have. A letter from a councillor may indicate that a service is being provided from a specific budget. You could pursue this lead and request further information. This approach can help you get more information that is relevant to your specific issue.



## USING BUDGET INFORMATION IN SOCIAL AUDITS IN INDIA

In 2006, the Mazdoor Kishan Shaki Sangathan (MKSS) and other civil society organisations jointly undertook a social audit in Dungarpur district of Rajasthan state. The audit examined the programme funds of the recently enacted Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). The Act entitles every rural household to up to 100 days of government employment at the minimum wage.

Over a seven day period the MKSS and other organisations met with approximately 140,000 workers that helped in building roads, dams, wells, etc. under the MGNREGA. The social audit found that there was non-payment of minimum wages to workers, late wage payments, and poor work site facilities. In many cases the workers were paid far less than the statutory state minimum wage of 73 Indian rupees (approximately ZAR 15) per day. These practices violated the MGNREGA guidelines.

The MKSS and other civil society organisations lobbied strongly for the Right to Information law to be enacted, which was passed in 2005. Through using this Act, they were able to access a much wider range of information, which previously would not have been possible. Before the Right to Information Act, government officials refused Indian citizens and civil society organisations information or asked why it was needed. This made the monitoring of services very difficult.

The information that MKSS and other CSOs have managed to access through the Right to Information law includes:

- **Accounting records** – cash books of the previous 3 years that details money transfers received from national and state governments and international donors.
- **Payment bills** – showing the purchases of materials made by the local government and contractors for all project work.
- **Stock registers** – materials procured by other agencies and sent to the local government for use in construction projects.
- **Receipts of acknowledgement** – showing beneficiaries' signatures/thumb prints that direct cash payments was made to them.
- **Engineering records** – details of measurement books showing construction specifications of public works projects.
- **Labour rolls** – these detailed all the labourers who worked on the various projects, how many days each person worked, their wage rate, the total amount paid, and their signatures/thumbprints indicating acknowledgement of receipt of payments to them.

All this information was used to verify with households, through door-to-door visits, if they have worked those stipulated days and received their payments. Access to such budget expenditure information unmasked massive corruption, mismanagement, and collusion between government officials and contractors in the MGNREGA. Beneficiaries who were supposed to have worked on these infrastructure projects were able to publicly contest these records through their personal testimonies during public hearings. Subsequently, the MGNREGA has been amended and requires all states in India to conduct social audits twice a year on all MGNREGA projects.

## Getting Access to Documents

The Constitution of South Africa has enshrined the right of access to information. According to Section 32 of the Constitution “Everyone has the right to access any information held by the state and any information that is held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights.” In other words, if you need to access this information, in most instances it must be given to you. It is a right, not a privilege.

**Mandatory documents** – Certain documents have to be made public by law. You can also ask any sphere of government for access to their Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) manual (which should be available on the municipality, province, or national department’s website). The PAIA manual lists all the documents that the government or government department retains. It is a good starting point for accessing documents. At local government level all of the documents listed must be placed on the relevant municipalities’ websites.

**Public documents** – Many government departments and municipalities publish a range of documents on their websites that go beyond what is required by law. Rather than using the search box on the relevant website, we have found that a much more useful search tool is **Google Advanced Search**. Set the domain name for the government website and search for PDFs or other useful files.

**Undisclosed documents** – Phoning or e-mailing suitable officials, or making an appointment to request the documents you require in person, can help you to get access to relevant documents. However, many people who work in government believe that government information should be kept secret and only released when they think that there is a good reason. Some worry that the information is inaccurate or incomplete, or that people will use the information to challenge what the government is doing. Often this culture of secrecy will obstruct your efforts, and you may be forced to use PAIA to access the documents you need.

## Using the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA)

It is possible that the information you need is not included in the documents that are routinely published by government. In this case you will need to apply for the information using PAIA. Making a PAIA request might appear to be a daunting task for many activists. Your expertise may not be in law or access to information, but this does not mean that information held by others is not important for your work.

Anybody can make a PAIA request to a public body, such as a government department, most of which have a dedicated information officer who handles such requests. You need to use the correct forms and may have to pay a small fee, but PAIA sets down strict deadlines that information officers must follow.

While appealing in theory, requesting information through PAIA does present a number of challenges. In terms of PAIA there are very few reasons that public bodies can use to decline a PAIA request. However, in our experience, local governments often simply ignore PAIA requests despite the law. Some avoid their obligations by using delaying tactics, by providing incomplete information, or information in formats that are hard to process. You can find a helpful guide for activists and all the PAIA forms here <http://nu.org.za/open-and-participatory-local-government/paia-guide/>

## Understanding Government Documents

Getting access to documents is one thing, but reading them is another. Government documents are often technical and use language that is difficult to understand. Reading and analysing these documents can be particularly challenging for those who are not familiar with technical terms and even more so for those who do not speak English as a first language.

In the context of a social audit it is important for residents to engage with the official documents rather than user-friendly summaries of them. If residents can learn to interpret original documents for themselves, their efforts at holding government to account will be more sustainable. This is why an important focus of the social audit process is empowering communities with tools and knowledge that they can use to make use of these documents, both during and after the social audit. This requires people with good facilitation skills, and a good knowledge of the documents, to help community members understand and analyse the information. Social audit organisers will therefore need to do considerable preparation with the documents in order to share the information effectively with the community.

It's essential that organisers involved in the social audit become familiar with the documents before presenting them to communities. But you might find that you and your organisation do not have the experience or skills to analyse and understand information produced by government, or to communicate it to residents in a meaningful way. Tender documents and budgets, for example, can be intimidating and challenging to work with. If this is the case then you can look for support from other organisations who have experience or expertise in this area.

## FINDING THE RIGHT DOCUMENT

*In our experience, obtaining a suitable document to audit a service against can be a major challenge. During the SJC's first two social audits, we worked with them to get access to Service Delivery Agreements (SDAs) between the City of Cape Town and private service providers. We knew they existed, but struggled to get copies. In the case of the janitorial service social audit, our third social audit, the City of Cape Town had refused to develop an implementation plan and the service was not outsourced. This meant that there wasn't a tender specification that we could use to audit the service against.*

*Initially we requested information about the service. This process proved much harder than expected, simply because we really had no idea what kinds of documents were being retained by the City, by which department, and in what format.*

*We needed a document that could, for example, state: the role of janitors; the equipment and chemicals they should use; and where and how often the toilets should be cleaned. We were particularly interested in using budget and expenditure documents but had very little idea to what level these documents were disaggregated. Would the City, for example, have documents on expenditure for chemicals or wages for each section of Khayelitsha?*

*Axolile Notywala, the SJC's Head of the Local Government Programme, asked Councillor Ernest Sonnenberg, the MAYCO member for Utility Services in the City, for a number of documents that we thought ought to have existed, for example "a breakdown of the Janitorial Services Budget for the current financial year."*

*Councillor Sonnenberg responded the night before the social audit was meant to start with a letter stating that the city spent R58 million annually. This general information was not suitable for a social audit because we would have no way to disaggregate it and verify it with the community. Overall, obtaining documents was challenging. We may have been able to use these initial documents to dig deeper and request more specific information, had we more time and a better relationship with the city.*

*At this stage, the relationship between the SJC and the City was sufficiently strained that all communications needed to be delivered through a formal letter. It is for this reason that we set much of the information provided by Councillor Ernest Sonnenberg aside and relied on a document we had gained access to in preceding correspondence with the City: we had what the City referred to as the "System Procedure," which the SJC received from Councillor Sonnenberg after threatening litigation. It provided some detail on how the janitorial service ought to work but was not a formal policy adopted by the City. Though imperfect, this would become our central reference document for the janitorial service social audit.*

**Jared Rossouw, Ndifuna Ukwazi**





## Planning a Social Audit

If you have established legitimacy within the relevant community, selected an appropriate focus for your social audit, and obtained access to suitable government documents, you are now in a position to start planning the social audit itself. This involves selecting a core organising team, deciding on dates for the social audit, gathering participants, and connecting with other important stakeholders such as government and the media.

### Establishing a Core Group

However you decide to conduct your social audit, you will need to establish a core group to organise and facilitate the process. Ideally your core group should include a mix of skilled facilitators (mostly likely from the organisations supporting the process), community organisers, and residents from the community.

Including both experienced people and newcomers in the core group can help to ensure continuity while also building institutional knowledge. This mix of individuals can be constituted in various ways. For example, if your plan is to conduct successive social audits in a number of informal settlements, you might think of including a selection of residents from the upcoming social audit in the core group for the current social audit. This allows residents to gain some experience before conducting a social audit in their area.

Once the process is underway, social audits require intense daily activity. Venues need to be booked, food needs to be fetched, and communities need to be consulted and mobilised. It is therefore important that each member of the core group is able to fully commit their time and attention to the social audit while it is being conducted.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Core Group**

- Logistical and operational planning and implementation.
- Mobilising and organising residents throughout the process.
- Educating the community about government documents and the social audit methodology.
- Facilitating and recording group discussions during the audit.
- Leading and organising groups during evidence gathering.
- Liaising with stakeholders and developing media briefs.

## **Deciding on Dates for the Social Audit**

The length of time it takes to conduct a social audit will vary. Some can be completed in a week, as was the case in the SJC janitorial service social audit, some take months. Equal Education's social audit of 200 schools across the Gauteng province took two months. Two to three weeks is a good rule of thumb for audits that cover a single location or a few select areas.

The dates for the different activities and events in the social audit must be agreed upon by all the members of the core group to ensure everyone is willing and able to commit to the process.

It is tempting to extend the social audit to allow a thorough analysis and presentation of the findings and wider engagement in the outcome, but there is a tension here. It is difficult to mobilise a community around a process that takes up most of the day for longer than two weeks. You might find that, the longer the audit takes, or if there are long gaps in between the steps of the audit process, fewer people attend and the audit loses legitimacy. Sustaining momentum is important, even if it means that at times the pace causes the work to be frenetic. This is part of the energy and power of social audits.

The public hearing should be held as soon as possible after agreement has been reached on the findings. For all who have taken part in the social audit, the public hearing is the culmination of the process. The sooner you hold it, the more likely you are to be able to mobilise residents from the community to attend.

However, it is also important not to rush the process. The schedule must include enough time to thoroughly analyse the evidence and collaborate on finalising the key findings. It is essential that there is agreement on the findings so that they can be presented at the public hearing by community members who were part of the social audit.

The core group should, as early as possible, formulate and agree on a timeline for all the main events in the social audit process. It is also helpful to include information about the resources needed for each event and the roles and responsibilities of each person in the core team for each of the main events.

## **Mobilising Participants**

A social audit should be an inclusive, participatory process and involve as many residents as possible. While this may take longer to organise and be harder to manage logistically, it does mean that more people take ownership of the process. This adds to the legitimacy of the process and provides increased support for the findings.

A social audit may begin with only a few residents but, as the process gains momentum and word spreads, conclude with significantly more. The opposite may also be true, the numbers could dwindle over time. Either way the number of participants is likely to fluctuate daily. This is normal

and to be expected, as many participants will be balancing work and family obligations with their participation in the audit. While unavoidable, fluctuating attendance can be challenging and disruptive. It may help to establish expectations at the beginning of the process and to ask residents to commit to an agreed period of time. However, avoid being rigid about this. It is important to remember that the overall objective is to encourage and facilitate participation.

Sometimes it is better to work with small groups of residents. However, this is only appropriate where the community agrees that these small groups can conduct the audit on their behalf. Selecting representative participants who have the time and commitment should be done openly and democratically. Nominations and voting may be necessary but are not required, consensus is more important.

Individuals from other organisations can also be invited to participate in the social audit process. As they often come to the social audit location from elsewhere in the province or country, they are likely to be focused and committed for the duration of their stay. These people can also bring interesting contributions to the audit from their organisations and experiences.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Participants**

- Contributing information about their experiences of the relevant service.
- Reviewing government documents.
- Developing instruments for gathering evidence.
- Gathering evidence in the community.
- Analysing the evidence.
- Discussing and agreeing on the social audit findings.
- Mobilising friends, neighbours, and other residents to attend the public hearing.
- Presenting the findings to officials and the public at the public hearing.
- Following up on the findings and government commitments.

## Involving Government Officials

It is important to involve government in the social audit process. The role that government officials play in the process depends on the service being audited, their availability and willingness to participate, the history of their relationship with the relevant community, and the nature of your relationship with them.

It is likely that you will be in contact with the relevant government officials early on in the preparation of your social audit, through your discussion with residents, your analysis of the role players involved in service delivery, or your efforts to secure official documents.

Ideally you would build a working relationship with the senior officials and politicians responsible for a service. Social audits are most effective when they are supported by government officials who see them as opportunities to increase community participation, responsiveness, and accountability.

One option for initiating government involvement is to invite relevant officials to make presentations on how the service should run and to answer questions about the service. The information presented by government could also be useful for developing the questionnaires for the audit. If officials do make an appearance to present information, you can use this opportunity to get them to commit to attending the public hearing.

You should try to ensure that the appropriate government officials attend the public hearing, listen to a presentation of the social audit findings, and give an official response. Ideally a political representative and an official responsible for the service would both attend the public hearing. You might find that government only sends very senior officials who can easily claim not to be familiar with the operation of services, and are therefore unable to respond in detail. Very junior officials, on the other hand, may be unwilling to respond to findings because they do not have the authority to do so.

When inviting government officials to be involved in the social audit process it is important to keep a few things in mind. Officials are often unable to respond immediately to requests so it is best to invite them as soon as you have decided on dates for the social audit and prior to implementing the process. You may also find that government officials are initially suspicious and unwilling to participate in a social audit. Setting up meetings with relevant officials long before the social audit to explain the process, the expectations from communities, and the role that they as government can play, can help mitigate these suspicions.

If the government ignores your invitations to participate in the process and refuses to attend the public hearing, you will need to consider other ways of getting government to acknowledge and respond to the social audit findings. Some possibilities will be discussed in the Follow up step of the social audit process (page 102).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Government**

- Playing a supportive role in the process by providing accurate and up to date information when requested.
- Being open, responsive, transparent, and accountable.
- Participating in community-led monitoring.
- Respecting the principles of the social audit, especially that it is community led, and not trying to manage or co-opt the process.
- Observing the process and learning from the experiences of residents.
- Engaging in public deliberation at the public hearing, responding to the findings, and committing to making improvements where necessary.

### **Engaging with Private Companies and Contractors**

Many government services are outsourced to private contractors, either in part or in full. Where there are problems with the delivery of a service that has been outsourced, you will often find that government will refer you to the contractor. However, it is still the responsibility of the government to oversee and monitor outsourced services and to evaluate the contractor's performance.

It is in the interest of those providing outsourced services to attend the social audit public hearing. This allows them to respond directly to the reported findings. However, many contractors do not see themselves as providing a public service and do not feel directly accountable to the community. The best approach is to ask the government to request or compel outsourced contractors to attend; you should check for stipulations to this effect in the relevant contract.

It is often easier to conduct social audits on outsourced services because government is required to produce documents that govern its relationship with service providers. This creates a paper trail and you are more likely to find tenders, memorandums of understanding, contracts, service delivery agreements, and monitoring reports that can all be used to audit the service.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Parties Providing Outsourced Services**

- Playing a supportive role by providing accurate and up to date information.
- Respecting the principles of the social audit (page 18).
- Observing the process and learning from the experiences of residents.
- Engaging in public deliberation at the public hearing, responding to the findings, and committing to making improvements where necessary.





## INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS IN THE SJC'S JANITORIAL SERVICES SOCIAL AUDIT

*During the July 2014 social audit on janitorial services, the SJC invited the Director of Environmental Monitoring Group, Stephen Law, and a presenter from Radio Zibonele in Khayelitsha, Unathi Tuta. The observers were present during the training and data collection processes. During the public hearing, they were observers of the process and at the end made the following observations:*

- *The City of Cape Town should put in place a monitoring system and perform unannounced site visits to inspect.*
- *Despite the social audit being widely publicised, stakeholders were not provided with the opportunity to engage on the methodology and the evidence before the hearing.*
- *The observers emphasised that the issues that the findings raised, and the participatory process that produced these findings, were crucial.*
- *The observers concluded that the City should engage with such community efforts to participate rather than dismiss them.*

**Nosiphelele Msesiwe, Social Justice Coalition**

## Inviting Independent Observers

It is common practice to invite independent observers to attend and observe the social audit process. Observers are normally people who are well respected, have moral standing in the community, and are seen to be able to offer a broad, impartial viewpoint. Depending on the scope and scale of your social audit, you may choose to invite somebody close to the community (such as a local church leader), or perhaps someone who has a larger profile in broader civil society who can lend weight and legitimacy to the process (such as a lawyer or judge, a business leader, or even a musician, or radio DJ).

There are two possible options for involving and defining the roles of independent observers. The first option is to ask them to attend the whole social audit or certain parts of the process. Such participation allows your observers to be steeped in the experience and to attest to the legitimacy of the process and the validity of the findings at the public hearing. It also allows the observer to provide critical feedback and an objective viewpoint to both the participants and government officials. Observers play an important role at the public hearing in not only supporting the findings, but also observing and commenting on whether the response of government officials is adequate and noting any commitments for follow up.

A second option, especially if your observers have limited time available, is to invite them to the public hearing only. If this is the case, the role of the observer is to listen to the presentation of the findings and the response of government, and to comment on the process.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Independent Observers**

- Observing the process.
- Providing feedback on the process.
- Attesting to the legitimacy of the findings and experiences.
- Commenting on the adequacy of the response by government officials.
- Noting any commitments to follow up.

## Inviting an Independent Person to Chair the Public Hearing

As an organisation facilitating a social audit, you will be likely to feel strongly aligned with the community's struggle and want to play a supporting role in advocating for change. This makes it difficult to be an objective party at the public hearing. This can result in government officials and private company representatives experiencing the hearing as an attack rather than as a process of constructive engagement.

For this reason it is a good idea to invite an independent person to help chair the public hearing. A chairperson should be familiar with the social audit process and principles, and have enough authority and standing to mediate what can often be highly emotional and difficult conversations. By appointing an independent chair, you allow yourself, as a participating organisation, the space to raise issues with the government officials or private company representatives present at the hearing.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of an Independent Chairperson**

- Chairing the public hearing.
- Giving everyone an opportunity to speak in a fair and consistent manner.
- Mediating disputes.
- Noting and keeping minutes of commitments.

## Informing the Media

The media plays a key role in the effectiveness of social audits. It is important that the experiences and stories of poor and working class communities are shared widely. Newspapers, radio stations, and TV news can all contribute to ensuring that the findings are communicated publicly and can also help to ensure that the government is responsive and accountable.

You may need to spend some time compiling a list of suitable media outlets and journalists to invite.

Local newspapers and radio stations are always looking for exciting events and innovative examples of community mobilisation. You could embed a journalist as a participant in the process for a week, or invite journalists to specific events.

National news media tend to cover important events of interest to a large audience rather than events affecting a single community. While they are unlikely to cover the social audit process extensively, they may be interested in the findings.

It is important that the voice of the community is heard in any media story. It is therefore advisable to delegate media relations to an organiser and elect a spokesperson to speak on behalf of the community. Another option is to identify a strong writer in your core group and have them write daily dispatches with updates on the process, experiences, and findings. This helps to build a practice of consistent communication with the public.

At the very least, you should invite journalists to the public hearing. Newspaper editors normally decide the day's work at short notice so you can invite journalists during the week leading up to the public hearing. More detailed strategies for getting quality media coverage and avoiding certain risks are discussed later in the section on the public hearing (pg 96).

## Using Social Media

Twitter, Facebook, and Mxit are powerful communication tools that can be useful for disseminating information during a social audit. Managing a social media account, however, requires dedicated capacity. You could use your organisation's social media account, or set up a dedicated account or page for the social audit, or both.

Social audit participants can share and engage with posts to help to create buzz around the audit and provide a platform for debate and discussion. Social media can also help keep the community informed about the progress and findings of the audit and notify residents of activities and events that they can get involved in.

Social media can also help to engage with audiences beyond the community that is involved. It works best when there are regular updates throughout the day that include visual content such as photos and videos along with short text. Social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, can also be used to engage with government officials. Sometimes you can even get a commitment from government officials on Twitter or Facebook to attend the public hearing or listen to the community's issues.

# Logistics and Costs of a Social Audit

While social audits are community led, organising and facilitating them require specific resources and skills.

In terms of financial resources, the direct costs of performing a social need not be great. Residents who participate in the audit are unpaid and are expected to volunteer their time and knowledge for the benefit of the community. This issue needs to be discussed openly with the participants to ensure that there are no false expectations.

**Venues:** Participants will need a place to meet daily and a large venue will be needed to hold the public hearing. A venue within the community, that is central for participants, is most suitable. Often community meeting places, such as churches or school halls, can be rented fairly cheaply or used for free.

**Transport:** Transport to, from, and within the area where the audit is being conducted can be expensive. Especially if you are auditing large areas. Taxi drivers are normally available for hire for a daily fee.

**Catering:** Organisers are not required to provide food for the participants. If the budget allows, however, providing food is always welcomed, especially where residents are contributing a day that could have been spent working. Providing food is recommended if the social audit requires a large commitment of time.

**Printing and equipment:** There is a good chance that you will need to print questionnaires, training materials, and government documents. This can be expensive if there are a lot of participants. You may also need materials like pens, flip chart stands, paper, and clipboards for the auditors to use. You may also need access to cameras for evidence gathering and computers for capturing and analysing the data.



# Skills and Capacities

There are a few skills and capacities that are particularly important for ensuring the success of a social audit. These skills don't necessarily need to be located within one organisation and could be garnered through partnerships.

- **Strong community links and community mobilisation skills:** The intermediary organisation should have the necessary skills to engage and communicate with communities and to effectively organise and mobilise community members.
- **Networking and partnership development skills:** Organisers will often need to connect with existing formal and informal community networks and build partnerships with relevant groups, organisations, and other stakeholders.
- **The ability to access and interpret government information:** Government documents can be hard to access, technical, and may require specific skills to extract, understand, and analyse relevant information.
- **Training and materials development skills:** The community members involved need to be able to understand the social audit methodology and the government information being used for the audit. This requires skills in developing materials to communicate relevant information to community members in a way that is meaningful to them.
- **Advocacy skills:** Organisations need advocacy skills to ensure that the social audit is accompanied by other relevant advocacy tactics within the context of a broader campaign. Previous experience in running an advocacy campaign is extremely useful when implementing a social audit.

# PHASE 2

# Conducting a Social Audit

Once the necessary planning and preparation is complete, the next phase in the process is to conduct the social audit. This section explains the ten key steps to conducting a social audit.





# PHASE 2:

## Conducting a Social Audit





# STEP 1:

## Holding a Mass Meeting and Establishing a Mandate

**Length:** Half a day.

**Purpose:** To inform as many people as possible about the social audit and its objectives, secure a mandate from the meeting to proceed, and plan community participation in the audit process.

One of the core principles of a social audit is that it is community led. Once you have established legitimacy and links within the relevant community, you then need to establish a specific mandate from that community to conduct a social audit on an agreed upon issue. The best way to do this is through a mass meeting held in collaboration with relevant members of the community. To establish a mandate, the meeting should ensure that community members are clear on the aim of the social audit, the process for conducting it, and have a chance to ask questions and share their expectations. This then allows you to plan community participation in greater detail and to inform the community of dates for the public hearing.



## Mobilising for the Mass Meeting

Many communities have established networks for mobilising residents for mass meetings. You should use these networks as much as possible. Word of mouth is powerful, but you should also consider making announcements at religious meetings and on a local radio station.

In large communities, you may need to spend some time mobilising for the mass meeting. A door-to-door approach is ideal but requires time and capacity. However, it is worthwhile to consult as many people as possible. Give people enough time between the house visits and the mass meeting, but be careful to not schedule the meeting so far in the future that people forget about it.

You should be creative with your mobilisation strategies – music, street theatre, and rallies can all work. It is important that as many people as possible hear about the social audit and attend the meeting. Even if they don't participate, they will understand what participants are doing in the community, talk to their neighbours about it, and be more likely to attend the public hearing on the findings. There is no prescribed way to hold the mass meeting, but there are a few things you should consider.

**Collaborating with community organisations and leaders:** It is important to start the social audit process as you mean to continue, in the spirit and practice of collaboration. Where you have established links with community organisations and leaders, you should invite them to collaborate in planning the agenda for the mass meeting together. You could ask community leaders to introduce you and the other organisers, to take turns to chair the meeting, or to make presentations to the gathering.

**Explaining the aim of the social audit:** It is not necessary to explain every step of the social audit in detail at the mass meeting. That is best discussed with the group of participants who will conduct the audit. The mass meeting should focus on explaining why you are conducting a social audit and what the social audit might achieve. This will ensure leaders and residents are clear about the objectives.

**Sharing available government documents:** A mass meeting is a good time to introduce the documents that you have managed to secure from government. Be sure to explain that you will verify the experience of the service against the documents and that everybody is welcome to take copies, even if they are unable to participate in the social audit.

**Allowing questions:** People may have comments or questions. Some might be excited and welcoming, others might be suspicious and cautious. Be prepared and answer questions openly and honestly.

**Discussing expectations:** The expectations of members of the community must be discussed and agreed upon to maintain trusting relationships through the social audit process. It is important not to make promises, but rather to talk openly and honestly about what can possibly be achieved. Some issues cannot be dealt with effectively through a social audit and these limitations need to be made clear up front.

**Getting a mandate:** Explain how you would like the community to assist in making sure that the social audit process runs smoothly. Check if the community has any objections or concerns about the process or objectives of the audit, and then ask for an explicit mandate. If you have the blessing of community leaders, together with a mandate from residents who attended the mass meeting, then the social audit has greater legitimacy.

**Planning community participation:** Share your final plan, including dates of when you will be conducting the social audit so that residents can decide if they are able to participate. Depending on the service that you are auditing, you might want to either limit attendees or make space for as many as possible. If you decide on using a smaller group of participants to represent the community, the mass meeting would be the time for the community to elect those individuals.

**Setting a date for the public hearing:** Announce when and where the public hearing will be held and invite everybody to return to hear the findings. It is important to provide enough advanced warning to help mobilise people to attend the public hearing.

## A MANDATE FROM GREEN POINT, KHAYELITSHA

*During August 2015, the SJC and NU facilitated a social audit in Green Point, Khayelitsha. While the SJC had already established relationships with the leadership in the area, this did not mean that we could just go there and conduct a social audit. We had to get a fresh mandate from the leadership and the broader community. We therefore had to devise a plan to engage both the leadership and the community and introduce the idea of a social audit.*

*We arranged two meetings with the Green Point community. The first was a meeting with the leadership. In that meeting we introduced the idea of conducting a social audit. We explained what a social audit is and what it can achieve. We also played a video of a social audit that we had conducted a year before, to give an idea of what happens during the process. The leadership was interested in the process and raised issues that the social audit could focus on. We discussed these and suggested that the leadership assist in calling a broader community meeting where we could explain the process to the community. We explained that the community meeting could be used to identify the issues that the social audit should cover, and also presented other means of dealing with issues that the social audit would not be able to cover.*

*The leadership agreed and a date for the community meeting was set. At the community meeting, at which the leadership was also present, we introduced the idea of conducting a social audit on sanitation issues in the area. We explained that we wanted the residents of Green Point to play a leading role and that we might have to interview residents and inspect services during the audit.*

*Many points were raised when we asked if there were other burning issues that the community would like to be covered, including some that were not sanitation issues. We listed these and discussed them, including which would be viable to include. For example, there was an issue about ward budget allocations. Residents wanted to know how and where that money had been used because they had seen nothing in Green Point. We couldn't include this in the social audit because we did not have information about it. We noted the issue, promising to look into it separately once we had information and to report back to the community.*

*The community agreed and gave us a mandate to conduct the social audit.*

**Axolile Notywala, Social Justice Coalition**







# STEP 2:

## Preparing and Organising the Participant Group

**Length:** A day or more.

**Purpose:** To introduce the method of the social audit to the participant group, discuss the issues related to the service being audited, and visit the site of the forthcoming audit.

After deciding on the specific service to be audited and the community members who will be directly involved in conducting the social audit, organisers should then prepare the participant group. Participants must be given the chance to get to know each other and understand their individual and collective roles and responsibilities. They should also be given a chance to discuss their experiences of specific problems related to the service being audited. This discussion can help frame and inform the development of the social audit questionnaire, topics of discussion at the public hearing, and issues for follow up after the social audit is complete. A site visit can also be a helpful way to orientate the participants in terms of the areas they will be covering during the audit. All this ensures that participants take ownership of the process and feel completely comfortable with what is required of them.

## Developing the Participant Group

This will be the first time that you convene the core group and all the social audit participants. There may be participants who do not know one another. It is important to introduce everybody who is taking part, and to indicate what their specific role is.

Time should be set aside for everyone to get to know one another, share their experiences, and gain clarity about their roles and responsibilities in the social audit process. Participants should be informed of who is responsible for the following roles:

- The lead facilitator
- The team leaders
- The person responsible for materials and stationery
- The person responsible for introducing new participants
- The person responsible for health and safety
- The person responsible for catering
- The person responsible for logistics
- The person responsible for communicating with the media
- The person responsible for managing social media

Many of these roles and responsibilities will be assigned to members of the core group and may have already been assigned when the broader participant group is brought together. However, some of these responsibilities could also be assigned to members of the broader participant group and this should be discussed and decided upon with participants.

At the outset it is valuable to emphasise that the social audit is a community-led and participatory process and that each decision along the way will be collectively discussed and agreed on. Participants should be actively encouraged to ask questions during this introductory discussion.

## Dividing the Participants into Small Groups

Many of the social audit activities are best conducted in small groups. This includes activities like reviewing documents and inspecting services. The groups must be formally established and each assigned a team leader. You may want to write people's names on large sheets of paper in the venue so that everyone is clear on who is in which group. You may also find that the number of participants shrinks or swells as the social audit proceeds. People may bring friends or family members at different points. It is a good idea to have somebody who briefs new participants when they first arrive, issues them with name tags and stationery kits, and assigns them to a group. There needs to be flexibility with the groups, as you go through the different audit activities you might see a need to shrink or expand some of the groups.

## Discussing Service Delivery Issues Facing the Community

Once the small groups have been established, their first task is to discuss the issues and problems that the community experiences in relation to the service that is being audited. The team leaders should facilitate this discussion. People may have a lot that they want to share and the team leader should ensure that everybody has a chance to speak, that nobody dominates the group, and that shy people are encouraged to contribute. It is particularly important that women and young people are encouraged to speak. Here are a few ways to make sure that everyone feels safe to talk:

- Introduce the session by sharing your own experiences or by telling someone else's story.
- Ask participants to speak in pairs first and then to report to the group.
- Use photographs or maps to get people talking about what they see.
- Ask participants to speak about their own experiences rather than discuss abstract concepts.

People often raise a range of problems during the discussion. Some problems might be specific and appear to be simple, others deeper and more systemic. It is important to record the discussion in groups so you can compare experiences in a plenary session. The following questions may be useful for categorising issues raised during the discussion:

- What are systemic problems that are suitable for gathering evidence about in the social audit?
- What are specific problems that can be documented and raised directly at the public hearing?
- What issues can be followed up during the social audit or afterwards?
- What are the biggest problems and which sites in the community are most suited to demonstrate this?

It's a good idea to write this information on large posters and hang them around the room as reminders during later discussions. It may be useful to draw on this information throughout the social audit process and at the public hearing.

At the mass meeting and during the focus groups, residents may have identified particular issues which were outside of the scope of the social audit but were still critical and worthwhile presenting at the public hearing. You may wish to delegate a special team from amongst participants tasked with following up on these issues.

## Visiting an Audit Site

Participants need to get a feel for the places where they will conduct the social audit and a site visit can help with this. The whole participant group can do a site visit together, or they can do it in their smaller groups. Visiting and walking around the problem areas helps everybody to connect with the issues that will be audited. Site visits also help prepare those who are not familiar with the area, and it can allow participants to identify and address challenges they might face when conducting the audit and engaging with residents.

# STEP 3:

## Training the Participant Group

**Length:** Two or three days. This can be broken up and need not all be done at once. It is usually better to conduct the method training in one session and the service-delivery training in a separate session.

**Purpose:** To introduce the social audit methodology in a fun, participatory way and to provide an open platform for participants to explore and understand what they might experience during the social audit. It is also useful to learn more about the service and to read and understand government records relevant to the delivery of that service.

It is likely that only members of the core group will have had previous experience of conducting a social audit. The participants who will carry out the audit will therefore need to be trained so that they can feel confident about what they are doing. Participants should be given training in two areas. First, training on the social audit method should cover the history, principles, and method of carrying out the audit. Second, training on the relevant government service should cover how to examine the relevant government documents that the core group has managed to obtain. This training should also include a discussion comparing the government perspective on the service and the lived experience of the community.

## Training on Social Audit Method

Social audits have a rich history. They come from a tradition of struggle in various countries, notably India (see *Where do Social Audits Come From* on page 16). Exploring the origins of social audits gives participants an understanding of how they have been used in different contexts and creates a sense of being a part of a historical global movement. The best way to do this is to present a brief outline of this history and screen one of the short films on social audits. The screening should be followed by a facilitated discussion to explore some of the main issues emerging from the films.

### Short films that we have found useful include:

- *Our Money, Our Accounts* by MKSS in India  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oB0EQ-lzReg>
- *It's Our Money. Where's it Gone?* by Muhuri in Kenya  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2zKXqkrf2E>

Participants should be clear on the main principles and purpose of social audits. Discussions on principles, such as non-partisanship, accountability, and community power, should be facilitated. The meaning of these concepts and principles may need to be explained and there should also be an exploration of what these principles mean in practice and how the participants can help to apply them. These may be difficult discussions, but for the social audit to be effective, and for consensus to be reached, it's best to have them early on. A good facilitator can hold a discussion of this kind and it may be useful to have some discussion in small groups so that everyone can participate.

The next step of the training is to explore the social audit method with the participants. This can be done through a presentation of the ten social audit steps. Ideally, a member of the core team with social audit experience will give this presentation. It is important to allow time for engagement and questions on the method so that everyone present is clear and knows what to expect. It's a good idea to display the seven principles (see page 19) and ten steps (see page 57) somewhere in the room so that you can refer to them later. You could also show a short film on the SJC janitorial services social audit (<http://nu.org.za/socialaudits/>) or the Equal Education school sanitation social audit (<http://www.equaleducation.org.za/campaigns/sanitation>).





## Training on Service Delivery and Government Documents

### Invite Government to Give a Presentation

To carry out an effective audit of government's delivery of a service, the participant group needs to understand the service being delivered in some depth. Depending on the nature of the service, the sphere of government, the availability of officials, and the relationship with the community, you could ask a government representative to give a presentation to the participant group on the service that you are auditing. You need to invite government officials well in advance, but even then the people who are directly responsible may not be available. Some may send a colleague or representative and some may not come at all.

Giving a presentation provides government with an opportunity to clarify their views on the nature and extent of the service. Sometimes officials will give a short presentation on the service and not invite discussion. Other officials may be willing to facilitate a longer training session.

If an official does come, make sure that participants understand the exact role of this government representative. There is probably already unhappiness or misunderstanding related to the service and it is likely that residents have never been consulted about its provision.

Community members should be allowed to ask questions to help clarify the presentation. Residents might also wish to immediately challenge what officials say, based on their own experiences. As you are trying to mobilise the community behind the social audit, you should not hold people back. However, you do need to explain that this is a fact-finding session, and that they can share their stories more openly at the later public hearing when the audit findings are presented.

Officials might also make inaccurate statements to communities. For this reason the participants will need to look at government documents in detail. This will allow participants to compare what government officials say to the official obligations found in the documents.

### Presenting Government Documents

As indicated above, access to information is a constitutional right in South Africa and it's a good idea to introduce the discussion of government documents in this way. You could read the Bill of Rights together so that everyone understands the rights that they have to obtain and scrutinise government documents.

You need to indicate to the participants which documents you will be using for the social audit, how you obtained them, and any problems you encountered in getting these documents from government officials.

Often you will find that you have an incomplete set of documents. You should indicate to the group which documents are missing and what information is unknown. Everybody should receive their own copies of the documents so that they can take them home to read. These documents should be retained so that everyone can return with them to analyse the evidence gathered in the social audit.

### Reading Government Documents

Government documents are not usually written in plain language and can be very difficult for people to understand. The language can be legal, technical, and full of jargon and they are mostly written in English – not everybody's mother tongue. It can be tempting to present summaries of the documents to the group, but this prevents participants from engaging with the language of government. It is better to find ways for participants to read and understand the original documents themselves, even if you select extracts. While this takes more time, the experience is worthwhile and builds community power and knowledge.



## TIPS ON READING GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

It generally works best to read the documents in focus groups, with a team leader who is familiar with the documents facilitating the discussion. The following are some useful tips for facilitation:

- Introduce key words and their meanings before reading.
- Discuss the overall structure of the document before reading, taking special note of the headings, subheadings, and other features. Explain the purpose of each of these.
- Allow participants time to examine the document themselves before reading aloud. It is difficult to read aloud when you don't know how a document is structured or what is coming next.
- Rather than going around in a circle, ask for volunteers to read.
- Divide participants into pairs and ask them to read together prior to reading as a group.
- Ask participants not to correct someone who is reading. That can make the person feel shy. Only the team leader should correct someone and it should be done in a supportive way.
- Read short chunks or sections and discuss each in turn, rather than reading through whole pages before having any discussion.
- Other government documents, such as budgets, may need less reading and more analysis. It may be better to give a presentation on these documents and then work through them systematically.

### Comparing Community Experience With Government Information

As you work through the government documents, allow participants to discuss their observations and note any discrepancies that they identify when they compare what government says with their own experience. Does the government's understanding of what is happening with the service differ with the reality that is experienced by the community? The focus group facilitators should write down any points raised by the group. These issues will form the basis of your evidence gathering.

At the end of the session bring everybody together to share and discuss the main issues that they have discovered. There are many ways that you can digest these together. The aim is to come up with a list of specific and clear points that relate to the issues raised in the groups.

As a group, you may wish to try the following ways of presenting the information:

- Organise the points by priority.
- Organise the points thematically.
- Locate the problems on a map.
- Decide if the point can be easily verified or not.
- Link the issues raised in the groups with specific statements in the documents.
- Ask participants to write out the relevant section from the document, together with the comment or issue, and to place these around the room to refer to later in the analysis stage.

At the end of this exercise, participants should have a good idea of what is contained in the government documents. You can point out to participants that the issues they have identified, and the government documents that they have studied, will be used to develop the social audit questionnaires. This information can also be used when making final decisions on who will be interviewed and what will be verified for the social audit.

## SJC DETERMINES WHO WILL BE INTERVIEWED AND WHAT WILL BE VERIFIED

*During their janitorial service social audit, the SJC used the official information they had collected to make a decision on interviewees and the focus for physical verification. As the documents stated, City janitors are responsible for cleaning and maintaining communal full flush toilets in Khayelitsha. On this basis the SJC decided to do the following:*

- *Interview janitors, asking questions about the equipment they receive from the City, the regularity with which they clean, and the challenges they face.*
- *Interview residents about their experiences of using the full flush toilets and their experiences of the janitorial service.*
- *Physically verify the condition of all the full flush toilets in the areas where the social audit was being conducted.*

*By incorporating these three components into our data collection, we were able to determine the state of the janitorial service, the state of the full flush toilets, and the key causes of the issues with both. We were also able to determine whether the official account of what was happening matched what was actually happening.*

*The SJC interviewed 193 residents and 31 janitors, and physically verified 528 toilets.*

**Nkosikhona Swartbooi, Ndifuna Ukwazi**





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# STEP 4:

## Developing and Testing Social Audit Questionnaires

**Length:** At least a day, two is better.

**Purpose:** To collectively develop the questionnaires and other tools that you will use to gather evidence in the community.

The development of the questionnaires and other tools for gathering evidence should be done by everyone who is participating in the social audit. Doing this helps everyone to understand why they are asking certain questions and recording answers in a certain way. It also helps to familiarise people with the tools that they will use. This builds understanding and ownership and will produce more accurate findings.

## Developing the Questionnaire and Other Tools for Gathering Evidence

The questionnaire is the most important tool for collecting evidence during the social audit. It is the primary tool for verifying that the information contained in government documents is correct, and it should contain a list of questions that the group has developed after reviewing the government documents and defining the service delivery issues.

It is important to keep two things in mind regarding your questionnaire.

First, you are not trying to gather lots of new information or record long stories of residents' experiences. Your main task is to gather hard evidence about whether a service is being provided the way that government claims it is in government documents. At this stage counting and checking is by far the most powerful form of social auditing. The public hearing will give ample opportunity for people to express their opinions.

Second, your questionnaire should be simple. It may be tempting to include as many questions as possible, but elaborate questionnaires or evidence gathering tools are difficult to use. The evidence that they produce is harder to synthesise and more likely to lead to confusion and inaccuracies. You should include participants in the process of developing the checklists and surveys. Each group can work on a different tool or different issue. Ask groups to discuss the questions and methods and then choose the best one during a plenary session. You should take a small break during the process to type up and print the draft questionnaires and tools.

There are various other tools that are important to use alongside your questionnaire. From our experience, the best tools are:

- **Physical inspection** – Physically inspecting the services is one of the simplest ways to verify whether government documents accord with reality. You can compare what you see to the specifications, norms, and standards contained in relevant documents. Photographs and checklists are both helpful ways of gathering evidence during a physical inspection.
- **Mapping** – Mapping can be a powerful way of gathering evidence on service delivery. Participants can record experiences and examples of poor service delivery in symbols and writing on maps and then go out and find examples. It helps to locate the problems physically and makes it easier to follow up and inspect whether there has been any improvement.
- **Photography** – Photography is a simple and powerful tool for gathering evidence of poor service delivery. You can create portfolios and collections of problems. In some cases it is worthwhile taking multiple photos of the same problem from different angles to better explain it. When you are using photographs to count problems, be careful to organise photographs of the same problem in such a way as you can count them correctly.

## Role Playing and Testing the Questionnaires

Before conducting the actual audit, participants must practice using the audit tools. A roleplay can be a good way to boost confidence and help to identify mistakes in the questionnaires. You should practice until everybody in the room feels confident. Here are some tips for the facilitator:

- Before asking the participants to do a role play, one of the facilitators should explain how to conduct the audit and how to use the tools. It is easier for participants to copy somebody else than to start fresh. But everyone must try. When you model the application of the questionnaire, explain what is being asked, how it relates to the government documents, and what the community concerns and issues are.
- Let the participants practice in groups or in pairs. This can be fun. You should allow people to practice until they feel confident. Don't be afraid to stop everyone to clarify a point or to take extra time to get it right.
- Participants must be encouraged to develop and practice the questionnaires in the language they feel most comfortable.
- Small things make a big difference to the success of the audit. Do you have enough pens? Does everyone who needs a clipboard have one? Will the forms get wet if it rains? Do you have enough forms? If participants are using cameras, you should make sure that the cameras work and give them time to practice taking photos.

Even if everybody is feeling confident, you may find that the evidence gathering in practice doesn't work in the way that you expected it would. Perhaps you will not be able to gain access to certain areas, or you may find that residents answer questions in ways that you did not foresee. The only way to be sure is to field test your plans for gathering evidence in the community. Build in time to test the questionnaire, take feedback, and refine it. When everybody is happy, you can go ahead and print the required number. You might need to have them printed in different languages to accommodate everyone participating.







# STEP 5:

## Gathering Evidence in the Community

**Length:** Anywhere between two days and two weeks; sometimes longer.

**Purpose:** To gather evidence using the questionnaires.

Gathering evidence is a central component of a social audit. It can be an extremely challenging and time consuming part of the process. Team leaders play an important role in ensuring that evidence gathering runs smoothly and that groups are well prepared. Strong team leaders can make a big difference to the process so it is important to ensure that they are well prepared and supported in their role. Methods of evidence gathering include interviews, physical verification, and ideally photography. Before beginning to gather evidence, you should make sure you identify who is responsible for doing what and when it should be completed by. At end of each day of evidence gathering it is important to allow participants to discuss their findings and reflect on the day and its challenges.



## Briefing Team Leaders and Preparing Participants

Strong team leaders are crucial to the evidence gathering stage because they will be responsible for making the everyday decisions that affect the overall success of the social audit. However, team leaders may have other responsibilities and may have missed some discussions. For this reason you should ensure that your team leaders understand exactly what is expected in terms of evidence collection and it can be helpful to check in regularly with them on the telephone.

It is important to ensure participants do not make promises to the community about improvements in service delivery when doing the interviews. For different reasons people conducting the audit can too easily make promises about change. Participants must stick to gathering evidence about how the service is being delivered and not raise residents' expectations of change.

You might encounter people in the community who will not have heard about you or what you are doing. You should take the opportunity to explain what the social audit is and invite residents to the public hearing. The social audit is a participatory process and impact or results will only be achieved through ongoing participation.





## Doing the Audit in the Community

After the participants have reviewed the different questionnaires and forms, gone through the preparation, and feel ready to conduct the social audit, it is time to go into the community to do the actual interviews and physical verification of the service.

At this stage participants would have already been split up into groups. If groups are collecting different kinds of evidence, you can divide their duties in two ways:

1. Assign each group a different geographical area for collecting all the evidence using all the tools. They might do a different method each day (interviews on day one, physical verification and photos on day two) or delegate different duties to different members of the group (some do interviews and some do physical verification and take photos).
2. Assign each group one evidence gathering method or tool for all the areas.

Whichever approach you choose, be careful that your groups don't gather the same evidence and examples – duplication of evidence can make the analysis confusing and difficult.

## TIPS ON TAKING PHOTOS

- If you decide to collect evidence using physical verification forms, it helps if each group has a camera. This means that for each structure that has been physically verified and documented, there is also a photo which allows for double verification in the analysis process.
- Auditors must take care to record the correct photo number on their physical verification form, so that the form and photograph can be matched at a later point.
- When you have different people responsible for taking photos and conducting physical verification it can be even more difficult to match the correct photo to the correct physical verification form. You should develop a system for managing this process.



## Using Maps

Maps are a helpful tool for managing and tracking the social audit process. You can indicate areas, such as train tracks, that are unsafe and should be avoided and routes through the community or specific landmarks. You can also indicate the boundaries for teams to help avoid the duplication of evidence. Finally, you can number and plot infrastructure and develop symbols for different things once the audit is complete.



## Capturing and Discussing Critical Issues in a Debrief

At the end of each day, you should set time aside for the team leaders to facilitate a debriefing session with their group. There are no hard and fast rules for doing this. But ideally you should consider the following:

- Give individual participants an opportunity to talk about their experience of gathering evidence.
- Find patterns or common threads of evidence.
- Agree on the key findings for the day.
- Identify any unusual, marginal, or unique issues.
- Decide if any issues need further investigation or documenting the next day, and who will do that.

It is most likely that you will be doing more than one day of evidence gathering, so you may wish to repeat the debrief discussion at the end of each day. If you are gathering evidence on a different issue, then debrief in the same way and make new findings. If you are continuing with the same issue, then the new evidence gathered can be added to previous evidence and can be used to adjust your existing findings.

This daily debrief allows for participants to share findings and start mapping commonalities and differences across the areas where the social audit is being conducted. At this stage, it is very important to note all the issues that may need follow up and to make a plan to do so.

All of the evidence needs to be collected, kept safe, and the analysis and findings need to be noted. You may wish to post your materials on the wall of the venue and share the groups' findings in a plenary session. You may need to choose participants who will be responsible for organising the evidence that has been collected. This evidence must be kept safe so that the group can return to it once the audit is complete and the findings need to be formulated.

## Briefing the Media

If you have selected members of the core group to prepare media briefings, then this is the perfect opportunity to begin to put the plan into action.

Journalists may be unfamiliar with the social audit method and it can help to send daily briefings to build momentum in the lead up to the public hearing. Your media briefings should present some of the issues that you are discovering. It is important to highlight the experiences of residents rather than the opinions of organisers. Remember this is a community social audit and residents should be the spokespeople for their community.

# STEP 6:

## Capturing Community Experiences and Testimony for the Public Hearing

**Length:** At least a day (but often at the same time as evidence gathering).

**Purpose:** To fully capture the experience and testimony of residents in a structured and detailed way.

Questionnaires, photographs, and statistics are not the only legitimate form of evidence gathering. Hard physical data is one kind of evidence, but it is most powerful when it is woven into peoples' everyday experience. For this reason you need to actively collect and document residents' testimony as evidence in its own right.

Although everyone will have an opportunity to speak at the public hearing, it is worthwhile asking a few residents to prepare and present their testimony in a way that is well-structured and confirms the social audit findings.



## Collecting Testimony

Collecting testimony differs from doing interviews or physical verification. You will not necessarily have a list of questions, such as those on a survey form. It may be better to ask open ended questions and prompts to elicit testimony.

Taking testimony can also be a sensitive and emotionally draining exercise. It therefore requires a careful approach. Those who will be collecting testimony will need to be properly trained to do so, as it is a skilled activity of exploring and listening that provides important evidence for the public hearing.

You could ask each group to choose one or two participants who will be responsible for collecting and recording testimony and train them separately before everyone goes out to collect evidence. Participants who are the most able writers are best placed to record testimony.

You can collect testimony at the same time as you are gathering evidence. For example, if you are inspecting infrastructure you can record testimony of a resident at the same time. This is efficient and means you don't have to go back to respondents.

You can also choose to collect testimony later in the process once all of the findings have been agreed on. This might take a bit longer, but you will be in a better position to select the residents with experiences that are linked to your findings.

Remember that many of your participants are community members and may be ideal candidates for providing testimony because they have been part of the process and may also have more time. However, you should take care to gather as broad a range of testimony as possible from residents who have not participated.

You should also try to ensure that your testimony is representative. It may not be very persuasive if all testimony is from young people or men. Who is speaking on behalf of women, people with disabilities, and the elderly?

Testimony from local leaders or well-known personalities can also be very powerful. A pastor often knows the issues a community is facing. A shop keeper may be well placed to watch everything happening in the street.

It is the responsibility of the team leaders to ensure that they maintain a list of everybody who has given testimony so that they can be contacted, especially if there is a need for clarification. Asking questions and making notes is the simplest way to collect testimony. Remember to take detailed notes so you can write a story based on the testimony.

## TIPS FOR COLLECTING TESTIMONY

- Don't ask closed (yes/no) questions such as "Is this service good?"
- Don't ask leading questions such as, "Tell me how bad the service is?"
- Do ask open ended questions such as, "What is your experience of the service?"
- If you would like to ask follow up questions, it helps to say things like, "You said that...can you tell me more?"
- It also helps to ask people to tell a story. People might be shy to give an opinion, but everybody can remember and retell an experience that they have had. Ask, "Can you remember a time when...?"

**When collecting testimony, the following steps can be followed:**

- Greet respectfully.
- Introduce yourself and explain where you come from, even if you live in the community.
- Ask permission to conduct the interview and collect testimony from the person.
- Explain why you are taking the testimony, and what it will be used for.
- Ensure you record their name, location, and contact details accurately. It's important to ask people whether they would be happy for their names to be used in the report and public hearing or not. It is better if they could give their names because it makes the testimony stronger.
- Sometimes it is polite to have a general conversation first before moving to your specific request. This helps to make people feel comfortable and will help you to get to know the resident better.
- It is best if participants who are local residents conduct the interviews with other residents. Their questions may be more appropriate because they will know the context and will make people feel more comfortable because they will know the social relations of the community.
- Think about age and gender. Will an elderly women easily open up to a younger man about a service that is personally affecting her dignity? Is it appropriate for group of men to interview a young woman?

**These are not the only ways to collect testimony from residents. You can also:**

- Take a photograph and ask them to write their experience on the back.
- Ask them to tell their story on film.

## Writing up Testimony

The aim of taking testimony is to get enough information to present a picture of the person and their experience of a particular service. You should record as much detail as possible. The testimony can be used to support the other evidence you have collected or may be a finding in its own right. Either way the testimony will need to be written down. You may wish to ask a member of the core group to type up the testimony and they can call residents to clarify any points.

## Inviting and Preparing People to Speak at the Public Hearing

Providing testimony at the public hearing is a powerful way to add weight to the findings that will be presented. You should invite as many residents as possible who have given testimony to attend the public hearing. Call everyone that you have invited to give testimony and confirm their availability. You may also need to provide transport or directions.

Some people might find it difficult to stand up at a public hearing and speak about their experiences. For this reason some preparation may be necessary. You could contact everyone who has given testimony and organise a time to meet with them to prepare.

Everybody should be encouraged to speak from personal experience, but reading written testimony is also an option if people are shy or do not wish to speak.



# STEP 7:

## Agreeing on the Main Findings and Organising the Evidence

**Length:** At least one day.

**Purpose:** To sort and analyse the evidence, help everyone to understand it, and produce a report. This step is about agreeing on the findings and ensuring that you have evidence and testimony that supports the findings you want to present at the public hearing. This work should involve all the participants of the social audit. It is crucial that everyone involved understands the evidence and findings, even those that are not presenting at the public hearing.

At this stage, each group will have established findings based on the evidence they have gathered. These must be discussed and an agreement reached on the most critical issues to be presented. You may need to go through all of the evidence that has been collected if there was not enough time during the gathering of evidence step. If you have been recording findings in the debriefing sessions and the end of each day, you may have already largely developed the findings in plenary, and you will then be focusing on wording and prioritisation. If not, you will first need to agree on the overall findings.

By now you will also have information in different formats, including different questionnaires, maps, photographs, and testimonies. Not all of the findings will necessarily apply to all sites you have audited. Some might be quite specific to a certain location, group, or individual. Care should be taken not to gloss over important geographical or gendered differences as you examine the findings to identify general problems. Many of the participants have joined the social audit because they are personally experiencing problems and those who have contributed testimony will hope that their issue is raised and resolved. For this reason, you should compile a long list of personal findings.

## **Highlighting Deviations Between Government Documents and Reality**

One of the principles of social audits is to verify government documents by comparing them to what is really happening. In reality you may find that some of the experiences and findings bear no direct relation to government documents. Where findings, evidence, and experiences do address a government document directly, you should cite the relevant part of the document in the finding – especially where discrepancies or evidence suggest corruption or maladministration. These are the most powerful findings.

## **Plotting and Mapping the Evidence**

Maps are excellent tools for making sense of your evidence. You may have been plotting the evidence on a map while you were collecting it. Alternatively, you may wish to plot your findings on a map once all the evidence has been collected. Mapping is especially useful to show the location of significant problems.

Maps can also be used to discuss experiences and participants can identify areas on the map that need investigation and documenting. For example, if you are auditing safety and the budget for the provision of street lighting, then participants might indicate areas that are particularly unsafe at night. Or if you are auditing the provision of roads and storm drainage, you might wish to record areas that are prone to flooding.

Maps are also good for capturing and analysing evidence. If you have audited lots of the same type of infrastructure then you can plot and show the results on the map. If you have asked residents to rate a service, then you could also record their results on the map. If you have been ranking items you can use different coloured pins to show patterns.



## Using Your Photographs

If you have collected photographic evidence during the audit, you can use these images as examples or as illustrations of other evidence you have gathered. For example, if your surveys indicate that the roofs of a majority of houses are leaking, you may wish to illustrate this with a few photos of the problem.

Photographs can be good evidence themselves for findings. Each photograph should be sorted according to agreed criteria. You may wish to group examples to show scope of the problem or rank and order photos to prioritise the worst examples of a problem.

## Counting and Sorting: Developing Statistics

If you have been using checklists in your audit, and counting things as a way of measuring a problem, you will need to sort and calculate your evidence in order to develop and organise your findings. This can be done in groups, or in a plenary session, so that all the participants can understand how the evidence that they gathered has been analysed.

It is easy to make mistakes. You should build in robust methods for counting, sorting, and analysing the information. It is best to collect statistics in practical, visual ways. Make use of tally charts or symbols, and physically sort questionnaires into piles and then count them for each question. You can even use stickers or physical objects to represent positive or negative answers.

You may, for example, be determining how many residents were interviewed compared to the total number of residents in the area according to the records. A bean in a jar for every resident interviewed is easy to count, check, and combine for aggregate numbers. Whiteboards and markers are also easy to use and make corrections on. By analysing your numbers, you will be able to develop statistics that can be used to compare the reality of a service to what government says should be in place.

However you do your counting and develop your statistics, you must document and organise this information. These are your findings that you will want to share with the community, other organisations, government, and the public.



## Organising Your Findings

You might be analysing multiple pieces of evidence, drawing out a variety of findings, and matching these to as many points in government documents as you can. Each finding should ideally be accompanied by a citation of the documents it is referring to (if applicable) and a summary of the evidence gathered.

You should systematically indicate what types of evidence you are using in your report and where it can be found. It is very important that you present this evidence to government officials in a single report and that the findings are organised in a systematic and logical way.

In your report you should give each finding a unique number so they are easier to refer to in discussions at the public hearing, and to follow up afterwards. There are however no hard and fast rules and the final list can only be decided through group discussion and decision making. You could:

- List the findings in order of priority.
- Group the findings thematically.
- Group the findings geographically.
- Group general findings separately from individual findings.

Not all of your findings will be based on statistics. They may be issues that were raised at the initial mass meeting or in the focus groups. Experience and stories are also forms of evidence. It is even better if you can support this evidence with photographs or make use of a map to show a problem.

Also, not all of your evidence has to be a finding. It can be tempting to try and include everything, but it is unlikely that government will be in a position to respond to, or resolve, all of your findings in a suitable time period. A few strong and striking findings are often more effective than a long list of everything that has emerged.

## Formulating Demands

The final step in the development of the report is to draw up a list of demands. Remember that these will be mainly demands from the participants, some of whom will be from the community, but it might not be everything that the community wants. You should set aside some time for the rest of the community to ask questions, agree or disagree with the findings, and suggest demands. The public hearing is an opportunity for this.

Rather than have a long list of demands, choose two or three general demands that will make a big difference to everyone if they are successful. Your demands should be **SMART**: **s**pecific, **m** measurable, **a**chievable, **r**ealistic, and **t**ime bound. For example, do not demand that “*Government must fix poorly built houses.*” A better demand would be “*Government must ensure that X private contractor fixes the leaks in all of the houses built in Govan Mbeki road according to the contract specifications, within three months.*”

## Producing a Report

You may need to ask a member of the core team to type up the findings in a report to share with everybody at the public hearing. You can choose to publish your report as a simple document that can be photocopied, or as a glossy report that will be professionally designed and printed.

A simple document is the easiest and cheapest to make, everybody can have a copy at the public hearing and you can produce it fairly quickly. If you have the resources, you may wish to produce a well-designed booklet that includes photographs, but this is not necessary for the public hearing. The most important thing is to have a final report that presents the findings and demands.

Your report must represent everyday experience and should be in plain language that everybody can understand. Take special care to avoid jargon and complicated statistics.

## Distributing the Report

Once you have produced the final report, you should share it with participants in preparation for the public hearing. You should also share the report with the government officials who have indicated that they will be attending the public hearing. If possible you should give them enough time to study the report so that they can come prepared with suitable responses and solutions. Without enough time to read the report and prepare for the hearing, it is very hard for government officials to respond immediately to the findings. This may be especially true where the officials who have been delegated to attend do not have the authority to make decisions.

You should also set the expectation that you are looking for specific responses from government to each finding. Delaying tactics or unreasonable requests for time to investigate the findings should not be tolerated. Your expectation should be that government is familiar with a service, and can respond to the vast majority of issues immediately. You should also avoid requests to meet government in private before the public hearing – a social audit is about public accountability to communities and discussions should take place out in the open.

You should also share the report with the independent observers before the public hearing so that they can be prepared for what is presented.







# STEP 8:

## Preparing for the Public Hearing

**Length:** At least a day.

**Purpose:** To finalise logistics and get participants and residents ready to present at the public hearing.

Having gathered testimonies, finalised your findings, and organised the evidence, you are in a position to start preparing for the public hearing. Decisions need to be made about who will present at the hearing and these individuals will need to practice before the event. The community needs to be mobilised to attend, the media need to be briefed to help them understand the social audit process and the purpose of the public hearing, and the logistics need to be planned.

## Reading the Report and Deciding who will Present at the Public Hearing

Everybody should be given an opportunity to read the final report. This can be done in groups, much like the focus group sessions when the participants were becoming familiar with government documents. Be prepared to make last minute changes to the report.

There may not be enough time for everyone to give testimony during the public hearing, but your report should include the testimonies of residents. Those giving testimony should be asked to present their own experiences. You will also need a participant, or a group of participants, to volunteer to present the whole report, the overall findings, and other evidence.

## Practicing Presentations

The people that will be presenting must feel confident and ready to present. Depending on the size of the community, there can be hundreds of people at a public hearing, including government officials, observers, and the media. Presenters must be ready to face such a large number of people. Practicing and role playing the presentations helps presenters prepare for any questions that might come from government officials or the community. All the participants should be ready to assist in answering or explaining issues that might need clarity at the public hearing, so everyone should be present during the practice sessions. It is also a good idea to invite residents that will be giving testimony, especially those that did not attend the social audit.



## Mobilising Community Members to Attend

Once you have prepared the presenters, you will need to start mobilising residents for the public hearing. While you will have begun to do this earlier in the process, now is a good time to remind residents of the public hearing and encourage them to attend.

There are many creative ways to mobilise residents and disseminate information about the public hearing. In the case of MKSS in India and MUHURI in Kenya, entertainment events such as drama and music are used to help spread the word. Details about the public hearing can also be communicated through pamphlets and community radio.

The participants helping with mobilising the community can share some of what will be presented at the public hearing, but must encourage residents to attend on the day.

When mobilising the community all the participants must have the following information:

- The summary findings of the social audit.
- The date and time for the public hearing.
- The venue for the public hearing.
- A list of government officials who have been invited to be respondents.
- A list of the independent observers.
- Any transport arrangements.

## Logistical Preparation

While the participants are mobilising residents, your core team will be focusing on the logistics of the public hearing. This will be a repeat of the process for the mass meeting discussed in Step 1 on page 58.

## Briefing the Media

Most media organisations will not be familiar with social audits, so your team and a few residents should plan a briefing for key journalists before the public hearing. You can introduce them to the history, principles, and method of social auditing and provide an introduction to the findings and the evidence you have gathered. The testimonies you have collected may also be useful for journalists to use in their articles. You may also want to ask a few participants or community leaders if they would be willing to be interviewed by the media. Be cautious, as journalists will often try and interview organisers, especially if they are more articulate in English. Try to avoid speaking on behalf of the community – let people speak for themselves. If you embargo the report until the public hearing, this will allow journalists to write a longer and more in-depth piece which can be published on the morning of the public hearing.

# STEP 9:

## Holding the Public Hearing

**Length:** At least half a day.

**Purpose:** To present the social audit findings, evidence, and demands to government officials and observers.

Having prepared extensively beforehand, the day of the public hearing has finally arrived. There are a few important points that organisers need to be particularly aware of. Everyone needs to understand the agenda for the day and the rules of engagement. This could be presented along with any additional information to help people understand the process and the focus of the social audit. The findings need to be presented in a clear and accessible way and ideally in all necessary languages to ensure that everyone can understand them. It is also important to carefully manage how and when government responds to the findings, to facilitate a productive engagement.

## Demanding Accountability and Justice

The public hearing is an important component of the social audit process because it brings all the relevant stakeholders together to discuss the social audit findings and the way forward. This includes government, organisers, participants, residents, partner organisations, observers, and the media.

The public hearing should be held soon after the final report is produced to keep up as much momentum as possible. Remember, the public hearing is the forum where the community demands accountability and justice. It needs to be well structured, fair, inclusive, and effective.

## Defining the Agenda and the Purpose of the Public Hearing

It is very important that everyone understands the rules of engagement and what will happen during the meeting. You should share the meeting agenda with government officials when you invite them. It may help to include a paragraph clarifying your expectations.

Likewise you should introduce the agenda early in the programme of the public hearing. It may also be useful to do the following:

- Present a brief history of the social audit methodology.
- Introduce the service and the government documents that you reviewed.
- Introduce the officials and observers who are present and their roles and capacities.
- Outline the scope and scale of the social audit.
- Ask residents to stick to the main focus issues in their inputs.
- Mention that after the formal presentations, everybody will be given an opportunity to speak.







## Presenting the Findings

After the chairperson has made their introductions and discussed the agenda and expectations, the findings of the social audit can be presented.

This can be done according to the main themes or findings from the social audit. It should be rooted in the key messages that the audit is trying to convey to the government and to the community members. Where residents have committed to providing testimony, they should be given the opportunity to do that at the appropriate time.

A social audit is community centred and you should consider the residents who have come to the public hearing as the main audience. The findings should be presented in simple language and preferably in the language that the community speaks. For the sake of government and the media, the report will need to be written in English. However, the presentations should be delivered in the language that most residents are comfortable with. Some government officials or observers may also not speak the language of the community. This may require formal or ad hoc translation.

Many residents have come with personal problems and experiences that they wish to solve. Within time limits, you should allow as many other people as possible to speak. The chairperson should try to keep time and allow the community members to speak in their own local language if possible. The chairperson should also ensure that speakers do not go off the topic and that they focus on the service that was audited. However, it is also important to allow residents to voice their long-held frustrations.

You may wish to invite comments from other people and organisations who have attended the public hearing or the social audit as a whole. They can add welcome advice or valuable endorsements of the process and findings.

## Managing Government Response

There are two options for managing the response of the government.

The first option is to ask the government to listen to the whole presentation and then respond. This is faster and allows for a more cohesive presentation. It does, however, allow government officials the opportunity to pick and choose what findings they wish to respond to. The audience may also lose track of which finding they are responding to.

The second option is for government officials to respond to each presentation of a finding in turn. If time allows, this is a better option. This helps to ensure that the government provides specific responses to each finding, which can be recorded by observers. This approach is particularly conducive for findings related to individuals who participated in the social audit or gave testimony. It is incredibly empowering for a poor and working class person to have their personal issue discussed and responded to during the meeting. The chairperson should encourage public deliberation on each finding and push government to provide specific responses. He or she may then choose to allow further testimony on a particular finding, or wait and allow further testimony on a particular issue after the presentations and responses.

The independent observers are responsible for following the discussion and noting any commitments from government. They should be given an opportunity to share their opinions of the dialogue during the public hearing, their observations of the actual social audit process, the quality and appropriateness of the findings and evidence, and the suitability of the response of government. They may wish to add other observations for improving the social audit and the relationship between the government and the community.

Where possible, the chairperson should then discuss the process for following up on government commitments.

## SJC'S JANITORIAL SERVICES PUBLIC HEARING

*On 19 July 2014, the SJC held the public hearing on janitorial services in Khayelitsha. Around 400 residents of Khayelitsha were in attendance. Other stakeholders present included:*

- *Councillor Ernest Sonnenberg, the Mayoral Committee member for Utility Services for the City of Cape Town.*
- *Dr Gisela Kaiser, Executive Director of Utility Services for the City of Cape Town.*
- *Joseph Tsatsire, Head of Water and Sanitation in informal settlements.*
- *Helen Zille, Premier of the Western Cape.*
- *Jonathan Timm, Director of citizen-based monitoring for the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.*
- *Stephen Law, Director of Environmental Monitoring Group and Unathi Tuta, presenter from Radio Zibonele in Khayelitsha as independent observers.*
- *Karam Singh, Head of Research, from the South African Human Rights Commission.*







### *So what happened during the public hearing?*

*SJC group leaders presented the preliminary findings to residents and to the City. Residents were then given an opportunity to give oral testimony on their experiences with sanitation services in their sections of Khayelitsha. Some residents took the opportunity to express their anger and frustration about the janitorial service and government service delivery in general.*

*The City representatives dealt with some of the findings directly. However, they challenged the legitimacy of the social audit findings. They challenged the objectivity and methodology as unreliable and the sample size of the audit as not being representative. The City claimed to be performing well in the context of urbanisation and in comparison to other metropolitan governments. City representatives also felt that they had not had sufficient time to review the findings before being asked to respond.*

*City representatives recognised their responsibility in improving the janitorial service and ensuring that everyone has access to decent sanitation services, but stressed the importance of residents taking responsibility as well. They emphasised the high cost of vandalism of toilets and the low number of faults being reported to the City call centre. The City felt that the community should work with the City and look after the toilets. Councillor Sonnenberg committed to responding in detail once the full report was published and to return to discuss progress.*

**Thozama Mngcongo, Social Justice Coalition**

# STEP 10:

## Reflecting and Following up

After the public hearing it is extremely important to find ways to maintain momentum and to sustain pressure on government to address the issues that emerged during the social audit. This requires follow up with both the community – to keep them actively involved in the process – and government – to hold them accountable to their commitments. It can also be very valuable to reflect on the process as a whole and consider ways in which the social audit could be refined or improved upon.

### Following up with Government and the Community

The details of the follow-up will differ between social audits, depending on the advocacy campaigns within which they are located. However the main aims of the follow-up are always to maintain pressure on government to fulfil specific commitments made during the public hearing and to address other issues and concerns raised by the social audit, and to encourage communities to remain actively involved in this process.

Follow-up is one of the key reasons that social audits should be located within existing advocacy campaigns. They cannot contribute to real change if they are isolated or one-off events that are not supported by further advocacy efforts.



## Ensuring that the Government Delivers on Commitments and Meets Demands

The government's response during the social audit will largely determine the steps you should take to follow up with government after the public hearing. If government is cooperative, you could enter into a period of facilitating further communication between the government and the community. If they resist, or you may need to support the community to insist that government responds to the demands of the social audit.

### Possible actions might include:

- Writing letters on behalf of residents.
- Chairing follow up meetings between leaders and government officials.
- Generating up to date evidence through community monitoring.
- Disseminating the social audit findings and demands to a wide audience of stakeholders, for example parliament, the auditor general, the public protector and/or or the human rights commission. This can help garner additional support for your campaign and increase pressure on government to address the community's demands.
- Approaching a specific third party to intervene on the matter, for example an eminent political leader or other moral figure with standing.
- Turning to a suitable public body for specific assistance. Depending on the service, this may include the Human Rights Commission, Public Protector, or other institutions.

If these actions fail to get the result you want, you may need to play a more active role in mobilising and organising. This can only be done after further consultation with the community and a mandate from them.

### You might consider the following:

- Peaceful picketing and protest marches. These can be good for demonstrating community power.
- Peaceful public demonstrations and occupation of public spaces.
- Creative symbolic methods. For example, if the community is struggling with access to clean water, you could organise symbolic visits to a local government office to collect water from their taps in buckets.
- Symbolic occupation. Symbolism is important as is the use of visible public space. If the community is struggling with electricity, you could cook a meal by wood fire in front of a government office. It is harder to ignore a community problem when it is public.
- Use the media. Government can be very responsive to publicity and many journalists will be willing to return to report on progress.
- Reach out to other communities and partners. Many other people will be struggling in similar circumstances and building broader coalitions can be powerful.

## Ensuring the Follow-up is led by the Community

Social audits are community led and the follow-up should be as well. It can be tempting to retreat into a high level advocacy campaign to make sure the demands are met, but you should consider how to achieve this through continued organising of, and in communication with, residents.

From the perspective of a resident it might seem like nothing is happening – especially if progress is slow. You should be sure to inform and remind those involved that dealing with structural inequality and injustice is a long term task. You should also hold regular public meetings with leaders, community members, and the social audit participants to discuss next steps and to keep them informed of progress. This is particularly important if you have established structures in the community. If you don't have established structures you will need to think creatively about how you will consult and communicate with leaders and residents after the social audit. You might consider the following:

- Working with the networks and groups that you have established relationships with. It is possible to have announcements and updates read at local meetings or church services.
- Do door-to-door organising and asking residents to spread the word.
- Developing methods of public education.
- You could work creatively with technology. Many companies offer group text message services that you could utilise if you have collected participants' telephone numbers.

## Reflecting on the Social Audit Process

Reflection is the final component in the social audit process. It is important because social audits often do not unfold in exactly the way they were planned, as there are a number of variables involved. For example, the organisers of Equal Education's school sanitation social audit had initially planned to conduct two days of training with participants in a particular area before gathering evidence in the relevant schools. They soon discovered that participants were failing to return on the second day, which was challenging because the participant groups were already small. In direct response to this experience, while the social audit was still underway, Equal Education Gauteng changed the training to a half day with evidence gathering in the second half of the day. On later reflection, after the social audit was complete, Equal Education Gauteng realised that half a day was insufficient for training and that they needed to explore strategies to encourage participants to attend all the training days.

The SJC has now completed four social audits and each one has developed on the approach and experience of the one before. After each of the first three audits, the SJC and NU participated in informal reflection discussions that allowed them to make small changes to their model. However, after their third social audit, which focused on the janitorial service for communal flush toilets, the SJC organised a one day formal reflection process which led to a big shift in their approach.

Here are some things that you can think about in your reflections:

- Who took part and who didn't? Did the social audit have legitimacy?
- Who spoke and who didn't? Was the social audit inclusive?
- Who made decisions and how? Was the social audit community led?
- What steps didn't work so well?
- Did the social audit achieve what you expected or anything unexpected?
- What would you do differently next time?

## SJC REVISES THEIR SOCIAL AUDIT MODEL

*Based on the outcomes of their reflection processes, the SJC/NU implemented a reformed social audit model in their fourth and most recent social audit held in Green Point, Khayelitsha. Some of the key new aspects of this model were the following:*

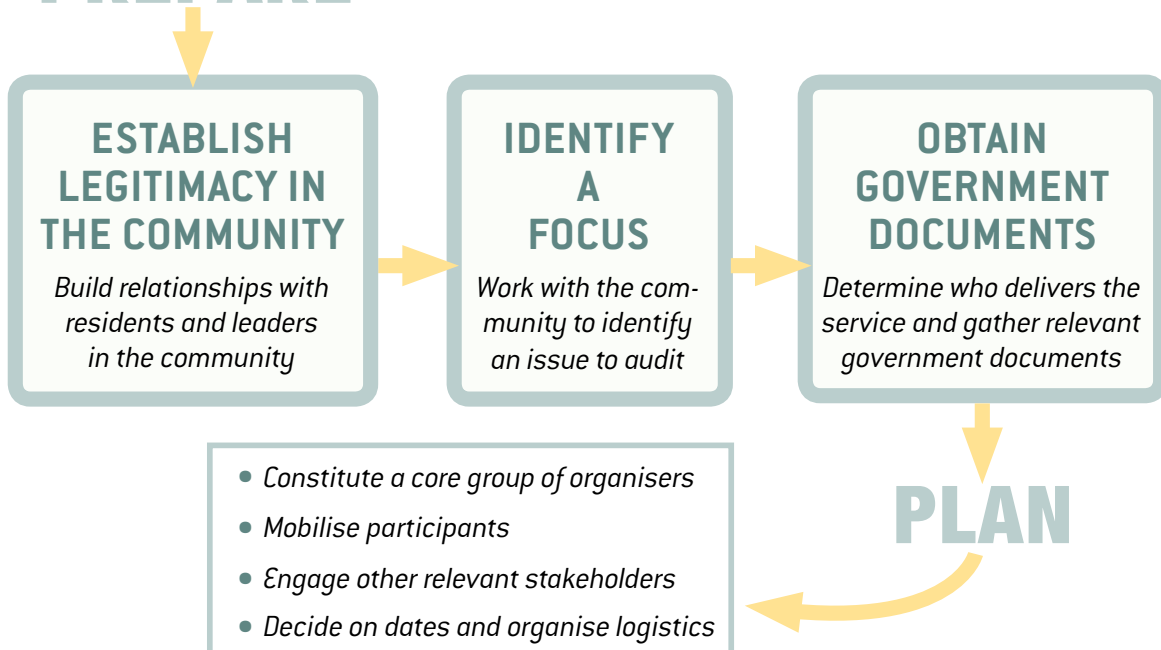
- *It focused on a single section in Khayelitsha, rather than the usual four or five, with the plan to move from section to section, conducting rolling localised social audits over a longer period of time.*
- *The community decides what issues will be audited and the organisers follow their lead. Previously the SJC and NU would guide the discussion to ensure that the issue selected was relevant to their clean and safe sanitation campaign.*
- *Community members were involved in the planning and preparation of the social audit as well as the implementation itself. Some community members were included in the core group organising the social audit, something which hadn't happened in previous audits.*
- *All participants were involved in the process of designing questionnaires and analysing evidence. This had been done by a small group of organisers in previous social audits.*

*This revised approach requires more time because it involves community members in every step of the process and emphasises community empowerment more than in previous audits. This model encourages greater community ownership of the process and findings, and positions the community at the centre of the follow-up process.*

**Zukiswa Qezo, Social Justice Coalition**

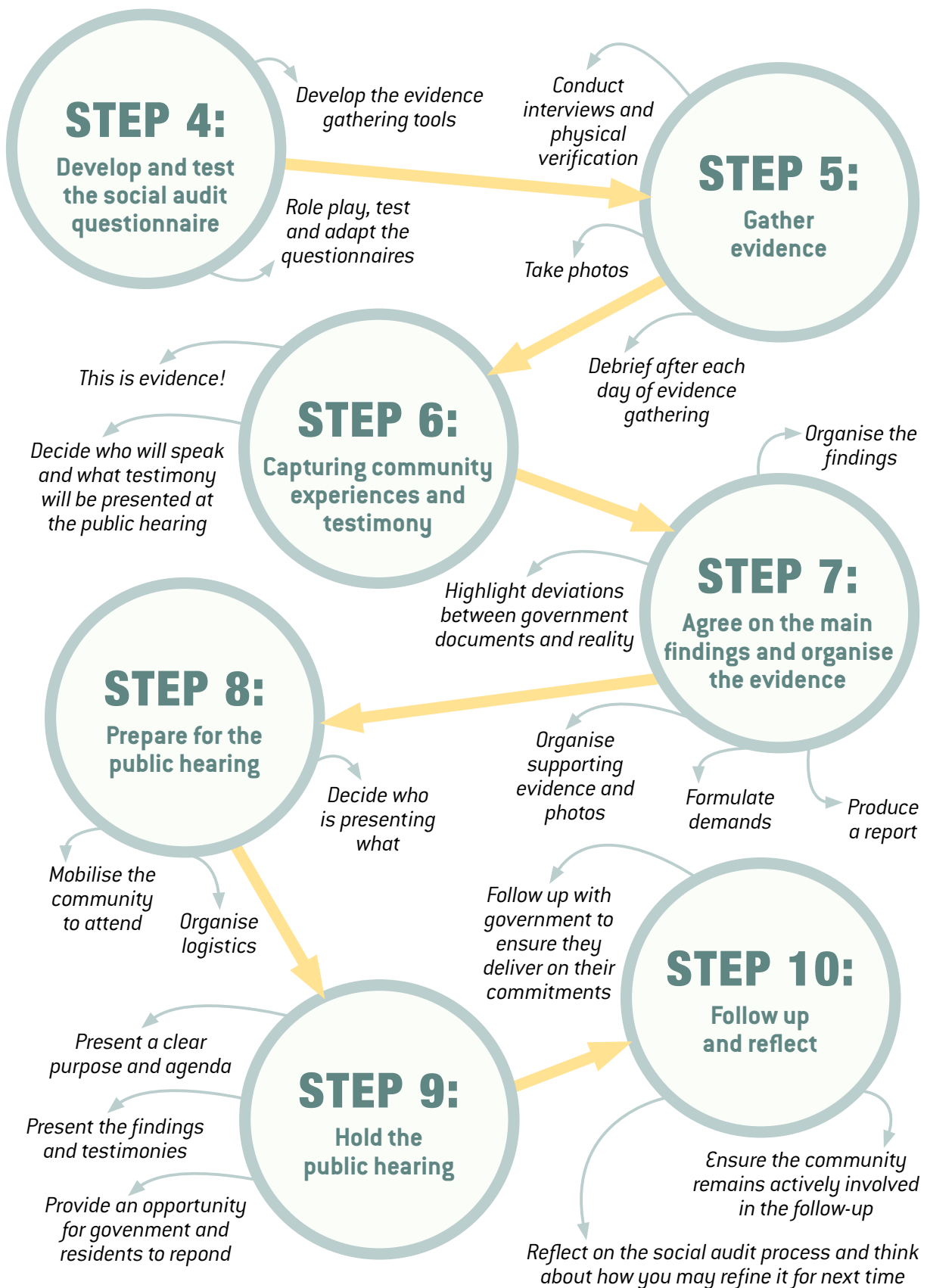
## PHASE 1: Preparing and Planning a Social Audit

### PREPARE



## PHASE 2: Conducting a Social Audit









# SECTION 3

## Key Challenges

## KEY CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL AUDITS

### The Data Trap: Experience is Evidence

A social audit can generate useful statistics that help to support your findings. Journalists are often particularly interested in numbers that can be easily digested and that make for great headlines. If picked up by the media, social audits can help to make the experiences of poor and working class people heard; not only by government officials, but by a wider audience that includes journalists, academics, civil society activists, and policy makers. However, readily-accessible evidence does not immediately translate into accountability. It is easy to make the assumption that the more legible and reliable the data you generate, the more likely you are to get traction with government. But this is not necessarily the case.

In some ways, emphasising data in presenting the findings can be counterproductive. You may find that instead of the government remedying poor service delivery, the debate becomes about the community being accountable to the government for the legitimacy of the data. Questions of data collection and data validity become central to the government's response and to their strategy for contesting the results of the audit.

Government officials can easily gain the upper hand in such data debates, as they can make greater claims to legitimate data, even in the cases where they fail to make this data public. By focusing on data, you can unwittingly give government officials the power to frame the debate as a question of how true, reliable, and valid the data is, rather than focusing on the valid and real experiences of people who live in the communities where the service is meant to take place.

You can try to be transparent about the process, and its strengths and shortcomings, but collecting data as a community is messy. There are challenges to the data collection, sample methods, data validity and reliability, and the preparation and interpretation of raw data. Technically, social audits cannot match a professional survey in terms of data collection and interpretation methods.

In the end, no amount of data is sufficient to appease government officials who are determined to undermine the findings. Further movement in this direction would be a trap.

The legitimacy of the findings do not rest in data alone but also residents communicating their experience. Your social audit must focus on capturing and legitimising the experiences and the voices of residents as true, reliable, and valid evidence. Prioritising this is integral to building the power of the community in its engagement with government officials. It is easy for government officials to ignore, reframe, or attack findings that are not rooted in experience. But it is very difficult to tell an individual expressing an experience, especially when it is representative of broader experience, that he or she is not telling the truth.



## **Justice and Accountability: the Tension Between Systemic Change and Individual Redress**

Where there is little accountability from government officials, residents can feel that their experience has been denied. There can be a deep sense of injustice for someone who takes part in the social audit, speaks of their experience and indignity, but does not get redress or accountability.

The public hearing presents an important opportunity for residents to experience justice and accountability. Many residents will understand that change takes time – but being listened to and having your experience acknowledged is cathartic and powerful.

Follow up is also significant for ensuring justice and accountability. When you have secured commitments from officials, you need to follow up to ensure the government delivers. It is tempting to manage follow-up and advocacy centrally, and to only focus on the broader systemic policy issues and campaign goals. These are very important but in the midst of all of this, it is important to not lose sight of the individuals. It is worth following up on the issues raised by each individual who presented testimony.

## **The Heat of the Moment versus Ongoing Mobilisation**

Social audits can bring considerable attention to an issue and raise the heat at that moment. Success is often determined by the media response and the public profile of the audit, rather than on the implementation of remedial action based on the findings.

However, the social audit has potential as a tool to mobilise and organise people politically around a long term, shared campaign for the improvement of services. A consistent and ongoing programme of advocacy that deals with problems through social audits can ensure that community members will continue to take part in, and value, the process.

## **Contestation is Part of the Process**

Participation is not apolitical: it is at the heart of shifting power relations and claiming rights. This is often bitterly contested. In the case of service delivery, the necessary change is often structural and involves a reallocation of resources and a shift in priorities. These processes are deeply political.

In mobilising and organising, and in collecting evidence and making it legible, residents are claiming their power. Many government officials can find this threatening. The issues raised through a social audit will usually be contested. This does not make conflict inevitable. In fact, social audits are geared towards real participation and meaningful contestation, rather than conflict. Remember, the expectations of communities to participate, be heard, and have their needs met, are not unreasonable. In fact, it is a constitutional requirement.





# SECTION 4

## **Alternative Social Audit Models**

# **ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL AUDIT MODELS**

Section 2 of this Guide presents the social audit model developed and implemented by the SJC. The principles, phases, and steps discussed in Section 2 provide a clear guide to the model that the SJC would encourage other South African organisations to implement.

However, there are organisations, both in South Africa and abroad, who implement social audits in different ways. This section presents two alternative social audit models. The first model is based on a school sanitation social audit implemented by Equal Education in **Gauteng**, some examples of which were introduced in Section 2. Equal Education and the SJC models differ in the scale and the depth of community involvement in the social audit process.

The second model is based on experiences from **India**. It presents a government-supported and government-funded model of social audit implemented by the Society for Social Audit, Accountability, and Transparency (SSAAT). This model differs significantly from the SJC model but provides an interesting illustration of the possibilities for government-supported social audits.



# School Sanitation Campaign

## – Equal Education

Equal Education is a movement of learners, parents, and teachers fighting for equality and quality in the South African education system. Founded in Khayelitsha in 2008, Equal Education has developed into a national organisation with active members in five provinces. The head office remains in Khayelitsha in the Western Cape, but the organisation also has offices in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape and a presence in Kwazulu-Natal and Limpopo. Equal Education's most active members are high school learners in grades 8 to 12 known in the organisation as "Equalisers." Equalisers, along with parents, teachers, activists and community members, work with Equal Education to improve schools within their communities.

Since its founding, Equal Education has run successful campaigns to secure minimum norms and standards for school infrastructure. The Minimum Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure are legally binding regulations promulgated by the national Minister of Basic Education in November 2013, in response to Equal Education's campaign. The regulations establish binding time-frames and standards for the delivery of essential school infrastructure.

The campaign for decent school infrastructure would be later be called the "Michael Komape Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure Implementation Campaign," named after six year old Michael Komape who tragically lost his life after falling into a pit latrine toilet at school in Chebeng Village, Limpopo in January 2014.

Within the framework of Equal Education's broader campaign around norms and standards, Equal Education Gauteng established that school sanitation was a significant issue in their province; with the support of their members, they started their School Sanitation Campaign in Tembisa in 2013. This campaign advocated dignified and safe sanitation for students in all schools across Gauteng, particularly for those located in townships. Equal Education's social audit activities were developed and implemented within this school sanitation campaign.

## Planning the Social Audit

In August 2013, Equalisers conducted an audit of 11 high schools in Tembisa, a township in the eastern part of Gauteng. At the time, this amounted to about two thirds of the high schools in the area. In more than half of the schools that were audited, more than 100 students were forced to share a single working toilet. A number of attempts were made to engage the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) on the matter. The findings of the social audit were publicised in the national media, which led to a meeting between Equal Education Gauteng and the Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Education in the province at the time, Barbara Creecy. By the beginning of September 2014, however, nothing had been done to address the issues raised by the Tembisa social audit.

In mid-September 2014, there was a significant increase in the number of high schools involved in the campaign, particularly from Daveyton, Kwa-Thema, and Tsakane. On 13 September, some two thousand Equal Education-affiliated students and parents marched to the offices of the GDE to demand action. As a result, the new Gauteng MEC for Education, Panyaza Lesufi, promised to spend R150 million on upgrading sanitation at 580 schools serving over half a million students. Following this commitment, Equal Education made a number of attempts to monitor and follow up on MEC Lesufi's promises. To sustain their monitoring efforts, Equal Education Gauteng decided to engage the support of progressive teachers in Gauteng, faith-based communities, such as the South African Council for Churches and the Moral Regeneration Movement, civic organisations, like the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), and community organisations, such as Sindinga Uthando.



In February 2015, leaders from these different organisations met to establish the Gauteng Education Crisis Coalition. It was decided at this meeting that a process of community-led monitoring of education infrastructure should commence. Poor school sanitation is widespread across township schools in Gauteng, and the decision to conduct a social audit in these schools was seen as an effective method to gather evidence related to this issue. Auditing on this scale would put the campaign in a better position to put pressure on the Gauteng Department of Education to respond to the issue at provincial level, and not just in one or two isolated districts. Equal Education was able to conduct a social audit at this level because they had a large membership and because they partnered with other community based organisations. Equal Education Gauteng ultimately audited 200 schools. They involved a large community in the audits, including parents, education staff from various districts, and members of partner organisations.

In preparing for their social audit, Equal Education Gauteng identified partner organisations within the relevant districts that could assist with conducting the social audit. Equal Education's own members were mostly concentrated in one district and so there was a need to get support from other organisations to implement the social audit across such a vast area and large number of schools.

Equal Education identified potential partner organisations through a community mapping exercise. This exercise helped to establish which schools needed priority attention, which faith- and community-based organisations were located near to these schools, and which organisations had a strong membership base.

Equal Education met with the leaders of these organisations to explain their campaign and social audit plans, and to discuss the role that the partner organisations could play in the social audit process. Seven organisations agreed to partner with Equal Education Gauteng on the social audit, and it was decided that five members of each organisation would attend the training and participate.

In preparation for the social audit Equal Education also spoke to schools, raised awareness among learners and parents, and engaged with community organisations about the importance of sanitation conditions in schools. Members worked hard to persuade parents and community organisations that conditions in schools were affecting learning, and that good performance at school would offer young people an alternative to dropping out and turning to drugs and crime. In some instances these discussions became very personal and emotional as people began sharing their stories and experiences. These engagements formed an important component of the community mobilisation process as people connected personally with the issue of sanitation in schools.



## Conducting the Social Audit

### Developing and Testing the Questionnaire

Equal Education used a single questionnaire to conduct the social audit, which included a component with questions for learners and a component to physically verify infrastructure. The questionnaire was developed using information from the Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure and the Norms and Standards for School Funding.

A draft of the questionnaire was developed and then piloted with parents and learners separately. Feedback from parents and learners was used to revise the forms and ensure that both groups could administer and fill out the questionnaire with ease and accuracy. Some questions related to school statistics (i.e. number of learners per grade, number of toilets in the school, etc.), other questions dealt with the condition and maintenance of the toilets, and access to sanitary towels and toilet paper. The questionnaire focused not only on the prescribed norms and standards, but included questions that sought to explore learners' access to, and experience of, school infrastructure like libraries and media centres.

In addition to the questionnaire, three other documents were provided to auditors: a letter addressed to the principal of the relevant school introducing the campaign and explaining the social audit process; a document explaining Equal Education and its advocacy focus areas; and a list of the 580 schools that MEC Panyaza Lesufi had claimed were scheduled for upgrading.

### Training Participants

Equal Education conducted training with five members from each of the seven partner organisations that had agreed to participate in the social audit. Training was provided prior to the social audit being conducted in their area. In other words, there were a number of training sessions that took place over the period of the social audit and the participants at each session were those who would be implementing the social audit in that area the following day.

The training focused on ensuring that participants had a clear understanding of the social audit process, what would be required of them, and that they understood the questionnaire and other documents that they would use when conducting the social audit.

The initial plan was for the training to run over two days. However, very few of the participants returned for the second day of training. This meant that very few of the participants were available to actually conduct the social audit. The training was therefore condensed into half a day. The social audit process and the questionnaire were explained in the morning and auditors conducted the audit in the afternoon.

Some attendees from partner organisations had expectations which could not be met. For example, some individuals expected to be paid for their time which is not part of Equal Education's volunteer policy. These are all things that need to be clarified at the outset so as to avoid confusion and disappointment.

### Conducting Interviews and Physical Verification

Equal Education Gauteng would move into an area, train members of the relevant partner organisation, and then conduct the social audit in the schools that they had identified in that area. Between February and March 2015, a total of 200 schools in more than 20 communities were audited.

As mentioned, one of the challenges that Equal Education Gauteng faced was that participants from other organisations wouldn't arrive on the day of the audit. This meant that there were times when the social audit teams were forced to conduct the audit on their own, without support from partner organisations.

In practice, the social audit team would enter the school premises and would start by visiting the principal or administrator to introduce themselves and the social audit. The audit team would often leave the questions related to school statistics with the administrator to answer while they went around the school to complete the rest of the questionnaire.

Equal Education found that when conducting a social audit in schools, there are a number of things to keep in mind that may not be relevant to social audits in other contexts. Timing is important because you need to conduct the audit when learners are at school, but without disrupting teaching and learning. You also need to get permission to be on the school grounds, which can be a challenge if the principal is not in support of the social audit process.

## Analysis and Findings

Data verification was a very important component of the process and, together with the data analysis, took more than 2 months. While collecting data, and before moving from one area to the next, the information in the forms that had been completed needed to be double-checked. Each completed questionnaire was verified with the auditor who had administered that questionnaire and verified a third time with the relevant school.

The findings were captured for analysis in a computer application that had been developed for use during the social audit. However, having been newly developed, the app had a number of teething problems and data had to be re-entered on a number of occasions. Once the programme had completed the analysis, Equal Education staff analysed the findings and developed a draft list of key issues and demands. The results were also compared with the norms and standards specifications for the minimum level of school infrastructure.

The draft demands were taken to the seven partner organisations, to learners and parent members, and discussed with a number of education experts who were going to be involved in the social audit public hearing.

Equal Education took their time with the analysis process to ensure that the data were accurate and that the findings were refined and widely supported through consultations with all the relevant stakeholders.

## Planning and Holding a Public Hearing

While the analysis process was underway, Equal Education mobilised resources for their public hearing (called the Schools Social Audit Summit), where the results of the social audit were made public. They also conducted a process of community mobilisation amongst members and partner organisations to get people to attend the summit.

A number of education experts from across Southern Africa were invited to sit on a panel at the summit. A briefing with these panellists was held prior to the summit to share the social audit findings and to get feedback.

Officials from the national Department of Basic Education were also invited to the summit, along with the MEC. The MEC was the only government representative to attend. At the summit he eventually accepted the demands of the social audit unconditionally. Over 5000 people attended the summit which began with a sharing of demands based on the social audit findings. A discussion of the accuracy of the data and findings followed this and, finally, learners and parents were given an opportunity to share their testimonies. The MEC was then questioned by the media and he declared that he would address the demands by mid-August 2015.







## Follow-up

Equal Education followed up with the MEC on his commitments on a number of occasions. By the deadline of 16 August many demands remained unmet, at which point Equal Education sent out a press release outlining all the demands that the MEC had missed.

Holding the MEC to his commitments has been an ongoing process. There has been some progress. The Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has already spent R150 million to upgrade sanitation at 578 schools serving about half a million learners. Government contractors have fixed or replaced the toilets, taps, pipes, and basins at these schools and some have received brand new toilet blocks. Politicians and government officials throughout the GDE have spoken out on the need for principals and school governing bodies to maintain toilets properly. A manual to guide schools on how to do this has been issued.

The GDE has also committed to spending a further R50 million to fix the toilets at the 50 most affected schools in Gauteng. It also undertook to fix all the matric pupil toilet blocks in the province. In addition, the GDE promised to make significant policy changes by 16 June 2015 which, if implemented, would improve the maintenance of toilets as well as access to toilets, soap, sanitary pads, and toilet paper in schools.

While Equal Education has done relatively well at maintaining pressure on the MEC, one of the key challenges that they faced after the social audit was maintaining momentum with the partner organisations and their members. Sustaining communication with partners about progress and including them in the process of planning follow-up steps was a challenge.

## Reflection

Equal Education has not carried out a formal evaluation process to discuss lessons from their school sanitation social audit, but there have been some opportunities to reflect. One such occasion was a session held with the seven partner organisations to discuss challenges that were experienced and how they were overcome. Equal Education has indicated that they will make the following adjustments to the process of their next social audit:

1. Identify their partners earlier on in the process and communicate the campaign and the social audit process more clearly.
2. Put greater emphasis on training auditors, including providing an orientation on the issue of the campaign and training on the social audit process itself.

See <http://www.equaleducation.org.za/campaigns/sanitation>

See <https://twitter.com/EducationGP/status/589403822897897472>

See <http://www.equaleducation.org.za/content/2015/06/24/ANNEXURE-3.docx>

# Government Supported Social Audits – the Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency in India

Social audits were first conducted by Mazdoor Kishan Shakti Sangathan (Association for the Empowerment of Workers and Peasants, or MKSS) in the 1990s in the Indian state of Rajasthan. Since then, many different kinds of social audits have been conducted in India. For example, in Maharashtra state, social audits are used by civil society groups at district level to monitor the delivery of medicines as a part of the Community-based Monitoring and Planning Programme.

In the state of Andhra Pradesh, the Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency (SSAAT) is an independent but government-funded social audit organisation with capacity and experience in conducting social audits. SSAAT started as a pilot project in 2006 under the Department of Rural Development, when social audits of MGNREGS were piloted in three districts of Andhra Pradesh. The pilots revealed there was often more than 90 percent difference between official documents and the reality of service delivery, despite the fact that these three districts had undergone and passed a financial audit. SSAAT subsequently expanded their social audits to other districts and currently carry out regular social audits across all districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Andhra Pradesh has a population of 49.6 million people, 70 percent of which live in rural areas. The work of SSAAT specifically focuses on rural districts. The large population in rural areas makes conducting social audits demanding as they require significant human resources. SSAAT has a management and administrative team which include seven state team monitors. These monitors provide leadership and support to the 70 people working on the state resource team. The state resource team supervises and supports the work of 700 district resource people, who in turn support over 80,000 people.



## The Enabling Conditions for Social Audits in India

The success of SSAAT has in large part been the result of the favourable environment for social audits in India. There are two significant factors which contribute to this environment:

- **Strong political leadership and will** – The state government has committed financial and human resources to the establishment and continuation of SSAAT.
- **Progressive legislation** – The MNREGS legislation requires social audits be undertaken in each district. India's Right to Information (RTI) Act also ensures that the government releases high quality disaggregated information that can be used by civil society to monitor the planning, budgeting, and implementation of government services. The Andhra Pradesh Department of Rural Development managed an information system to keep track of various projects undertaken by the department. This information is also publicly available to communities and is used by SSAAT during their social audits.

## Preparing a SSAAT Social Audit

SSAAT drafts a quarterly schedule of which social audits will be conducted in which districts. The schedule is communicated to the relevant project director at state level and to district officials. The team that will conduct the social audit in a specific district goes to the district a week before the start of the social audit to ensure that the necessary documents are ready for the auditors to use.

The next step is the identification of the village social auditors. Both the state and the district resource teams go to each village and identify literate wage seekers or youth from different labourers' families. The village social auditors are given the necessary training, which covers topics like understanding the Right to Information Act and the MGNREG Act, and how to conduct both door-to-door and physical verifications. The village social auditors form about ten teams after the training, each team is given a selection of villages that they will be responsible for during the social audit. SSAAT has a policy of ensuring that village social auditors do not conduct a social audit in their own villages. This ensures the safety of the social auditors and prevents bias and intimidation.

## Implementing the Social Audit

The different teams move from village to village during the social audit. Depending on the size of the district and the number of villages, it can take up to seven days to complete the door-to-door and physical verifications. The village social auditors will do the following in each village:

- Make use of the “muster rolls,” which indicate the list of labourers, the projects they worked on and for how long, and how much they were paid. Payment receipts are also examined to verify if the information recorded matches what has been paid to beneficiaries.
- Measure the completed projects as stated in the muster rolls or engineering books. For example, if a gravel road was constructed then the auditors will measure that road, take pictures of the condition of the road, and compare this with the information in the engineering book to see if it matches.
- The auditors also engage in awareness-raising discussions with wage seekers while they do the door-to-door verification.
- The auditors also collect evidence from community members in the form of statements, videos, and photos.

After the social audit is completed, the elected head of each village will call the community together for a gram sabha, or village meeting. A public hearing of the social audit findings is held at the gram sabha (village) level, and at the gram panchayat or Mandal (block level in Andhra Pradesh). The Mandal is a collection of villages where elected members from the villages meet in a joint forum. During the gram sabha public hearing, the social audit findings are read out to everyone. Evidence and proceedings of the public hearing are recorded by an independent observer. If there are people who withheld money from workers, they are given an opportunity to pay back the money openly

during the public hearing while the whole village watches. The village public hearing also serves to educate those present about the policy of the service delivery programme that has been audited, and villagers are allowed to ask questions and share their experiences.

The Mandal, or block public hearing, is held after all the village public hearings have been completed. The block public hearing is convened by the project director or the District Water Management Agency (DWMA). During the public hearing, the issues are heard by everyone and recommendations are made about actions that should be taken against the guilty officials and contractors. There is always an ombudsman present to take note of the process and findings for further action.

## Follow-up and Reflection

The social audit report published online for the public to access. The report is also sent to the District Collector (a person in charge of revenue collection and administration) who must take action within seven days of receiving the report. The District Collector has to take disciplinary action against staff who have not followed procedure or been found to have stolen funds; recover misappropriated funds from staff and contractors; and, in extreme cases of corruption, lay criminal charges against staff and contractors. District vigilance officers are responsible for the follow up on the actions to be taken. In turn the compliance and vigilance officers have to monitor the district vigilance officers' to ensure they adhere to the actions agreed on and that this is reported in monthly meetings.

## Results of SSAAT Social Audits

Social audits have revealed a significant number of cases of misappropriation of funds in the MGNREGA. Almost 100 million Indian Rupees (ZAR 20 million) has been misappropriated, and almost 20 million Rupees (ZAR 4 million) has been recovered from government officials and contractors. The social audits have also found that over sixteen thousand staff have committed irregularities; more than three thousand staff have been dismissed and just over five hundred have been suspended.

SSAAT has found that social audits empower the communities that the rural employment scheme is aimed at, who become able to collectively monitor government services and engage with government officials directly to demand accountability. Social audit participants also gain more awareness about their rights and entitlements through their participation.

Moreover, the social audit process helps the Department of Rural Development understand the satisfaction levels of different stakeholders and how much they value the MGNREGS. At the village level, it strengthens the community institutions and their capacities around mechanisms such as service delivery, resource sharing, and distribution.





# SECTION 5

## Resources

# Resources

## The Social Audit Network

<http://socialaudits.org.za>

**Training opportunities** – The social audit network offers a range of training opportunities and support for organisations wishing to learn more about or conduct social audits.

**Contact:** Nkosikhona Swartbooi

**E-mail:** [socialauditnetwork@sjc.org.za](mailto:socialauditnetwork@sjc.org.za)

**Facebook page** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1557834897805875/>

## Social Audit Network members

### SOCIAL JUSTICE COALITION

<http://www.sjc.org.za/>

**Contact:** Axolile Notywala

**E-mail:** [axolile@sjc.org.za](mailto:axolile@sjc.org.za)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/Social-Justice-Coalition-146458315383256>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/sjcoalition>

### NDIFUNA UKWAZI

<http://nu.org.za/>

**Contact:** Nkosikhona Swartbooi

**E-mail:** [nkosikhona@nu.org.za](mailto:nkosikhona@nu.org.za)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/NdifunaUkwazi>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/NdifunaUkwazi>

### EQUAL EDUCATION

<https://www.equaleducation.org.za/>

**E-mail:** [info.gauteng@equaleducation.org.za](mailto:info.gauteng@equaleducation.org.za)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/equal.education>

**Twitter:** [https://twitter.com/equal\\_education](https://twitter.com/equal_education)

**INTERNATIONAL BUDGET PARTNERSHIP SOUTH AFRICA**

<http://internationalbudget.org/>

**Contact:** Albert van Zyl or Jessica Taylor

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**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/IBPSouthAfrica>

**AFESIS CORPLAN**

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**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/afesis.corplan>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/Afesiscorplan>

**BENCH MARKS FOUNDATION**

<http://www.bench-marks.org.za/>

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**HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG SOUTHERN AFRICA**

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**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/boellza>

**OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATION FOR SOUTH AFRICA**

<http://osf.org.za/>

**E-mail:** [Ichumile@osfsa.org.za](mailto:Ichumile@osfsa.org.za)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/OpenSocietyFoundations>

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/osfsa>

**PLANACT**

<http://www.planact.org.za/>

**E-mail:** [info@planact.org.za](mailto:info@planact.org.za)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/planact.sa>

**Twitter:** [https://twitter.com/Planact\\_NGO](https://twitter.com/Planact_NGO)





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