

Overview

This Report consists of two Subject Specific Compliance Audit viz. 'Implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission' and 'Implementation of Emergency Response Support System – 'Dial 112' in Punjab'. There are two audit observations arising out of Compliance Audit of Departments/Autonomous Bodies involving financial implications of ₹ 28.40 crore.

Chapter-I: General

As against the total budget outlay of ₹ 2,96,345 crore, the application of resources was ₹ 3,00,517 crore during the year 2023-24. The total expenditure¹ of the State increased by 29.51 *per cent* from ₹ 94,471 crore to ₹ 1,22,346 crore during the period 2019-20 to 2023-24.

Revenue expenditure of the State increased by 54.77 *per cent* from ₹ 75,860 crore in 2019-20 to ₹ 1,17,407 crore in 2023-24. However, the revenue expenditure constituted 80-96 *per cent* of the total expenditure while capital expenditure ranged between four *per cent* and eight *per cent* during 2019-2024 except for the year 2019-20 when it was 19 *per cent* due to conversion of Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) loans amounting to ₹ 15,628 crore into equity capital in Punjab State Power Corporation Limited.

During the period from 2019-20 to 2023-24, revenue expenditure increased at compound annual growth rate of 11.54 *per cent* whereas revenue receipts grew at compound annual average rate of 9.71 *per cent*.

(Paragraph 1.2, Page 1)

The heads of the offices are required to reply to the audit observations contained in the Inspection Reports (IR) within four weeks from the date of receipt of the IRs. Serious financial irregularities are reported to the heads of the Department and the Government.

As of June 2024, 17,245 Inspection Reports containing 67,816 observations (issued up to March 2024) having money value of ₹ 73,534.62 crore, were not settled, of which 12,608 IRs containing 38,934 observations having money value of ₹ 34,646.13 crore pertained to the period prior to April 2019 i.e., more than five years old.

The lack of action on these audit observations weakens accountability and raises the risk of loss of revenue. Increasing pendency of audit paragraphs merits urgent attention of the Government for addressing the issues consistently raised by Audit.

(Paragraph 1.5, Page 4)

¹ Total of Revenue Expenditure, Capital Expenditure and Loans & Advances.

As many as 575 audit observations involving money value of ₹ 62.91 crore were settled in 45 Audit Committee meetings held with 26 auditee units under 15 Departments during 2023-24.

(Paragraph 1.5.1, Page 5)

Chapter-II: Implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission

The Compliance Audit titled ‘Implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission’ (JJM) in Punjab showed that JJM encountered several structural and operational challenges.

The State was unable to fully utilise allocated funds which stemmed from the inaccurate preparation of Annual Action Plans, which were prepared in the absence of re-verified baseline data, Village Action Plans and the State Action Plan, and inflated reporting.

Audit observed that the re-verification of Baseline Data, that was crucial for effective planning and preparation of Village Action Plans, was required to be completed by March 2020. However, the household survey was planned by the State Water Sanitation Mission (SWSM) in December 2020, nine months after the required timeline. Despite having a plan to conduct a survey to gather baseline data, the SWSM decided in July 2023 not to get it conducted, as the State by then had reported 100 *per cent* Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) coverage. Baseline data was available as Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) which was to be reverified as per Operational Guidelines of JJM. Although the reverification was planned nine months after the required timeline, yet the same was not done.

As per Operational Guidelines of JJM, a Village Action Plan (VAP) was to be prepared based on baseline survey, resource mapping and needs identified to ensure provision of FHTC for all rural households. These VAPs were to be consolidated into District Action Plans (DAP), which were further to be integrated into the State Action Plan (SAP) based on which AAPs were to be prepared. It was noticed that the SWSM prepared AAPs without having prepared the SAP and re-verifying baseline data. In absence of VAPs and baseline data re-verification, the SWSM overlooked 11.27 lakh households that had arranged their own drinking water source without any assistance which were initially proposed for coverage under JJM but later incorrectly included in FHTC coverage reports, without actually providing them with piped drinking water from water supply schemes of SWSM leading to preparation of inflated proposals.

Groundwater extraction in Punjab was not only maximum among all the States of India but was also significantly higher compared to neighboring States. Out of 23 Districts of Punjab, as far as groundwater extraction was concerned, only

two Districts (nine *per cent*) were safe, whereas, 18 Districts were over-exploited (78 *per cent*), two were critical (nine *per cent*), and one was semi-critical (four *per cent*).

The SWSM, in departure from the Vision/Mission of JJM and knowing about the already over-exploited groundwater resources in the State, proceeded with planning groundwater-based schemes under JJM.

Against the plan of training 8,118 workers, only 5,162 workers were imparted training as of September 2023 and that too at an expenditure of ₹ 1.56 crore met from JJM support activity funds. The National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM) advised (September 2023) the SWSM to incur expenditure on trainings for skill development from funds provided by the 15th Finance Commission.

Between 2019 and 2024, water quality data analysis revealed significant contamination on various parameters in Punjab. Arsenic levels exceeded the safe limit of 0.01 PPM in 815 to 593 habitations, with Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Tarn Taran being the worst affected. Nitrate contamination (69 to 20 habitations) surpassed the 45 PPM limit, particularly in Ferozepur, Ludhiana and Roopnagar. Iron contamination (45 to 14 habitations) exceeded 1.0 PPM, with Amritsar, Ferozepur and Roopnagar being the most impacted. Other metal contamination (134 to 22 habitations) surpassed limits, affecting Fazilka and Patiala the most. Fluoride levels exceeded safe limits (319 to 195 habitations), with Patiala and Fatehgarh Sahib being the worst affected. Uranium contamination (252 to 174 habitations) was detected in Fazilka, Ferozepur and Moga, surpassing the BIS and Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) safety limits.

As on 31 March 2024, there was one State Laboratory, 17 District Laboratories, six Regional Laboratories, seven Block Laboratories and two Mobile Laboratories in the State. There was 95 *per cent* shortage of Block Laboratories as against 153 Blocks, there were only seven Block Level Laboratories.

Against the annual target of 3,000 tests for the District Water Testing Laboratories, there was a shortfall ranging between 33 *per cent* and 95 *per cent* during 2021-2024. These District Level Laboratories were required to forward confirmed positive cases to the State Laboratory immediately for further testing on advanced parameters. Audit noticed that during 2021-2024, out of 588 samples tested positive in four test-checked Districts, only the District Laboratory in Ludhiana sent 11 (2.83 *per cent*) samples to the State Laboratory, while the other District Laboratories failed to comply with the Drinking Water Quality Monitoring & Surveillance Framework (DWQMS) guidelines.

During 2021-22 and 2022-23, results of water quality testing of as many as 45.57 per cent and 62.99 per cent samples, respectively were declared after 31 days of receiving the sample, thereby making the chances of timely intervention nearly impossible.

Recommendations:

The State Government may ensure:

- *Structured planning based on verified baseline data;*
- *Regularising the functioning of key Committees and adopt a formal Operation & Maintenance strategy along with integration of Internet of Things, Geographic Information System mapping and smart monitoring systems; and*
- *Conducting required number of tests, expanding the number of water testing laboratories and introducing real-time monitoring technologies to ensure supply of contamination-free drinking water.*

Chapter-III: Implementation of Emergency Response Support System – ‘Dial 112’ in Punjab

The Compliance Audit titled ‘Implementation of Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) – ‘Dial 112’ in Punjab’ showed that the delayed formation of key Committees, lack of monitoring and inadequate funding hampered the implementation of ERSS in the State.

The ERSS Guidelines provide for constitution of a State Apex Committee (SAC) comprising eleven members under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary. Though the State Government had received first instalment of grant-in-aid from GoI in March 2017 for implementation of ERSS, the SAC was constituted in February/April 2018 as per the structure defined in the Guidelines i.e., after more than two years from issue of the guidelines. It was further noticed (August 2024) that as against the requirement of 24 meetings till March 2024, only one meeting of the SAC was held (March 2018).

As per ERSS Guidelines, the State was required to set up a State Steering Committee (SSC) comprising of eight members from different prescribed departments under the chairmanship of the Director General of Police. Audit observed (August 2024) that the SSC was initially constituted in November 2015 with members solely from the Police Department, lacking representation from other Departments. The SSC was subsequently reconstituted in March 2024, aligning with the ERSS Guidelines, more than eight years after issuance of guidelines by GoI (August 2015). It was observed (June-September 2024) that no DMCs were constituted even after nine years of the issuance of the guidelines (August 2015).

The ERSS Guidelines mandate the State to define the State level Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for responding to emergency calls by the State Call Centre as well as field units. Audit observed (June 2024) that the State had not prepared the SOP defining operations of ERSS in the State (November 2024) even after a lapse of more than nine years of issuance of ERSS Guidelines by GoI. In the absence of a clearly defined SOP, the State's ability to address emergency situations in a timely and organised manner could be hindered, potentially impacting public safety and the overall effectiveness of the ERSS system.

ERSS Guidelines required integration of existing emergency services such as firefighting, ambulance and other emergency services with 'Dial 112'. Delays in the constitution of various committees and non-release of essential funds by the State hampered the timely implementation and operationalisation of ERSS in the State. This hindered effective integration with other emergency services, potentially compromising coordination, efficiency and resource utilisation, thereby undermining the objectives of the 112-based Emergency Response System.

The State was responsible for providing sufficient number of two-wheelers and four-wheelers for dispatch in case of emergency. As per ERSS Guidelines, each State was to be provided with an average of six Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) *per* police station for the actual number of vehicles available. Against the requirement of 1,866 vehicles, only 258 vehicles were deployed under ERSS, thereby depicting a substantial shortfall of 1,608 (86 *per cent*) vehicles.

Analysis of ERSS quality parameters during the period 2021-2024 highlighted significant delays in key stages of the emergency response, including call forwarding, dispatcher response, vehicle response times and incident resolution, thereby impairing the objective of the Scheme to provide immediate emergency services to the people in distress.

Recommendations:

The State Government may ensure:

- *Timely formation and operationalisation of mandated Committees to strengthen governance and oversight of ERSS;*
- *Development and implementation of comprehensive SOPs for ERSS operations, and emergency response protocols across the State;*
- *Integration of other emergency services like Fire, Health, Women's Helpline, etc. with ERSS- 'Dial 112'; and*
- *Implementation of measures to reduce delays at all stages of emergency response, including call forwarding, dispatcher response, vehicle deployment and incident resolution, to enhance service delivery.*

Chapter-IV: Compliance Audit Observations (Departments)

Failure of the Punjabi University, Patiala to comply with the provisions of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 led to a payment of ₹ 2.19 crore (which includes interest of ₹ 1.08 crore) on collection of College Affiliation Processing Fee, from its own sources. Of this, ₹ 0.35 crore was recovered from certain colleges, leaving the University with a financial burden of ₹ 1.84 crore. Additionally, a liability of ₹ 0.12 crore remains outstanding due to pending GST payments along with accrued interest.

(Paragraph 4.1, Page 65)

Non-provision of adequate funds by the Public Works Department (B&R) and Inder Kumar Gujral Punjab Technical University (IKGPTU) coupled with allotment of work by the Executive Engineer before obtaining technical sanction and ensuring availability of sufficient funds from the client department resulted in non-completion of work even after lapse of 14 years from the scheduled date of completion, thereby rendering the expenditure of ₹ 19.05 crore incurred on six incomplete blocks of Multi-Disciplinary Academy as idle, besides non-realisation of the intended benefits of improving the living standards of people in remote village areas through technical education.

(Paragraph 4.2, Page 67)