

## Chapter-7: Monitoring and Evaluation

National Social Assistance programme is being implemented in all rural and urban areas in all States and UTs and intends to touch upon lives of the vulnerable sections of society. Hence, the monitoring of implementation and evaluation for course-correction is quite vital. The scrutiny of Monitoring and Evaluation of NSAP with respect to in NSAP guidelines led to the following observations:

### 7.1 Monitoring at Central Level

#### 7.1.1 Monitoring by National Social Assistance Advisory Committee

A National Social Assistance Advisory Committee (NSAAC) was envisaged to be established at national level to assist the Ministry of Rural Development in the monitoring and evaluation of the NSAP and to advise on matters related to policy and its effective implementation. NSAAC was also empowered to clearly state specific variations in guidelines within overall framework of NSAP. The Committee was to consist of:

- Representatives of related Ministries and departments of the Central Government,
- Five representatives from civil society organizations and academic institutions, and,
- Five Secretaries from State Governments on rotation covering all regions of the country.

NSAP Guidelines also envisaged that meetings of the NSAAC may be conducted at least twice in a year. However, only three NSAAC meetings were held during 2017-21 as detailed in table 7.1 below:

**Table 7.1: Discussions in NSAAC Meetings during 2017-21**

1 <sup>st</sup> meeting (July 2018)	2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting (November 2018)	3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting (August 2019)
1. Pension rate needed to be revised upwards and should be reviewed periodically.	1. Pension amount needed to be revised to minimum to ₹ 2000 per month.	1. Old age pension amount needed to be revised and should be linked with price index, bringing uniformity in pension amount and eligibility criteria.
2. Sumit Bose Committee recommendations should be followed for NSAP.	2. To bring uniformity in pension being disbursed in different States.	2. Adoption of SECC data instead of BPL data in identification of beneficiaries under old age pension scheme and amount needed to be revised to minimum to ₹ 2000 per month. Urgent need to revisit the rate of assistance under widow pension scheme.
3. NSAP-MIS falls gravely short in terms of user-friendliness and needs to learn from MISs of PMAY-G and MGNREGS.	3. Pension card portability to be addressed on priority.	3. In some cases, upto 10 <i>per cent</i> of inclusion error were reported as number of beneficiaries had died over a period, but their name continued to be existing in the list. 4. Establishment of effective grievance redressal mechanism.

Hence, NSAAC did not meet twice a year as intended and after its meeting in August 2019, no meeting was conducted during 19 months till March 2021. Further, the suggestions of NSAAC meeting as tabulated above was not followed by the Ministry of Rural Development.

The Ministry replied that recommendations contained in the Task Force of Mihir Shah, Sumit Bose Committee and the comprehensive third-party evaluation study of NSAP were considered by the Government at the time of considering extension of NSAP for the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission cycle (2021-2026). The Cabinet, however, approved the NSAP Scheme in its current form and did not recommend any revision for NSAP Schemes for the period 2021-2026. Hence, the recommendations of the Task Force headed by Mihir Shah, Sumit Bose Committee and the comprehensive third-party evaluation study of NSAP were no longer under consideration of the Government.

*The Ministry in its reply (December 2022) stated that NSAAC meeting could not be held after 2019 due to covid-19.*

### 7.1.2 Monitoring by National Level Monitors

National Level Monitors (third party monitors) were appointed by the Ministry to undertake field visits and submit reports on implementation of various rural development programmes. NLMs were assigned to different States and were provided with questionnaires for the purpose of assessment of implementation of Schemes in the field. The reviews by NLM would also monitor schemes under NSAP and the State Nodal Departments would proactively assist NLMs and facilitate their visits. The Reports of NLMs were to be shared with the State government for follow-up action.

The NLMs undertook monitoring of all schemes of NSAP in six phases covering 574 Districts in 2017-18, 563 Districts in 2018-19, 578 Districts in 2019-20 and 233 Districts in 2020-21. During Phase I & II monitoring of 2017-18, NLMs reported that there were more eligible persons who were not covered under IGNDPS and IGNWPS in four to five *per cent* villages. Periodicity of pension was irregular in Bihar, Kerala, Manipur and Punjab. In Mizoram, pension was being distributed on half yearly basis. Similar irregularities were also reported by NLMs during 2018-19 and 2019-20.

There was no action on irregularities reported by NLMs for 2017-18 to 2019-20. On being pointed out, the Ministry replied that NLM Reports for 2021-22 had been shared with States/UTs with a request to submit action taken report. However, details of action taken on NLM reports for 2017-18 to 2020-21, were not included in the Ministry's reply. Hence, there was no proper follow up action on NLM reports.

The Ministry in its reply (December 2022) stated that the NLM Reports were sent to the States/UTs for taking corrective measures on the irregularities found vide D.O. letter dated 05 May 2022, the matter is being followed up through reminders issued in August and October 2022.

## 7.2 Monitoring at State Level

### 7.2.1 Non constitution of State Level Committees

The State Level Committee (SLC) were to be headed by the Chief Secretary or Additional Chief Secretary nominated by Chief Secretary and include:

- (a) Secretaries of Departments concerned such as Finance, Rural Development, *Panchayati Raj*, Municipal Affairs, Social Welfare, Health, Revenue, Women and Child Development, Minorities, SC, ST, etc.,
- (b) Two representatives of Banks/Post Office.
- (c) Four Chairpersons, two each of *Zilla Parishad* and Municipalities,
- (d) Collectors from three districts in rotation, and,
- (e) Four independent experts and representatives of NGOs.

This Committee was to be responsible for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme and matters concerned therewith. State Committees were to meet at least twice a year. Also, a Vigilance & Monitoring Committee was to be formed at the State and District levels for the review of implementation of the programme.

#### (i) State Level Committee

The State level committee was not constituted in most of the States/UTs except in Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura as envisaged in NSAP Guidelines. The shortcomings in respect of functioning of State Level Committee are discussed in **Table 7.2**.

**Table 7.2: State wise audit observation on SLC**

State	Audit Observation
1. Arunachal Pradesh	The Committee did not conduct any meetings.
2. Kerala	The Committee was constituted only in March 2021 and did not meet even once since its then.
3. Mizoram	The Committee was formed on 16 November 2018, with the Chief Secretary as the Chairman. However, records of meeting held by the State Level Committee was not found in audit.
4. Nagaland	A State Level Selection Board was constituted (February 2011) that does not meet the prescribed criteria for constitution of a State Level Committee.
5. Tripura	The Committee was formed (December 2018); however, minutes of meetings of the Committee were not found on records.

Due to non-existence of SLCs in 30 States/UTs and shortcomings in functioning of SLCs in five States, desired monitoring by the SLCs remained unachieved.

### (ii) State Level Vigilance & Monitoring Committee

Vigilance & Monitoring Committee at State level as envisaged in NSAP Guidelines was not constituted by most of the States/UTs except by Odisha, Rajasthan and West Bengal. Though Odisha and West Bengal constituted the Committees, yet the details of their meetings were not made available.

Due to non-existence of State Level Vigilance and Monitoring Committee in 34 States/UTs, desired oversight on vigilance aspect could not be ensured which was corroborated by irregularities observed by audit on the implementation aspect.

*The Ministry in its reply (December 2022) stated that the observations have been referred to the concerned States/UTs.*

## 7.2.2 Adequacy of Monitoring through the State Nodal Department

According to NSAP guidelines, a nodal department was to be identified for coordinating with the different implementing departments for periodic review and submission of physical and financial progress reports under different schemes of NSAP to Government of India. The Monthly/Quarterly Progress Reports (MPR/QPR) were to be furnished online by the State Nodal Department (SND) by 15th of every month after obtaining reports from the District and field offices in a regular manner.

- In 18<sup>20</sup> States/UTs, SND of the State/UT concerned did not conduct periodic review of schemes of NSAP. Information on conduct of the periodic review was not furnished by SND of Madhya Pradesh and ANI.
- The Monthly/Quarterly Progress Reports had not been furnished by SND of three States/UT (Goa, Kerala and Ladakh). In Haryana, from September 2020 onwards, MPR/QPR were not being furnished to GoI. The SND did not obtain MPR/QPR from the districts and field offices in Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. In Tripura SND submitted monthly progress reports but did not submit quarterly progress reports. No such record was maintained in Mizoram and Rajasthan.

There was a lack of oversight regarding implementation of the NSAP by State Nodal Departments as no periodic review of the implementation was conducted and, therefore, opportunity for correcting the shortcomings in implementation of Schemes at the ground level was not adequately utilised.

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<sup>20</sup> Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Punjab, Tripura, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.

### 7.3 Monitoring by District Level Committee

According to NSAP guidelines, District Level Committee (DLC) headed by the Chairperson Zilla Parishad/Chief Executive Officer, Zilla Parishad/District Collector was to be constituted, including:

- (a) District level officials of Departments concerned,
- (b) Four representatives from among Chairpersons of 25 Gram/Intermediate Panchayats and Municipalities, and
- (c) Four independent experts and representatives of NGOs working in this area.

DLCs were responsible for implementation, monitoring and evaluating the programme within the District and for matters concerned therewith. They shall submit their reports to the SND on a monthly basis.

DLCs as envisaged in the NSAP Guidelines were constituted in eight<sup>21</sup> States/UTs. The shortcomings in functioning of DLCs in these eight States are detailed in **Table 7.3**.

**Table 7.3: Shortcomings in functioning of DLC**

State	Observation
1. Chhattisgarh	DLCs did not submit any Report.
2. Kerala	Government of Kerala approved the formation of District level Committee in March 2021. The Committees did not meet even once since inception.
3. Manipur	Neither DLCs submitted reports nor SND reminded DLCs for submission of Reports.
4. Mizoram	No records about the working of the DLCs maintained.
5. Nagaland	Compositions of the DLCs were devoid of representatives from Gram/ Intermediate Panchayats and Municipalities, and NGOs and DLCs did not submit Reports.
6. Odisha	DLC were not constituted in some of the Districts.
7. Telangana	In selected Districts, reports were not submitted to SND on a monthly basis by DLCs.
8. Uttar Pradesh	No documentary evidence available on the records for conducting DLC meetings and inclusion of representatives of NGOs in DLC. Neither DLC meetings were held nor monthly Reports were prepared and submitted to the SND.

Due to absence of DLCs in majority of States/UTs, the desired reporting to SND could not be ensured and difficulties as well as scope for improvement in implementation of the NSAP in districts could not be assessed. Thus, bottom-up approach for ensuring effective implementation of the Programme was lacking.

*The Ministry in its reply (December 2022) stated that the observations have been referred to the concerned States/UTs.*

<sup>21</sup> Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

## 7.4 Non-conduct of Social Audit

NSAP Guidelines envisaged conduct of social audit with the aim to promote transparency, accountability, and people's participation in the NSAP.

Audit noted that the Ministry issued the NSAP social audit guidelines containing Standard Operating Procedure for conduct of social audit, process checklist, format of social audit findings and action taken on them in 2019, i.e. five years after issue of latest NSAP guidelines in 2014.

The State nodal department was to monitor reports of social audits conducted and send reports to the Ministry of Rural Development in NSAP-MIS. Audit noted that pilot Social Audit Reports of 13 States were available on NSAP-MIS. Further, action taken report was available for only five<sup>22</sup> States out these 13 States.



Picture 7.1: Social Audit in Mizoram

NSAP Guidelines stipulated that Social Audit was to be conducted at least once in every six months by the *Gram Sabha*/Ward Committee. The funds released for administrative expenses were to be used for conduct of Social Audit. Further, funds for the social audit were sanctioned @ 0.5 per cent of the total State allocation (1/6<sup>th</sup> of the three per cent administrative expenses) exclusively for the social audit. It was noticed that all the States/UTs had reported to the Ministry in their UCs that three per cent administrative expenses had been utilised as per norms including expenditure on social audit. Total estimated allocation of ₹ 172.24 crore towards social audit as part of administrative expenses was shown as utilized as per the norms despite the fact that social audit was not conducted at all in more than 70 per cent of the States/UTs.

Audit noted that social audit was not at all conducted in 25<sup>23</sup> States/UTs. Observations regarding the social audits conducted in 10 States/UTs and inaction on Social Audit Reports are discussed in **Table 7.4**.

<sup>22</sup> Gujarat, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Rajasthan.

<sup>23</sup> Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, ANI, Chandigarh, Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.

**Table 7.4: State-wise deficiencies in social audit**

State	Observations
1. Andhra Pradesh	Social audit was taken up as a part of social audit of MGNREGA works but not conducted on half-yearly basis. It was not conducted in urban areas.
2. Assam	No social audit was conducted during 2017-18 to 2019-20. Social audits were conducted in 542 out of 2,198 GPs during 2020-21.
3. Himachal Pradesh	Social audit was conducted only once in 2018-19 in Kangra District and findings of Social Audit Report had also not been communicated by the Social Audit Committee to DWOs for further necessary action.
4. Karnataka	Social audit was conducted only in 2019-20 covering 3,152 out of 6024 GPs. ₹ 237.12 lakh were utilised on conduct of social audit out of ₹ 1043.18 lakh (0.5 per cent or 1/6 <sup>th</sup> of administrative expenditure) earmarked to be utilised for social audit, however, entire funds were shown as spent towards administrative expenditure in UCs.
5. Mizoram	Social audit could not be conducted once in every six months in all the GPs.
6. Meghalaya	Only three social audits were conducted in 2017-21. The action taken report on social audit report was not prepared except for the year 2017-18.
7. Nagaland	One pilot phase social audit (27 May–3 June 2019) at Mokokchung and Phek Districts covering two Blocks in each District was conducted; however, no report on conduct of social audit was submitted. Moreover, social audit was conducted only once and an amount of ₹ 0.78 lakh out of ₹ 38.22 lakh was incurred from the fund sanctioned for social audit. However, an amount of ₹ 38.22 lakh was shown as utilised in the UC.
8. Odisha	Only seven social audits were conducted in 5 out of 8 sampled Districts during the period 2017-21.
9. Tripura	Only six social audits were conducted in two selected Districts.
10. West Bengal	7756 social audits conducted during 2017-21; however, action taken on social audit findings were not made available.

On a review of some of the social audit reports conducted by States<sup>24</sup>, it was found that the reports had findings similar to audit findings (allotment made to dead beneficiaries, ineligible beneficiaries, etc). However, action taken on social audit findings were not made available to audit.

Thus, social audit, envisaged as a mechanism for ensuring transparency, accountability, and peoples' participation in implementation of NSAP, was not conducted in most of the States/UT. In few States where social audit was conducted, it was either not done periodically or necessary follow-up action was not taken on the findings. There is a need to strengthen the mechanism of social audit in NSAP to ensure transparency and accountability, thus defeating the purpose of the social audit mechanism.

*While the Ministry in its reply (December 2022) stated that as per NLM Reports social audit had been conducted in 28 States during last year, details were not provided to Audit.*

## 7.5 Improper/Non-maintenance of NSAP-MIS

The use of Information technology is essential in order to enhance efficiency in implementing NSAP both at the level of sanction and disbursement of pension. The Ministry developed NSAP-MIS for all States and UTs to adopt it in implementation of the Scheme. States and

<sup>24</sup> Taldangra Block, Hirbandh Block and Indpur Block of West Bengal.

UTs which have developed their own software will have to ensure porting their information/data onto NSAP-MIS through bridge-software. It is mandatory that the States having their own software must ensure/enable porting of data on the NSAP-MIS of MoRD.

The shortcomings in own MIS developed by States or offline system in 11 States/UTs are discussed in **Table 7.6** below:

**Table 7.6: State/UT-wise details of shortcomings in MIS**

State	Audit observations
1. Bihar	State had maintained its own software (e-Labharthi) but the data pertaining to NSAP was not being ported from e-Labharthi to NSAP-MIS. Modules of MIS remained incomplete, and the department was not in a position to develop and implement a comprehensive MIS to improve the effectiveness of the funds flow and disbursements of funds to the actual beneficiaries for all the pension schemes.
2. Haryana	Data was ported to NSAP-MIS through server to server and not through bridge software. Porting through a back-end process might have compromised on validations.
3. Himachal Pradesh	The data from e-Kalyan software was not ported to NSAP-MIS.
4. Jammu & Kashmir	No mechanism existed for regular data sharing with NSAP-MIS portal. There was offline mode for registration, verification and sanctioning of application for new payments.
5. Kerala	Porting and bridging of data from state portal to NSAP-MIS portal could not be accomplished and State portal was unable to exclude/ include beneficiaries in real time.
6. Ladakh	No mechanism existed for regular data sharing with NSAP-MIS portal. There was offline mode for registration, verification and sanctioning of application for new payments.
7. Madhya Pradesh	Information regarding porting of data to NSAP-MIS was not made available.
8. Odisha	A link existed in department's website for receipt, process and sanction of application of NSAP. However, the complete application details and status were not ported to NSAP-MIS through bridge software.
9. Punjab	Partial information and data was ported onto NSAP- MIS through bridge software.
10. Uttar Pradesh	State portal did not show effective date of pension.
11. West Bengal	Software failed to capture essential parameters such as pension verification date, pension effective date, date of birth of beneficiaries under all the sub-schemes and percentage of disability in case of IGNDPS.

Thus, States/UTs did not fully migrate to Ministry's NSAP portal and continued with their own State portal which were not in fully in sync with the NSAP portal. State/UTs own portal were not capturing all the details to ensure transparency and proactive display of progress of the implementation of NSAP.

*The Ministry in its reply (December 2022) stated that the observations have been referred to the concerned States/UTs.*

## 7.6. Non-existence of Grievance Redressal Mechanism in States

NSAP guidelines envisaged that States should put in place a Grievance Redressal system at the Gram/Intermediate Panchayat/District/Municipality levels and designate an officer of appropriate seniority to whom the grievances can be addressed. Timelines for dealing with



grievances should be fixed. The office of the designated officer must keep a record of complaints received, action taken and the outcome. The complainant must be informed in writing about action taken. Second Administrative Reform Commission also recommended that there was a need for a strong and effective internal grievance redressal mechanism in each organization.

Institutional grievance redressal mechanism as per NSAP Guidelines was not in existence/functional in 17<sup>25</sup> States/UTs. In 11 States/UTs grievance redressal mechanism was having deficiencies as detailed in **Table 7.7**.

**Table 7.7: State-wise observations on grievance redressal mechanism**

State	Audit Observations
Assam	Timeline fixed, if any, for settlement of grievances on CPGRAMS was not found on the records.
Andhra Pradesh	92,100 cases relating to pensions were received through 'Spandana' (One-Stop public grievance redressal platform for the citizens of State), out of which 86,124 cases were resolved (93.51 per cent). However, grievances relating to NSAP beneficiaries could not be ascertained as the scheme is integrated with the State's scheme (YSRPK).
Jharkhand	No proper Grievance redressal system existed
Delhi	There was no institutionalized mechanism for monitoring the grievances. District Facilitation-cum-Grievance Redressal Committee was constituted in January 2022.
Haryana	There is no mechanism for monitoring the grievances available in GP/Municipalities, as no records/registers were being maintained by them for the purpose.
Odisha	In two out of eight selected Districts, the grievance redressal system did not exist and no exclusive records on receipt and disposal of grievances under NSAP were maintained. In the remaining six Districts, although grievance redressal system existed, DSSOs received 2,239 grievances from different sources on delay in receipt of pension, non-inclusion under NSAP, etc., and forwarded to the implementing agencies for redressal. But no follow up measures were taken on redressal of such grievances.
Rajasthan	In selected eight Districts there was no institutionalized mechanism for monitoring the grievances available in GPs/Municipalities, as no records/registers were being maintained by them for the purpose.
Tripura	Grievance Redressal Mechanism was not activated.
Uttarakhand	No records were made available.
Jammu & Kashmir	In selected eight Districts, there was no institutionalized mechanism for monitoring the grievances available in GPs/Municipalities, as no records/registers were being maintained by them for the purpose. The District Social Welfare Officer was authorized to follow up the grievances of the pensioners, which was not observed in practice.
Ladakh	In selected two Districts there was no institutionalized mechanism for monitoring the grievances available in GPs/Municipalities, as no records/registers were being maintained by them for the purpose. The District Social Welfare Officer was authorized to follow up the grievances of the pensioners, which was not observed in practice.

<sup>25</sup> Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Nagaland, Punjab, Sikkim, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Lakshadweep and Puducherry.

Grievance Redressal Mechanism was not in existence as envisaged under the NSAP Guidelines in majority of States/UTs and even where it existed in some States/UTs, it was not effective to meet aspirations of beneficiaries and resolution of their grievances. Hence, in absence of effective Grievance Redressal Mechanism, implementing departments in States showed non-responsiveness about the grievances of the beneficiaries.

*The Ministry in its reply (December 2022) stated that SAMBAL app provides status of monthly pension payment based on pension ID. Further, the Ministry has referred the observations to concerned States/UTs.*

Audit noted that the SAMBAL app had limited role in providing grievance redressal.