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Social Audit - Meghalaya Model

What is the issue?

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- Meghalaya is the first state to launch the social audit law.
- The state's experience is informative to increase awareness of entitlements.

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What is Meghalaya's social audit law?

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- In April 2017, Meghalaya became the first State in the country to pass a social audit legislation, the Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act.
- This Act mandated social audits across 21 schemes and 11 departments.
- Meghalaya audits had been built on traditional tribal institutions, leveraging their inherent strengths and facilitating their engagement with contemporary democratic practices.

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What are the experiences of the Meghalaya from this law?

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- The Meghalaya exercise demonstrated how social audits can be developed as an ongoing process through which citizens participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme.

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- The audits were deliberately positioned to be a platform for

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1. Sharing information about schemes.
2. Enhancing awareness amongst people about their entitlements.
3. Detecting beneficiaries who were eligible
4. Recording people's testimonies and registering of grievances
5. Identifying priorities for inputs for planning.

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- The Meghalaya pilots have also helped formulate a practical framework through which that can be done. Draft rules were prepared on the basis of consultation.
- Thus these Social audits has helped to identify and bring evidence-based policy changes.

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What rest of India can learn from Meghalaya's model?

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- In India there is a growing acknowledgement of social audits as a credible means of institutionalising citizen oversight.
- There is therefore an urgent need to come up with a working protocol for facilitating social audits across a range of interventions.
- The experience of Meghalaya has taught how social audit is intrinsically related to processes of community participation and grievance redress.
- Thus Social audit is a tool of "good governance" and it is likely to spread or become robust with the participation of citizens groups.

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Source: The Hindu

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