



SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
FORUM FOR ACTION
& RESEARCH



National Law School
of India University
Bengaluru

Concept Note- AI, Rights and Accountability: Social Protection and Justice Delivery

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Proposed by **LibTech India** in collaboration with:
**JSW Centre for the Future of Law, National Law School
of India University (NLSIU)**
SAFAR and NHRC Chair on Human Rights, NLSIU

Background:

Social welfare delivery in India over the past decade has been increasingly mediated by digital technologies. Beneficiary databases, Aadhaar-based authentication, electronic payment systems, management information systems, digitised records and automated processes now shape how people access rights and entitlements. These systems have created important possibilities for improving administration and access. At the same time, experience from the ground has shown that digitisation can also create or reproduce exclusions. Errors in databases, authentication and payment failures, incorrect records and opaque administrative processes can have serious consequences for people who depend on social welfare programmes.

Artificial Intelligence is now adding a new layer to this transformation. AI systems can analyse large datasets, recognise patterns, process documents and images, interact through natural language and support administrative decision-making. These capabilities could potentially improve welfare delivery, strengthen grievance redressal and support frontline officials. They could also reproduce existing errors, introduce new forms of opacity, and influence decisions affecting people's access to essential entitlements. Just as with digitisation, existing legal and regulatory frameworks may partially address these concerns, but may not be adequate.

AI is therefore not entering a blank institutional landscape. It is being introduced into welfare systems that have already undergone substantial digitisation and automation. This makes it important to understand both the continuities and the differences between digitisation, rule-based automation, algorithmic decision-making and newer forms of AI. In particular, AI and algorithms have been shown to mirror and amplify historical inequities. Literature has documented how across sectors ranging from gig work to healthcare, unchecked AI deployment disproportionately harms marginalised and vulnerable groups, therefore requiring specific attention at a level beyond the general concerns of access and exclusion that have historically surrounded efforts at digitisation.

Against this background, LibTech India proposes a one-and-a-half-day consultation in Bengaluru, in collaboration with the JSW Centre for the Future of Law at NLSIU, the NHRC Chair on Human Rights at NLSIU, and SAFAR, to explore the emerging relationship between Artificial Intelligence and social welfare, from the perspective of human rights and accountability. Domestic as well as international human rights standards provide a strong normative basis against which any welfare mechanism must be tested, while accountability forms an overriding premise of welfare in a democratic society.

The consultation will be national in its conceptual scope, while drawing substantially on experiences from Karnataka and selected examples from other states and welfare programmes.

Key Questions:

The consultation will be organised around five broad questions.

1. What changes when welfare moves from digitisation and automation towards AI?

Digital welfare systems already rely on databases, automated rules and interconnected administrative systems. AI introduces additional capabilities such as prediction, classification, pattern recognition, natural-language interaction and automated recommendations.

What is genuinely different about these capabilities, and how might they change welfare administration? Establishing a shared understanding of these distinctions will be important, particularly given the different levels of technological exposure among participants.

2. Where can AI improve welfare delivery, and where might it deepen exclusion?

AI could help identify payment failures, analyse grievances and present issues requiring policy course correction, improve communication, assist officials in navigating complex rules, and detect patterns that may otherwise remain invisible.

At the same time, AI systems may reproduce errors in administrative data, wrongly classify beneficiaries, create new verification burdens or make decisions harder to understand and challenge.

Through concrete examples from pensions, employment guarantees, food security, farmer support and other welfare programmes, the consultation will examine both these possibilities and risks.

3. Who decides when AI affects a person's entitlement?

If an AI system identifies a beneficiary as potentially ineligible, suspicious or low priority, what happens next? Should an automated system ever directly determine exclusion or eligibility? When is meaningful human review necessary? Should citizens have a right to know when an algorithm has influenced a decision concerning them?

These questions also raise issues of explanation, appeal and accountability. If an automated system makes an error, who is accountable—the government department, official, vendor or system designer? How should legal and regulatory frameworks fix this accountability, keeping citizens' rights at the forefront?

4. Can AI strengthen citizens, civil society organisations and frontline workers?

The discussion on AI in governance often focuses on how governments can use technology more effectively. The consultation will also examine whether AI can strengthen the capacity of citizens and civil society.

Could AI help people understand government orders, eligibility conditions or rejection reasons in accessible languages? Could grassroots organisations use it to analyse beneficiary lists, identify patterns of exclusion, examine grievances or support social accountability processes? Could it help frontline workers navigate complex administrative systems? A focused discussion will explore such possibilities while remaining attentive to limitations relating to accuracy, access, language and dependence on technology.

5. What forms of accountability are necessary as AI enters welfare systems?

As AI begins to influence welfare administration, existing accountability mechanisms may need to evolve.

The consultation will examine questions of transparency, human review, auditability, grievance redressal, error correction and the responsibilities of government agencies and private technology vendors. It will also consider what information should be available to citizens and civil society when automated systems influence decisions affecting rights and entitlements.

Participants and Approach

The consultation is expected to bring together around **30–40** participants, including members of LibTech India's programme team, grassroots organisations working in Karnataka, SAFAR and other accountability organisations, researchers, legal scholars, journalists, and a small number of technologists and people working directly on AI systems. A limited number of people from grassroots communities may also participate.

The consultation will be conducted in Kannada and English.

Rather than relying primarily on conventional panels, the programme will combine short framing presentations, concrete welfare cases, moderated conversations, demonstrations where useful, and small-group discussions.

The intention is to bring different forms of knowledge into conversation: field experience, welfare and digital-systems knowledge, legal and accountability perspectives, and technical understanding of AI.

Expected Outcomes

The consultation is exploratory and does not seek to produce a comprehensive policy framework within one-and-a-half days. At the same time, it is intended to move beyond a general exchange of views.

It will seek to:

- Develop a clearer shared understanding of how AI may affect social welfare administration;
- Identify important concerns, principles and questions that require further attention;
- Initiate conversations around legal and regulatory frameworks to engage with these concerns, principles and questions, using domestic and international human rights frameworks;
- Explore areas where AI may strengthen welfare delivery, citizen access and social accountability; and
- Identify possible directions for future research, experimentation and collaboration.

The consultation should therefore be seen as the beginning of a longer conversation on AI, welfare, rights and accountability.

At its core, it will return to three questions:

1. What should AI enable the welfare state to do?
2. What decisions affecting rights and entitlements should not be left to AI alone? What forms of transparency, human responsibility and accountability are necessary when AI influences people's access to social welfare?
3. What are the legal and regulatory mechanisms (new or existing) that may be required or adapted for the use of AI in welfare delivery?