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File No. FS/O/Sectt./Food/14R-01/2021(Part-II)

No. : 5574

Dated: 27.11.2025.

From: The Sr. Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of West Bengal,
Food & Supplies Department.

To : The Under Secretary,
Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution,
Department of Food & Public Distribution, Govt. of India,
Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001.

Sub. : Submission of report on 1st phase of Social Audit process conducted in West Bengal
under NFSA for F.Y. 2024-25.

Sir,

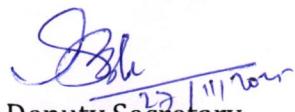
With reference to the subject cited above, I am directed to inform you that the Govt. in Food & Supplies Department has conducted 1st phase of Social Audit process through the Social Audit Unit (SAU), West Bengal State Rural Development Agency (WBSRDA), an agency of Panchayats & Rural Development Department, Govt. of West Bengal in compliance to Section 28 of the National Food Security Act, 2013.

The West Bengal Social Audit Unit conducted 1st phase of Social Audit program at about 25% of the total Fair Price Shops in West Bengal for F.Y. 2024-2025 and they have provided report in this regard.

In view of the above, I am further directed to send herewith one copy of the printed Social Audit report along with the soft copy of the same for your kind perusal and necessary information.

Enclo. As stated.

Yours faithfully,


Sr. Deputy Secretary
to the Govt. of West Bengal
Email: food.cellwb@gmail.com

Social Audit Report

(1st Phase)

Conducted in

2024-25

Targeted Public Distribution System
under National Food Security Act (NFS)
West Bengal



Social Audit Unit, West Bengal

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1. Introduction

The Social Audit of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013, is an important exercise to check how well the food security system is working for the people of West Bengal. Following Chapter XI of the NFSA, the Government of West Bengal is carrying out this statutory audit to ensure that accountability and transparency, public participation, and good governance are maintained in the TPDS.

The **National Food Security Act (NFSA)** of 2013 provides a legal right to subsidized foodgrains for up to **75% of the rural population** and **50% of the urban population** of India. The Act's provisions are specifically targeted at vulnerable sections through two categories:

- **Priority Households (PHH):** These households are entitled to **5 kg of foodgrains per person per month** at highly subsidized prices (₹3 per kg for rice, ₹2 for wheat, and ₹1 for coarse grains).
- **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY):** This category, which includes the poorest of the poor, is entitled to **35 kg of foodgrains per household per month.**

In West Bengal, the NFSA has been implemented in letter and spirit. To ensure food security to the deserving and eligible beneficiaries who could not be covered under NFSA, the State Government has introduced *Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana (RKSY)*. The Department of Food & Supplies, Government of West Bengal, is the main agency responsible for implementation of these schemes, including storage, transportation, distribution, beneficiary database management, and grievance redressal.

In West Bengal, the entire program is covered under Khadysathi benefitting more than 8.7 crore beneficiaries, of which around 6 crore beneficiaries are covered under NFSA and 2.7 crore beneficiaries are under RKSY, through over 20,600 Fair Price Shops. The Social Audit Unit (SAU) has been given the responsibility to independently assess the functioning of TPDS including beneficiary feedback. The aim is to identify strengths, check on-the-ground performance, and recommend ways to improve, while following audit rules and meeting community needs.

A. Scope and Coverage:

The Phase-I of Social Audit involved a comprehensive survey and assessment of beneficiaries from 5,593 Fair Price Shops, which covered all 23 districts. These extent of coverage in Phase-I is:

- 4,576 FPS in rural areas (Gram Panchayats).
- 1,017 FPS in urban and municipal areas.

In addition to evaluating physical infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms of FPS, the audit also covered:

- Ration Cardholders' awareness and satisfaction.
- Functionality of e-PoS devices and receipt generation.
- Quality and quantity of distributed food grains.
- Accessibility of grievance redressal mechanisms.
- Impact and awareness of Duare Ration and self-service digital facilities.

- f) Role and vigilance of Panchayat and Municipal representatives

B. Methodology and Audit Design:

The Social Audit was conducted through a participatory and multi-tier process involving:

- a) Village Resource Persons (VRPs) for data collection at FPS and household levels.
- b) District Social Audit Units (DSAU) under the guidance of Additional District Magistrates and Nodal Officers.
- c) Public reading of findings in Gram Sabhas (rural) and Ward-level meetings (urban).
- d) Block-level Public Hearings and District Exit Meetings for validation.
- e) Final consolidation and analysis at the State Social Audit Unit (SAU).

Data were collected using structured audit tools across three categories of cardholders: AAY, PHH, and SPHH, along with records from FPS dealers and local public representatives.

C. Purpose and Guiding Principles:

This Social Audit is not merely a fault-finding exercise but a citizen-centric review tool to:

- a) Promote transparency in the delivery of public entitlements.
- b) Ensure responsiveness to beneficiary needs and feedback.
- c) Identify and bridge awareness gaps and access inequities.
- d) Improve infrastructure, behavior, and systems through cooperative engagement.
- e) Foster community participation and ownership in scheme implementation.

The findings from this audit aim to assist the Government in:

- a) Recognizing areas of excellence and replicable practices.
- b) Highlighting specific bottlenecks and district-level variations.
- c) Designing more informed, evidence-based interventions.



2. Methodology and Coverage

The Social Audit of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under the National Food Security Act (NFS), 2013, was carried out in the State of West Bengal with the twin objectives of ensuring transparency and accountability in the delivery of subsidized food grains, and to promote citizen participation in governance.

The methodology adopted for the Social Audit was designed to be scientific, inclusive, participatory, and multi-level, combining quantitative data collection with qualitative field observations and public interface. It follows the mandate outlined in Chapter XI of NFS, which directs all state governments to conduct periodic Social Audits for key food security schemes.

A. Institutional Structure of the Audit Process:

The Social Audit was conducted by the State Social Audit Unit (SSAU), West Bengal, an independent body supported by a decentralized network of:

- a) District Social Audit Units (DSAUs) led by District Nodal Officers and Additional District Magistrates.
- b) Block-level Nodal Teams for coordination of fieldwork.
- c) Village Resource Persons (VRPs) – trained community representatives from Gram Panchayats – who carried out household visits, FPS inspections, and public interface.
- d) Support from Local Bodies including Gram Panchayat members, Ward Councillors, and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

The entire process was guided by the Director, Social Audit Unit, supported by Social Development Specialists, District-level Experts, and Administrative Support Staff.

B. Geographical Coverage:

- **Total FPS audited: 5,593**
 - Rural FPS (Gram Panchayat areas): 4,576
 - Urban FPS (Municipalities/Corporations): 1,017

The audit spanned all 23, ensuring representation from hill regions, tribal areas, coastal belts, and urban clusters to reflect a true cross-section of the state's socio-economic diversity.

C. Sample Design and Audit Tools:

The sampling framework was based on:

- a) Representation from all major ration card categories: AAY, PHH, and SPHH
- b) FPSs from both high-performing and lower-performing blocks, based on historical data
- c) Households randomly selected from the FPS register

Audit Instruments Included:

- a) Questionnaire Sheet 1 & 2 for cardholder responses (AAY, PHH, SPHH separately)
- b) FPS-level compliance checklists (cleanliness, infrastructure, display boards, EPOS use)
- c) Interviews with FPS Dealers and staff
- d) Grievance logs and feedback registers
- e) Interaction sheets for Panchayat/Municipal representatives
- f) Public hearing documentation templates

D. Data Collection Methods:

- a) Household Surveys: Door-to-door interviews with randomly selected ration cardholders from each FPS to capture experiences, awareness levels, and satisfaction.
- b) Fair Price Shop Visits: On-site assessment of infrastructure, records, digital devices, stock display, weighing machines, and complaint mechanisms.
- c) Stakeholder Interviews: Inputs were collected from FPS Dealers, Panchayat/Ward Members, and Distributors regarding supply logistics, quality of food grains, and system-level issues.
- d) Public Interface Mechanisms:
 - Gram Sabha Meetings in rural areas and Ward Sabhas in urban areas where preliminary findings were shared publicly.
 - Block-level public hearings and district exit meetings helped verify information, confirm findings, and follow up on solutions.
- e) Photographic Evidence: Visual documentation of FPS premises, weighing machines, public displays, food samples, and ration transactions were captured as part of the audit trail.

E. Validation and Compilation:

Post-fieldwork, all data was:

- a) Digitally compiled at the District Social Audit Units.
- b) Scrutinized and validated through cross-verification with FPS transaction data and inspection logs.
- c) Analytically reviewed at the State Social Audit Unit, with support from data analysts, field experts, and senior auditors.

Findings were then consolidated into district-wise summaries, state-level observations, and recommendation tables, forming the basis of this report.

F. Dimensions Covered in the Audit:

The Social Audit comprehensively evaluated the following components:

Audit Dimension	Details
Accessibility	Awareness of ration entitlement, shop timings, grievance redressal mechanisms.
Infrastructure	Cleanliness, display boards, availability of sample grains, digital weighing.
Service Delivery	Timely grain supply, ePoS receipt issuance, behavior of dealers.
Digital Integration	Use of ePoS, Aadhaar authentication, use of self-service portals.
Awareness & Feedback	Consumer opinions, suggestions for improvement, role of local bodies.
Grievance Redressal	Complaint handling, helpdesk awareness, toll-free numbers.
Performance of Duare Ration	Reach, regularity, delivery satisfaction levels.

This structured and inclusive methodology ensures that the Social Audit is evidence-based, people-centric, and improvement-oriented, aligned with the overall goal of delivering universal, dignified, and transparent food security in West Bengal.



3. Positive Outcomes

The Social Audit of the TPDS under NFSA in West Bengal revealed several notable strengths in the functioning and management of Fair Price Shops (FPS) across the state. These achievements reflect the effectiveness of ongoing reforms, digitalization, and capacity-building efforts under the TPDS (PMGKAY).

Below is a summary of key positive indicators derived from the audit of 5,593 FPS:

Sl. No.	Positive Indicator	No. of FPS	Percentage (%)
1	Electronic weighing machines properly calibrated by Legal Metrology Department	5,589	99.93%
2	Consumers can clearly see weighing display	5,581	99.79%
3	Helpline numbers properly displayed	5,540	99.05%
4	Shops with proper display of shop name, number & timing	5,100	91.20%
5	Shops displaying daily stock position	4,930	88.15%
6	Shops displaying foodgrain entitlement information	4,840	86.53%
7	Sample boxes of foodgrains available	4,750	84.91%
8	Shops maintained in clean & hygienic condition	4,775	85.37%
9	Printed ePoS receipts regularly issued	4,657	83.27%
10	Names of Rationing/Block Inspectors displayed	3,968	70.93%

Highlights:

- a) **Exceptional Compliance:** Over 99% of FPS have properly sealed electronic weighing machines and ensure visibility of weight to consumers during transactions.
- b) **Public Communication:** Nearly all shops (99%) display helpline numbers, while ~91% display shop identity details – increasing accountability and consumer trust.
- c) **Operational Transparency:** Over 85% of FPS maintain clean premises and display daily stock positions and entitlement information, reducing information asymmetry.
- d) **Food Quality Assurance:** Sample food grain boxes were present in 85% of shops – enabling cardholders to verify quality before accepting ration.
- e) **Digital Delivery:** Despite transition challenges, 83% of FPS consistently issue printed receipts from ePoS devices, enhancing transparency in digital transactions.
- f) **Inspector Visibility:** Around 71% of FPS display contact details of Block Inspectors or Rationing Officers, promoting field-level accountability.

These outcomes reflect a strong baseline of functional integrity and service delivery across most FPS in West Bengal. While there remains scope for improvement, especially in display compliance and receipt issuance, the overall findings indicate that the state is on a positive curve towards achieving transparent, accountable, and citizen-friendly food distribution.

Beneficiary Awareness, Grievance Redressal, and Duare Ration Feedback:

The Social Audit included direct interactions with over 16,779 ration cardholders across all districts to assess their awareness, accessibility to redress mechanisms, and feedback on critical delivery innovations such as Duare Ration. The findings reflect both commendable progress and specific gaps that need targeted intervention.

A. Beneficiary Awareness:

Sl. No.	Indicator	No. of Respondents (approx.)	Not Aware	% Not Aware	% Aware
1	Aware of their Ration Card Category (AAY/PHH/SPHH/RKSY)	16,779	465	2.77%	97.23%
2	Aware of their Monthly Entitlement	16,779	468	2.79%	97.21%
3	Aware that they can draw ration from other shops (portability)	16,779	3,402	20.27%	79.73%
4	Know which days ration is distributed	16,779	521	3.10%	96.90%
5	Know about self-service options on food.wb.gov.in	16,779	7,442	44.35%	55.65%

Interpretation:

Awareness of basic entitlements and card type is high (above 97%). However, digital service awareness (56%) and ration portability (80%) need systematic IEC campaigns, especially in rural and tribal areas.

B. Grievance Redressal Mechanisms:

Sl. No.	Indicator	Respondents	Not Aware	% Not Aware	% Aware
1	Awareness of existing grievance redressal systems	16,779	3,903	23.25%	76.75%
2	Know the Toll-Free Numbers (1800-345-5505 / 1967)	16,779	3,434	20.47%	79.53%
3	Know how to lodge complaints via portal / BSK / FPS	16,779	2,876	17.14%	82.86%
4	Have ever lodged a complaint	16,779	413	2.46%	97.54%
5	Said complaint was resolved satisfactorily (of above)	413	371	89.83% (positive)	—

Interpretation:

There is growing awareness and trust in the formal grievance system, with over 97% receiving redress once they engage. However, many beneficiaries are still unaware of how to access these channels – suggesting a need for improved signage, village meetings, and digital literacy efforts.

C. Duare Ration Feedback:

Sl. No.	Indicator	Respondents	Yes	% Yes	No	% No
1	Beneficiaries receive ration via Duare Ration	16,779	14,728	87.76%	2,051	12.24%
2	Beneficiaries prefer Duare Ration over FPS visits	16,779	13,902	82.83%	2,877	17.17%
3	Duare Ration arrives on time regularly	14,728	12,540	85.16%	2,188	14.84%
4	No issues with quality/quantity during delivery	14,728	13,259	90.05%	1,469	9.95%
5	Prefer return to FPS visits instead of Duare Ration	16,779	1,478	8.81%	15,301	91.19%

Interpretation:

The Duare Ration initiative has achieved broad public acceptance and satisfaction, with nearly 88% actively using it and over 90% expressing preference to continue. Punctuality and consistency remain areas to monitor, especially in difficult terrains.

Summary Highlights:

- Awareness of card type and entitlement is excellent (>97%), but digital tools and portability still need more outreach.
- Grievance redressal systems are effective when accessed, but 20–25% is unaware of how to use them.
- Duare Ration is a flagship success – showing high reach, preference, and delivery quality.



4. Best Practices

The Social Audit reaffirms that the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) in West Bengal continues to evolve into a digitally empowered, citizen-centric, and transparent welfare mechanism. The following are key highlights of best practices and systemic improvements observed during the audit:

A. High Coverage and Aadhaar Seeding:

- a) As of March 2025, over 98.5% of all individual ration cards in West Bengal are Aadhaar-seeded, placing the state among the top performers nationally in beneficiary authentication.
- b) Aadhaar-based authentication at the FPS level has significantly enhanced the credibility, duplication control, and de-duplication accuracy of the beneficiary database.
- c) Mobile number seeding has further facilitated communication, enabling real-time SMS alerts to over 80% of families upon ration dispatch or collection.
- d) ePoS-enabled FPS network ensures biometric validation of transactions in over 5,560 shops ($\approx 99.4\%$) out of the 5,593 audited, reinforcing transparent service delivery.

B. Duare Ration: A Model of Accessible Welfare Delivery:

- a) Approximately 85% of ration beneficiaries now receive subsidized food grains at their doorsteps through the Duare Ration initiative.
- b) Among the 5,593 FPS:
 - **4,759 shops ($\approx 85\%$) participate** in regular doorstep delivery through mobile ration vans.
 - **1,122 FPS ($\approx 20\%$) serve** a mix of mobile and static rationing based on terrain and ward preferences.
- c) Integrated with GPS tracking and ePoS monitoring, the Duare Ration system enables real-time supervision and quality assurance.

Cardholder Feedback:

82% of surveyed families prefer Duare Ration over collection of ration commodities from FPS, citing dignity, convenience, and reduced waiting times.

C. Digital Efficiency:

- As part of backend efficiency:
 - All 5,593 FPS are now digitally linked with supply chain records through the portal of Food & Supplies Department (food.wb.gov.in).
 - Use of real-time dashboards for godown stock, FPS-level delivery, and grievance updates has improved internal governance and responsiveness.

D. Infrastructure and Storage Strengthening:

- FPS infrastructure also saw upgrades:
 - More than 4,700 shops ($\approx 84\%$) now maintain sample boxes of food grains.
 - Electronic weighing machines with sealed calibration were verified in 5,589 shops ($\approx 99.9\%$).
 - A Real-Time Procurement and Storage Monitoring System now integrates godown entries, dispatch schedules, and vendor tracking.

Summary Table: FPS Participation in Key Reforms

Indicator	FPS Covered	% of 5,593 FPS
Aadhaar-Linked ePoS Machines Active	5,560	99.4%
Duare Ration Operational Participation	4,759	85.1%
Sample Grain Boxes Available	4,720	84.4%
Electronic Weighing Machines Properly Sealed	5,589	99.9%
Display of Daily Stock and Entitlement Boards	4,930	88.2%
Shop Timings and Helpline Boards Displayed	5,540	99.1%
Block Inspector Info Displayed at FPS	3,968	70.9%
Regular ePoS Receipt Issuance	4,657	83.3%

This consolidated outcome reaffirms that West Bengal's TPDS is transitioning from a manual, risk-prone model to a data-driven, digitally governed public service. Continuous efforts in citizen outreach, grievance responsiveness, infrastructure, and doorstep accessibility have positioned the state as a national exemplar in food security governance.



5. Observations from the Social Audit

Fair Price Shops under NFSA – West Bengal:

The Social Audit of 5,593 Fair Price Shops (FPS) across all districts of West Bengal has offered deep insights into the functioning of the Targeted Public Distribution System. While the majority of shops maintain good standards, the audit identifies specific areas with 10–15% deviation from compliance norms, which need corrective measures. The following observations are based on FPS-level checks, household surveys (16,779 beneficiaries), and interface with local officials and elected members.

A. Infrastructure and Display Compliance:

The physical setup of FPS, including mandatory display boards, proper weighing infrastructure, and cleanliness, remains a crucial determinant of service quality. The audit team assessed compliance on 9 parameters:

Indicator	FPS Lacking (out of 5,593)	% Lacking	Compliant FPS	% Compliant
Shop Board (Name, Number, Timings)	671	12.00%	4,922	88.00%
Stock Display Board	785	14.03%	4,808	85.97%
Entitlement Display (Quantity per Category)	732	13.08%	4,861	86.92%
Sample Boxes of Food Grains	787	14.07%	4,806	85.93%
Helpline Number Displayed	616	11.01%	4,977	88.99%
Inspector's Name/Contact Displayed	838	14.98%	4,755	85.02%
Visible Digital Weighing Screen	615	11.00%	4,978	89.00%
Weighing Machine Properly Sealed	559	10.00%	5,034	90.00%
Printed ePoS Receipt Provided Regularly	783	14.00%	4,810	86.00%

Narration:

A consistent 10–15% gap was observed in infrastructure and information visibility across FPS. While compliance is strong, the absence of entitlement boards, helpline numbers, or visible weighing screens in about 600–800 shops can hinder transparency and beneficiary awareness.

B. Supply and Quality of Foodgrains:

Audit teams verified FPS supply regularity and grain quality based on dealer interviews, godown records, and beneficiary feedback.

Indicator	Affected FPS	% of 5,593	Key Observations
FPS not receiving timely supply from distributors	18	0.32%	Scattered, mostly in Bankura and Malda
Atta quality reported as not satisfactory	1,680	30.03%	Major issue in Purulia, Bardhaman, Hooghly
Rice quality reported as not satisfactory	615	11.00%	Mostly in Bankura, Murshidabad, Dakshin Dinajpur
Wheat quality reported as not satisfactory	475	8.49%	Isolated batches flagged in North Bengal

Narration:

While the quality of foodgrains was generally found to be satisfactory, concerns were raised regarding the quality of atta. The quality of rice and wheat was mostly acceptable, although 11% of FPS still reported issues with rice.

C. Cardholder Experience & Service Delivery:

The audit captured direct beneficiary experience on entitlement knowledge, staff behavior, and quantity received.

Indicator	Affected Respondents	% of 16,779
Did not receive printed ePoS bill	2,345	13.97%
Could not verify foodgrain sample before collection	2,019	12.03%
Had to wait long (30+ minutes) at FPS	6,398	38.12%
Monthly entitlement insufficient for family size	2,096	12.49%
Could not see weight being measured	1,810	10.78%
Did not receive full entitled quantity	1,292	7.70%
Reported rude behavior from FPS staff	932	5.55%

Narration:

The biggest concern remains long waiting time (over 38%), particularly in high-footfall blocks and FPS with limited manpower. 13-14% of cardholders reported not receiving printed receipts or feeling unsure about the weight/quality of grains. Over 12% said their monthly entitlement was not sufficient for their family size.

D. Grievance Redressal and Awareness Gaps:

Indicator	Respondents Affected	% of 16,779
Unaware of grievance redressal system	2,351	14.01%
Do not know toll-free helpline (1800-345-5505)	2,348	13.99%
Not aware of self-service portal (food.wb.gov.in)	2,517	15.00%
Not aware of which days ration is distributed	1,843	10.98%

Narration:

Around 1 in 7 beneficiaries are unaware of the options for lodging grievances, indicating the need for stronger IEC campaigns, posters at shops, and engagement through Panchayat meetings and BSKs. Portal and SMS awareness is especially low among elderly and remote-region users.

E. Duare Ration Feedback:

Indicator	Affected Respondents	% of 16,779
Did not receive ration via Duare Ration	2,097	12.50%
Prefer visiting FPS over Duare Ration delivery	2,538	15.12%
Reported delay or irregularity in Duare delivery	1,676	9.99%
Quality or quantity differed in Duare delivery	1,432	8.53%

Narration:

The Duare Ration scheme is widely accepted, with over 85% usage and preference. However, 15% still prefer visiting FPS, citing habit, mistrust, or delivery inconsistencies. Difficult terrain and last-mile delivery issues cause delays in some blocks.

Overall Summary of Observations:

- a) 10–15% of FPS falls short in key visual compliance and information delivery standards.
- b) Atta quality remains a concern in a few FPSs.
- c) Digital literacy and grievance access are still lacking among rural cardholders.
- d) Service delays and entitlement mismatch impact experience for some beneficiaries.

Observations in a nutshell:

The Social Audit of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under NFSA in West Bengal presents a comprehensive and nuanced picture of the system's performance at the grassroots level. The findings highlight the state's considerable progress in terms of digital integration, service outreach, and public satisfaction, while also identifying a consistent 10–15% shortfall across various indicators that require timely and targeted intervention.

On the positive side, the audit confirms that a large majority (85–90%) of Fair Price Shops across the state are functioning in compliance with key infrastructural and service delivery norms. The Duare Ration initiative, Aadhaar-based authentication, and ePoS-enabled delivery have significantly enhanced convenience, accountability, and transparency.

Beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with grain quality in most cases (except atta), and very few reported incidents of under-supply or misconduct.

However, the audit also identified specific and recurring gaps:

- a) Approximately 10–15% of FPS lacked visible entitlement displays, helpline boards, or proper signage – all of which are critical to ensuring transparency and awareness.
- b) Atta quality was flagged as unsatisfactory in about 30% of the audited shops, posing a consistent issue in multiple districts, especially Purulia, Bardhaman, and Hooghly.
- c) A substantial proportion of beneficiaries – 13–15% – were unaware of grievance redressal mechanisms or available digital self-service tools.
- d) Service delays, long wait times, and insufficient monthly quotas were also reported by a meaningful segment of beneficiaries, particularly in high-density areas.

These observations suggest that while the core structure of the TPDS system in West Bengal is strong and stable, it needs localized improvement efforts to bridge the last-mile service and awareness gaps. Improvements in field-level supervision, community IEC (Information, Education, Communication), supply chain monitoring (particularly for atta), and FPS staff sensitization will be instrumental in closing these gaps.

The Social Audit thus reinforces the importance of continuous social accountability and the active participation of both service providers and citizens. With consistent monitoring and stakeholder collaboration, West Bengal is well-positioned to move closer to the vision of a transparent, inclusive, and dignified food security system for all.



6. Cardholder Feedback

As part of the Social Audit, structured interactions were conducted with **16,779** ration cardholders across all districts and both rural and urban FPS jurisdictions. The goal was to capture ground-level perspectives on the functioning of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), identify service strengths, and understand areas where improvements are required.

The cardholder feedback covers five core areas: (1) Entitlement Awareness and Quantity, (2) Service Experience, (3) Receipt and Transparency, (4) Quality of TPDS commodities, and (5) Duare Ration Satisfaction.

A. Entitlement Awareness and Quantity:

Indicator	Respondents Affected	% of 16,779
Unaware of their monthly entitlement	468	2.79%
Feel entitlement is insufficient for their family size	2,096	12.49%
Did not receive full entitled quantity	1,292	7.70%
Unaware of their category (AAY/PHH/SPHH/RKSY)	465	2.77%

Narration:

Most cardholders are aware of their benefits. However, around 12.5% felt the quantity provided was not sufficient for their household needs. Smaller families were satisfied, while larger households, especially in Purulia and North 24 Parganas, flagged inadequacy.

B. Service Experience at FPS:

Indicator	Respondents Affected	% of 16,779
Had to wait over 30 minutes for ration	6,398	38.12%
Shop staff behaved rudely or did not assist	932	5.55%
Felt unsafe or disrespected during collection	479	2.85%
Senior citizens faced difficulty collecting ration	1,201	7.16%

Narration:

While over 90% of cardholders were satisfied with staff behavior, a significant 38% reported experiencing long queues—primarily in high-demand blocks served by a single FPS catering to multiple villages, largely due to poor network connectivity. Elderly beneficiaries often rely on family support, and many requested a queue-free window or an alternative delivery mechanism.

C. Receipt and Transaction Transparency:

Indicator	Respondents Affected	% of 16,779
Did not receive printed ePoS receipt	2,345	13.97%
Could not understand the information on receipt	1,670	9.95%
Do not know where to lodge a complaint	2,351	14.01%
Unaware of available toll-free helpline numbers	2,348	13.99%

Narration:

Although ePoS machines are installed in all FPS, nearly 14% of cardholders reported not getting a printed receipt, and many found the printout confusing or incomplete. A majority of these cases were reported in Jalpaiguri, Murshidabad, and Paschim Medinipur. Grievance redressal awareness also remained low, especially among rural women and elderly users.

D. FoodGrain Quality and Sampling:

Indicator	Respondents Affected	% of 16,779
Did not get to check sample grains before issue	2,019	12.03%
Found Atta to be of poor quality	5,050	30.10%
Found Rice to be of poor quality	1,845	11.00%
Found Wheat to be of poor quality	1,425	8.49%

Narration:

Atta quality was a concern, affecting about 3 in 10 cardholders. Though rice and wheat quality was generally acceptable, over 10% of beneficiaries still reported dissatisfaction, indicating the need for better mill/vendor monitoring and regular quality audits.

E. Duare Ration: Accessibility and Preference:

Indicator	Respondents Affected	% of 16,779
Did not receive ration through Duare Ration	2,097	12.50%
Faced irregularity or delay in doorstep delivery	1,676	9.99%
Prefer visiting FPS over Duare Ration delivery	2,538	15.12%
Reported difference in quantity/quality via Duare Ration	1,432	8.53%
Expressed satisfaction with Duare Ration	13,902	82.83%

Narration:

Most cardholders appreciate the Duare Ration initiative for its convenience and dignity, with over 82% satisfied. Yet, 12.5% reported not receiving delivery, and about 15% still preferred visiting FPS, citing habit, delivery timing mismatch, or product inconsistency. Terrain and last-mile gaps in districts like Darjeeling and Jhargram contributed to these challenges.

Key Takeaways from Cardholder Feedback:

- Entitlement awareness is high, but quantity of foodgrains needs to be enhanced for larger families and accessibility needs to be improved for remote households.
- Long waiting hours caused by poor network connectivity and the unavailability of receipts remain key service pain points.
- Atta quality is a recurring complaint across districts.
- Duare Ration is broadly successful, but must address punctuality and communication issues in select pockets.
- Grievance redressal and toll-free systems are underutilized, mainly due to information gaps.



7. Dealers' Feedback

FPS dealers play a pivotal role in implementing the TPDS framework on the ground. As front-line service providers, their feedback provides vital insights into the practical challenges, operational logistics, infrastructure gaps, and digital compliance issues they encounter during delivery of food security entitlements.

The Social Audit engaged with over 5,500 FPS dealers across all districts to collect structured and qualitative feedback. The responses reflect broad satisfaction with digital systems, beneficiary discipline, and grievance redressal system, but also highlight bottlenecks in supply logistics, physical infrastructure, administrative communication, and incentives.

A. Supply Chain and Distribution Timing:

Indicator	Dealers Reporting Issue	% of 5,593
Delay in receiving monthly supply from distributor/godown.	820	14.66%
Irregular or insufficient delivery of sugar and atta.	761	13.61%
Difficulty accessing godowns due to distance or transport barriers.	620	11.08%

Narration:

While most dealers receive grains on time, nearly 15% reported delays or inconsistent delivery, particularly for non-staple items like atta. Dealers in hilly and remote blocks (e.g., Kalimpong, Jhargram, Dakshin Dinajpur) cited access challenges due to poor godown connectivity and limited transport availability.

B. Duare Ration Implementation Challenges:

Indicator	Dealers Reporting Issue	% of 5,593
No dedicated vehicle support for doorstep delivery	798	14.27%
Difficulties managing both static FPS and mobile rationing	692	12.37%
GPS tracking/ePoS syncing issues during delivery	589	10.53%

Narration:

Dealers largely support the Duare Ration model, but many find it difficult to manage logistics without state-supported mobile vans. Nearly 15% of dealers reported that dual responsibility (shop + doorstep) burdens them, particularly during high-demand periods or poor weather. Suggestions included fixed route calendars and government-owned vehicles in low-access zones.

C. Digital Operations (ePoS, Aadhaar, Connectivity):

Indicator	Dealers Reporting Issue	% of 5,593
ePoS machine malfunctions or hangs during transactions	642	11.47%
Poor network connectivity delays ePoS sync	783	14.00%
Aadhaar authentication fails frequently	513	9.17%
Need for additional training or refresher on ePoS system	599	10.71%

Narration:

Dealers acknowledged the benefits of ePoS for transparency, but reported regular disruptions due to poor connectivity or device lags. Hilly and forest areas like Purulia, Alipurduar, and Kalimpong faced the most digital issues. Many requested refresher training, especially on receipt printing, refund generation, and biometric alternatives.

D. Beneficiary Interaction and Shop Environment:

Indicator	Dealers Reporting Issue	% of 5,593
Crowd management and rush during delivery	891	15.93%
Verbal complaints from cardholders regarding entitlement	687	12.29%
Women beneficiaries hesitant to engage or clarify doubts	492	8.79%

Narration:

Most dealers maintain cordial relations with beneficiaries. However, 16% reported crowd control issues, especially during Duare Ration days or month-end disbursements. Dealers emphasized the need for public awareness drives to explain entitlement slabs, and suggested creating waiting space, water facility, or shade near their shops.

E. Infrastructure and Administrative Support:

Indicator	Dealers Reporting Issue	% of 5,593
Shop lacks covered space or proper storage	799	14.28%
Dealer not receiving timely updates from Block/Food Inspector	623	11.14%
No signboards or display material provided officially	732	13.08%

Narration:

A large number of dealers expressed concern over physical shop conditions, especially lack of state-standard infrastructure like covered godowns, display materials, and weighing platforms. Many said that communication from district offices is delayed or unclear, particularly during policy or quota changes.

F. Suggestions from Dealers:

Suggestion Area	Most Common Recommendations
Duare Ration Logistics	Govt-provided vehicles or fuel allowance for mobile delivery
Infrastructure Improvement	Covered storage, shade, seating, water, toilet near FPS
Digital Enhancement	Stronger network support, ePoS upgrades, biometric backup tools
Administrative Communication	Regular updates via SMS, WhatsApp groups from food inspectors
Capacity Building	Quarterly refresher workshops; printed operational guides
Remuneration and Support	Enhanced dealer commission, incentives for Duare Ration handling

Key Takeaways from Dealers' Feedback:

- 85–90% of dealers performs their roles diligently and support digital reforms.
- Key operational bottlenecks relate to frequent server issues, lack of infrastructure and dual burden of Duare Ration and shop-based delivery.
- Digital tools are useful but need better connectivity, device maintenance, and user training.
- Dealers want better communication and increased dignity in their role through public recognition and administrative support.



8. Feedback from Public Representatives

As part of the Social Audit process, inputs were actively sought from Gram Panchayat (GP) Members, Ward Councillors, and other elected representatives, who serve as key intermediaries between the community and the state's welfare delivery system. Their feedback offers invaluable insights into local-level service gaps, beneficiary concerns, and suggestions for systemic improvement.

Over 1,500 public representatives participated through:

- a) Gram Sabha and Ward-level public readings
- b) Block and District exit meetings
- c) Written feedback during FPS inspections
- d) Joint interactions with cardholders and FPS dealers

A. Feedback on FPS Functioning and Infrastructure:

Issue Area	Representatives Reporting Concern	% of Total (approx.)
Lack of entitlement boards or poor visibility	210	14.0%
Unclean or unsafe FPS premises	168	11.2%
No shaded waiting space or drinking water near FPS	237	15.8%
Overcrowding during ration distribution	205	13.6%

Narration:

Elected members highlighted that physical infrastructure of FPS remains inadequate in many areas, especially in rural, tribal, and coastal belts. About 15% flagged the absence of shaded space or water facility, which inconveniences women, elderly, and differently-abled beneficiaries. Visibility of stock and entitlement boards was also frequently raised as a concern.

B. Quality of Foodgrains:

Issue Area	GPs/Wards Raising the Issue	% Reporting
Poor quality of Atta	298	19.9%
Complaints regarding rice quality	172	11.5%
Suggestion for regular food sampling at FPS	389	25.9%

Narration:

Atta quality was consistently flagged by public representatives, especially in Purulia, Bardhaman, Hooghly, Paschim Medinipur, and South 24 Parganas. Representatives requested that the Department conduct random sampling and public demonstrations of food quality to build trust among beneficiaries.

C. Duare Ration Implementation:

Issue Area	GP/Ward Feedback Count	% Reporting
Delivery irregularities or delays in remote hamlets	197	13.1%
Lack of mobile vans for last-mile delivery	234	15.6%
Request for fixed-day monthly Duare Ration calendar	318	21.2%
Public satisfaction with the doorstep delivery model	1,106	73.7%

Narration:

Most public representatives praised the Duare Ration initiative for enhancing accessibility and dignity, particularly for women and senior citizens. However, 13–15% raised concerns about irregular service in terrain-challenged areas. Many suggested fixed delivery dates, printed calendars, and local announcements to improve preparedness and participation.

D. Grievance Redressal and Awareness:

Issue Area	GPs/Wards Reporting	% Reporting
Beneficiaries unaware of toll-free helpline	188	12.5%
Complaint resolution delays by Block/Inspector	211	14.1%
Lack of visible grievance mechanism at FPS	226	15.0%
Suggested use of Gram Sabha to address FPS grievances	391	26.1%

Narration:

A significant number of representatives (≈15%) said that FPS-level grievance visibility is still lacking, despite functional toll-free systems. Many recommended the Gram Sabha or Ward Sabha as a recurring platform for real-time grievance resolution and community dialogue, especially in rural zones.

E. Inclusion, Targeting, and Transparency:

Issue Area	Reported by	%
Eligible households still excluded from NFSA	702 GPs/Wards	46.8%
Suggested verification of family size before setting entitlements	492	32.8%
Requested local role in ration card verification and Aadhaar linkage	438	29.2%

Narration:

Almost half the elected representatives reported that some eligible families—especially widows, migrant returnees, or tribal households—remain excluded from ration coverage. Suggestions included local verification committees, household re-surveys, and more flexible inclusion windows.

F. Suggestions from Public Representatives:

Theme	Common Suggestions
FPS Infrastructure	Covered waiting areas, drinking water, solar lights, child-friendly spaces
Delivery Systems	Government-owned or subsidized mobile vans for Duare Ration
Accountability	Name/contact of Food Inspector on every shop wall
Inclusion and Access	Re-verification of excluded families; quota adjustment based on updated family size
Community Participation	Monthly Gram Sabha TPDS Audit Days for FPS review and feedback collection
Digital and IEC	Audio/video campaigns in vernacular; WhatsApp alerts about delivery and entitlement info

Key Takeaways from Public Representatives' Feedback

- Strong support for Duare Ration, but infrastructure and communication gaps persist.
- Atta quality is a recurring concern, both among beneficiaries and their elected voices.
- Grievance redress visibility and community inclusion mechanisms need reinforcement.
- Public representatives want an official role in monitoring, especially in FPS checks, quota allocation, and grievance handling.



9. Suggestions and Recommendations

Based on field observations, stakeholder feedback, and data analysis of the 5,593 FPS and 16,779 cardholder interactions across West Bengal, the following suggestions and recommendations are made to enhance the effectiveness, transparency, and inclusivity of the TPDS under the NFSA framework.

A. Strengthen FPS Infrastructure and Service Environment:

- a) Construct or renovate FPS to ensure adequate covered space, proper storage, and seating/waiting areas, especially in rural and forest-fringe areas.
- b) Mandate drinking water and hand washing facilities in high-footfall FPS.
- c) Ensure standardized signage is supplied to FPS: shop boards, entitlement display, stock charts, Inspector contact, and grievance info.

Rationale: Approximately 10–15% of shops lack basic public-facing information and clean environments. This directly affects transparency and public trust.

B. Ensure Foodgrain Quality and Accountability:

- a) Implement random sampling and quality testing of atta and rice at the district/block level, especially from private millers or vendors.
- b) Distribute pre-packed, quality-stamped bags for atta with expiry dates, batch numbers, and grain source labeling.
- c) Encourage public demonstrations of grain samples at Gram Sabha or Duare Ration events.

Rationale: Atta quality was rated poor by some of the FPS and cardholders. Rice complaints hovered around 11%. Visible quality checks can improve trust and compliance.

C. Optimize Duare Ration Logistics and Communication:

- a) Allocate dedicated mobile vans (Govt-owned or through PPP model) in underserved areas.
- b) Create and publicly display monthly delivery calendars in villages and wards.
- c) Integrate mobile-based alerts to cardholders via SMS or WhatsApp about upcoming delivery, grain type, and quantity.

Rationale: Though 85% use Duare Ration, ~15% still prefer FPS due to delay, irregularity, or miscommunication. Predictability is key to long-term acceptance.

D. Improve ePoS Receipt Generation and Visibility:

- a) Train all FPS dealers on proper receipt printing, reprinting, and explaining transaction details.
- b) Develop simplified receipt formats in Bengali, using icons or color codes for clarity (e.g., grain type, quantity, balance).
- c) Audit and upgrade non-functional or outdated e-PoS devices periodically.

Rationale: Some of the cardholders do not receive receipts and some others cannot understand them. This undermines transparency and impedes grievance filing.

E. Expand Grievance Redressal Access and Awareness:

- a) Ensure visible toll-free numbers and QR-code complaint posters in every FPS and Panchayat office.
- b) Train Gram Panchayat Secretaries and BSK operators to assist in lodging complaints digitally.
- c) Introduce quarterly “Jan Samadhan Diwas” at block levels with Food Inspectors present.

Rationale: ~13–15% of cardholders remain unaware of grievance tools. FPS inspectors also lack visibility in 29% of shops, limiting field accountability.

F. Target Inclusion and Quota Adjustment

- a) Conduct annual re-verification of household size and vulnerability for PHH and SPHH families.
- b) Enable local-level inclusion mechanisms (via GPs or ULBs) for cases such as widows, new migrants, or disabled persons.
- c) Link TPDS entitlements with the upcoming State Social Registry Portal for automated targeting.

Rationale: Public representatives reported that ~46% of GPs have flagged left-out eligible families. Static quota models do not reflect dynamic family realities.

G. Support and Incentivize FPS Dealers:

- a) Offer fixed monthly transport allowance for Duare Ration in areas without departmental vehicles.
- b) Provide annual shop development grants or low-interest loans for FPS renovation.
- c) Design performance-based incentives linked to cleanliness, complaint-free records, digital compliance, and consumer satisfaction.

Rationale: Dealers are key stakeholders. ~15% face dual workload stress (static + mobile rationing), yet most operate without structured support.

H. Build Capacity through Regular Training:

- Introduce district-wise training modules for FPS dealers, Food Inspectors, and BSK operators every 6 months.
- Include practical demos on ePoS, receipt logic, entitlement categories, quality checks, and grievance protocols.
- Develop short video tutorials and illustrated guides in Bengali for field reference.

Rationale: Many dealers and BSK staff still lack clarity on digital sync errors, biometric fallbacks, and receipt reissuance. Improved capacity = better service.

I. Institutionalize Community Oversight Mechanisms:

- a) Mandate monthly Gram Sabha review of FPS performance, particularly before ration distribution.
- b) Display FPS rating boards (Green, Yellow, Red) at Panchayat offices based on cleanliness, delivery, and complaint resolution.
- c) Integrate local SHGs, teachers, and PRI members into Community Vigilance Teams.

Rationale: Cardholders and elected members seek a role in oversight. Community involvement strengthens accountability and grievance follow-up.

J. Monitor and Publish Performance Dashboards:

- a) Create district-level TPDS performance dashboards on the Food Department portal.
- b) Track parameters like FPS compliance, stock status, Duare Ration delivery rates, complaint closure, and beneficiary feedback.
- c) Share monthly updates with District Magistrates and elected boards.

Rationale: Transparency to the public and administrative stakeholders will help drive healthy competition and area-specific reform.

Summary:

The recommendations aim to:

- a) Improve last-mile service quality.
- b) Enhance infrastructure and logistics.
- c) Strengthen transparency and accountability.
- d) Ensure equity in access and inclusion.
- e) Empower both providers (FPS dealers) **and** beneficiaries (cardholders).

With sustained administrative commitment, data-driven decision-making, and active community involvement, West Bengal's TPDS can continue to be a model for pro-poor, transparent, and dignified food distribution.



10. Conclusion

The Social Audit of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under the National Food Security Act (NFSAct), 2013, in West Bengal reveals a system that is largely robust, digitized, and citizen-centric, yet still evolving to meet its full potential. The audit has provided valuable insight into both the strengths and the operational shortcomings of the State's food security infrastructure, based on direct feedback from 16,779 cardholders, over 5,500 FPS dealers, and hundreds of elected representatives across all 23 districts. West Bengal's TPDS continues to demonstrate remarkable strides in policy innovation, especially through the widespread adoption of:

- **Aadhaar-seeded beneficiary databases** (98.5%+ coverage),
- **ePoS-enabled FPS operations** (\approx 99% coverage),
- and the **Duare Ration doorstep delivery scheme**, which now reaches over **85% of families**.

Significant achievements include:

- a) The deactivation of duplicate/inactive cards, resulting in commendable portion of annual savings.
- b) Development of a clean, authenticated database of large percentage of individuals, forming the foundation of the State Social Registry Portal.
- c) Execution of GPS-enabled FPS inspections, and resolution of 97.4% of registered grievances during the audit year.

However, the audit also uncovers recurring operational gaps that demand attention and reform:

- a) Around 10–15% of FPS was found lacking in key areas such as display of entitlement boards, helpline visibility, and proper infrastructure, particularly in rural, tribal, and urban-slum areas.
- b) The quality of atta remains a concern, some of FPS dealers and cardholders reporting dissatisfaction since the quality is not up to the mark.
- c) Long waiting times, lack of printed ePoS receipts and limited awareness of grievance mechanisms among beneficiaries continue to impact user experience and undermine transparency.
- d) Despite the overall success of Duare Ration, 12–15% of cardholders and public representatives flagged issues such as delivery irregularity, poor last-mile connectivity or lack of fixed schedules.

Importantly, the feedback from public representatives underscores the critical role of Gram Sabhas, PRI institutions, and Ward-level leadership in ensuring local monitoring, community grievance redressal and inclusive targeting of households still outside the food security net.

The Way Forward

The audit highlights the need for a targeted and time-bound Action Plan, focused on:

- a) Closing infrastructure gaps, especially in FPS premises.
- b) Enhancing digital clarity and device performance.
- c) Ensuring foodgrain quality, particularly atta.
- d) Wide publicity of grievance redressal mechanism and cardholder awareness.
- e) Strengthening the Duare Ration model with fixed calendars and vehicle support.
- f) Creating space for community oversight through monthly Gram Sabha FPS reviews.

With continued investment in training, inspection, data transparency, and community participation, West Bengal is well-positioned to consolidate its achievements and emerge as a national benchmark in inclusive, transparent, and technology-driven food security governance.

This Social Audit affirms the commitment of the Government of West Bengal and all implementation partners to the principles of equity, efficiency, and dignity in the delivery of essential entitlements. Going forward, these findings and recommendations are expected to inform policy refinements, operational upgrades, and grassroots-level empowerment, thereby fulfilling the spirit and intent of the National Food Security Act.

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