CHAPTER – I
SOCIAL SECTOR

CHAPTER-I

SOCIAL SECTOR

1.1 Introduction

This Chapter of the Audit Report for the year ended 31 March 2024 deals with the findings on audit of State Government Departments under Social Sector.

During 2023-24, against total budget provisions of ₹ 5,210.89 crore, a total expenditure of ₹ 3,886.52 crore was incurred by 13 departments under the Social Sector. Department-wise details of budget provision and expenditure incurred there-against are shown in **Table-1.1**.

Table-1.1: Department-wise budget provision and expenditure

(₹ in crore)

Sl. No.	Name of the Department	Budget Allocation (BA)	Expenditure	Percentage of Expenditure to BA
1.	School Education	1,712.59	1,450.03	84.67
2.	Higher and Technical Education	320.71	247.78	77.26
3.	Sports and Youth Services	55.31	27.15	49.09
4.	Art and Culture	14.10	12.44	88.23
5.	Health and Family Welfare	968.50	643.51	66.44
6.	Public Health Engineering	651.74	390.10	59.86
7.	Information and Public Relation	14.30	13.78	96.36
8.	Labour, Employment, Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	36.61	27.98	76.43
9.	Social Welfare	289.98	212.99	73.45
10.	Disaster Management and Rehabilitation	69.81	41.23	59.06
11.	Local Administration	218.11	66.87	30.66
12.	Personnel and Administrative Reforms	6.81	6.40	93.98
13.	Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation	852.32	746.26	87.56
Total		**5,210.89**	**3,886.52**	**74.58**

Source: Appropriation Accounts: 2023-24

Barring Sports and Youth Services Department, Health and Family Welfare Department, Public Health Engineering Department, Disaster Management and Rehabilitation Department and Local Administration Department where the utilisations were around 49.09 *per cent*, 66.44 *per cent*, 59.86 *per cent*, 59.06 *per cent* and 30.66 *per cent* respectively, all other departments managed to utilise more than 70 *per cent* of the funds allocated to them. The overall savings under Social Sector was 25.42 *per cent* against the budget allocation.

1.1.1 Planning and conduct of Audit

Audit process commences with the assessment of risks for the various departments of the State Government. The risk criteria were the expenditure incurred, criticality/ complexity of activities, level of delegated financial powers, assessment of overall internal controls, *etc*.

After completion of audit of each unit, Inspection Reports (IRs) containing audit findings are issued to the Heads of the offices, with a copy to the next higher authority, with a request to furnish replies within four weeks of receipt of the IRs. On the basis of responses, audit findings are either settled or further action for compliance is advised. Significant audit observations arising out of these IRs are processed for inclusion in the Audit Report. The Audit Report is submitted to the Governor of the State under Article 151 of the Constitution of India for being tabled in the State Legislature.

During 2023-24, Audit test-checked an expenditure of ₹ 6,621.16 crore, including funds related to previous years, of the State Government pertaining to Social Sector. This Chapter includes one Performance Audit Report and five Compliance Audit Paragraphs, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Social Welfare, Tribal Affairs, Women & Child Development Department

1.2 Performance Audit on Integrated Child Development Services Scheme

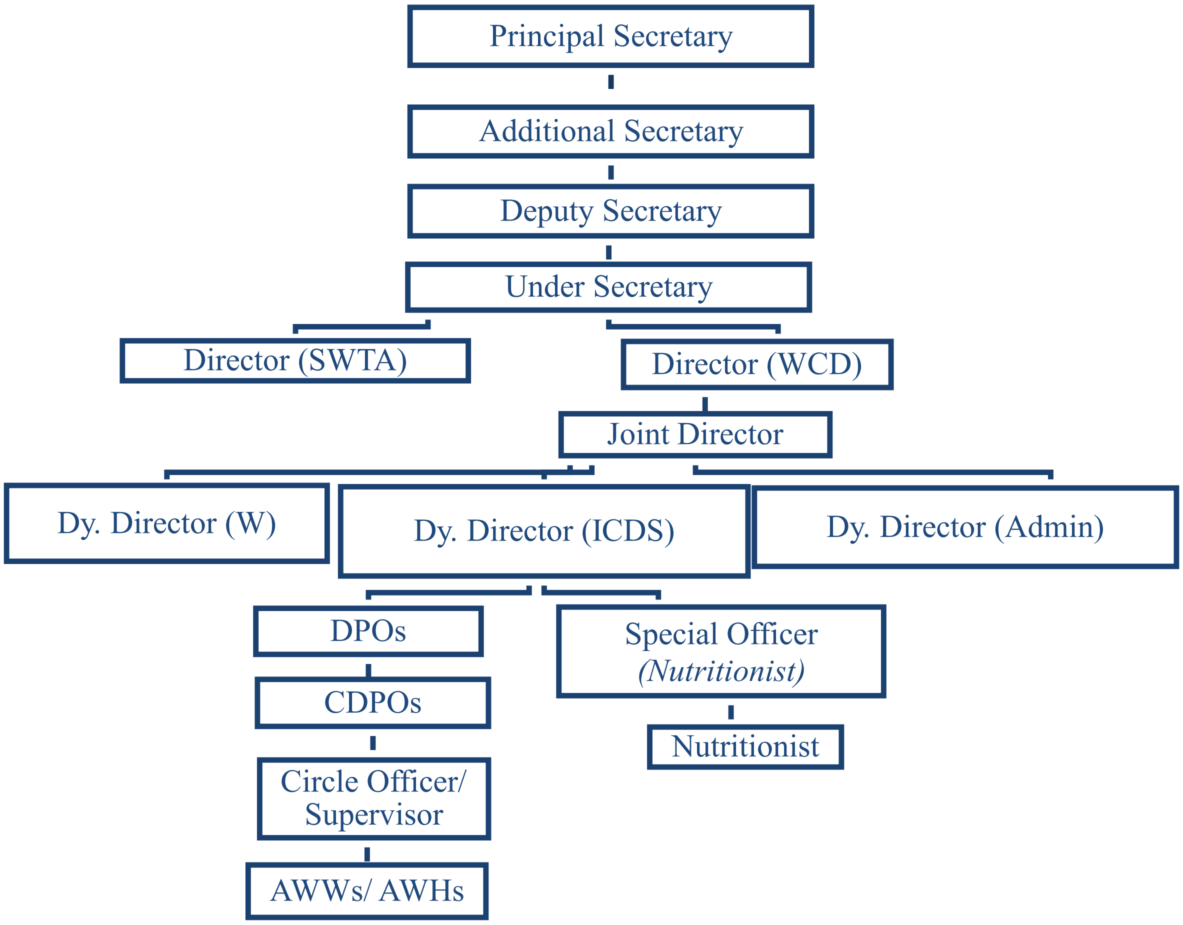
1.2.1 Introduction

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme, one of the world's largest and most unique programme for early childhood development is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) launched on 02 October 1975 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD), Government of India (GoI). In Mizoram, the scheme was launched in 1978 at East Lungdar in Serchhip District. In July 2018, GoI renamed the ICDS as 'Anganwadi Services' and restructured it into 'Umbrella ICDS'. In March 2018, POSHAN Abhiyaan (erstwhile National Nutrition Mission) was launched to achieve improvement in nutritional status of the beneficiaries in a time bound manner. In August 2022, POSHAN Abhiyan and ICDS were re-structured as 'Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0' (hereinafter called Poshan 2.0) for implementation during the Fifteenth Finance Commission period from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

1.2.2 Organisational Structure

ICDS was implemented by the erstwhile Social Welfare Department, Government of Mizoram (GoM). The Department was bifurcated (13 August 2018) into two Directorates *viz*., 'Social Welfare & Tribal Affairs (SWTA)' and 'Women & Child Development (WCD)'. The Directorate of WCD was, however, established on 01 April 2020. The Department was renamed (05 October 2023) as Social Welfare & Tribal Affairs and Women & Child Development (SWTA & WCD) Department. The Directorate of WCD is responsible for all matters for the health, nutrition and welfare of Children and Women in the State. The schemes are implemented by District Programme Officers (DPOs) at the Districts, Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs) at the Projects, Circle Officers (COs)/ Supervisors at the Circles and Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)/ Anganwadi Helpers (AWHs) at Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). The organisational structure of the Department is given in **Chart-1.1**.

Chart-1.1: Organisational structure



Source: Departmental records

1.2.3 Audit Framework

1.2.3.1 Audit Objectives

The Performance Audit was conducted to assess whether:

- Planning for identification and coverage of beneficiaries was comprehensive, the activities envisaged under various interventions were designed to meet the scheme objectives and inter-sectoral monitoring mechanism was robust;
- The available physical, human and financial resources were optimally utilised and convergence with other related programmes was ensured to maximise the benefit of ICDS;
- Effective awareness was created among the targeted beneficiaries under ICDS scheme; and
- The delivery of services through ICDS was effective, efficient and economical in achieving the desired outcomes.

1.2.3.2 Audit criteria

The implementation of various components of ICDS scheme was evaluated with reference to the following criteria:

- Scheme guidelines - 'ICDS Mission - the Broad Framework for Implementation' (the Broad Framework), National Nutrition Mission/ POSHAN Abhiyan, Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 (Poshan 2.0) Scheme for Adolescent Girls, *etc*.;
- Operational Guidelines for Food Safety and Hygiene, Guidelines for Monitoring and Supervision, *etc*.;
- General Financial Rules, 2017, National Food Security Act, 2013, Manual for Procurement of Goods, 2017, Competition Act, 2002, Mizoram Procurement Rules 2020, Monitoring Mechanism instituted by GoI and GoM; and
- Instructions/ Notifications issued by the Central and State Governments respectively.

1.2.3.3 Scope and Methodology of Audit

The scope of audit of various sub-schemes under the "Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0" (erstwhile 'Umbrella ICDS') was restricted to Anganwadi Services, Poshan Abhiyaan and Scheme for Adolescent Girls covering the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23. Out of eight districts[1] in the State, three districts *viz*., Aizawl, Champhai and Siaha were selected based on the percentage of underweight children in the districts. Seven[2] ICDS Projects (40 *per cent*) under the three sampled districts and 70 AWCs (10 AWCs from each sampled Project) were selected on Simple random sampling without replacement (SRSWOR) basis. 700 beneficiaries (10 beneficiaries from each sampled AWCs) were selected for Beneficiary Survey.

The Audit objectives, criteria and scope of the Performance Audit were discussed in an Entry Conference held on 23 November 2023 with the Secretary, SWTA & WCD Department. Audit involved examination of records of the Directorate of WCD at the State level, DPOs and CDPOs at the District and Project levels respectively and Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) at the grassroot level and information furnished by the National Health Mission (NHM) Mizoram on interventions taken up under NHM in convergence with ICDS. Joint Physical Verification and Beneficiary Survey of 690 beneficiaries from selected AWCs were conducted with the Departmental officials. Photographs duly authenticated by Departmental officials were used to support audit findings wherever necessary. The Audit findings were discussed in an Exit Conference held on 17 December 2024 with the Commissioner and Secretary of SWTA & WCD, Government of Mizoram. The replies of the Government have been suitably incorporated in the Report.

1.2.4 Acknowledgement

The office of the Principal Accountant General, Mizoram acknowledges the co-operation extended by the SWTA & WCD Department, Director of WCD, DPOs/ CDPOs and

[1] The number of districts increased from eight to 11 with the creation of three new districts in 2019
[2] Two Projects each under Champhai and Siaha districts and three Projects under Aizawl District

AWWs/ AWHs, officials of the National Health Mission (NHM) and Health Centres at the districts in the conduct of the Performance Audit.

During the Performance Audit, the following observations were made:

Audit Findings

Audit Objective-1:	***Whether planning for identification and coverage of beneficiaries was comprehensive, the activities envisaged under various interventions were designed to meet the scheme objectives and inter-sectoral monitoring mechanism was robust.***

1.2.5 Non-availability of data on scheme implementation

During the period covered in Audit, ICDS was implemented under two schemes *viz*., (i) POSHAN Abhiyan/ National Nutrition Mission during 2018-19 to 2020-21 and (ii) Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0 during 2021-22 to 2022-23. Two different digital platforms *viz*., ICDS-CAS (ICDS-Common Application Software) and Poshan Tracker applications were used in the implementation of POSHAN Abhiyan and Poshan 2.0 respectively. Since March 2019, all physical registers, except Stock Register, were discontinued. Data captured in the digital applications were used for preparing the Annual Programme Implementation Plans (APIP) and for real-time monitoring and review of the schemes.

POSHAN Abhiyan was implemented through ICDS-CAS, which was abruptly decommissioned by the Ministry, and became inaccessible since September 2020. No data was migrated from ICDS-CAS to the new application *i.e.,* Poshan Tracker. Although MoWCD launched the Poshan Tracker on 05 March 2021, the portal shows records from April 2022 onwards only. Thus, data on implementation of ICDS during the period 2018-19 to 2021-22 was not available for audit analysis.

Poshan Tracker portal records for the month of April 2022 reflected the number of AWCs as 2,244 and eligible beneficiaries as 6,36,140 of which 22,159 beneficiaries were AADHAAR verified. No other data related to the scheme implementation was shown in the portal. The status of AWC Infrastructure during the year 2022-23 was not reflected at all in the portal. Monthly Report of AWCs also was available only from May 2022. Further, though Poshan Tracker does not capture data of anaemia among children, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 report (2019-20) shows that 46 *per cent* of children were anaemic. Thus, it was observed that complete data on implementation of ICDS during the year 2022-23 was not captured in the Poshan Tracker.

Further, many Anganwadi centres are located in remote areas with poor internet connectivity, making it difficult to upload data in real-time. Poshan Tracker application itself experiences technical issues like slow loading times, data synchronisation problems, causing frustration for users. The Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram (GoM) communicated the issues/ challenges faced in Mizoram to the Ministry of Women & Child Development on 27 September 2021, which was reiterated by the Commissioner-cum-Secretary, GoM on 25 May 2023. The key challenges faced by AWWs in Mizoram, *inter alia*, were:

Language barriers: Poshan Tracker application supported only the languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. AWWs, who speak Mizo exclusively, could not easily comprehend and effectively utilise the application.

Connectivity challenges: Network issues were prevalent, leading to delays in receiving One-Time Passwords (OTPs) necessary for data entry. In many areas, especially in southern regions of the State, internet connectivity was so poor that data entry became nearly impossible. This resulted in prolonged data entry times and often led to not being synced or inaccurate data being reflected in the Poshan Tracker.

Due to incompleteness of data on the implementation of ICDS schemes, effective analysis to assess the impact on child nutrition and health outcomes could not be carried out by Audit.

The transition from ICDS-CAS to Poshan Tracker belatedly in April 2022, was poorly managed, leading to critical data loss and affecting the ability to monitor and evaluate ICDS implementation effectively. Persistent technical, connectivity and language-related challenges further hindered real-time data entry, impacting the accuracy of beneficiary tracking and service delivery. Non-redressal of these long-standing issues indicates a need for stronger digital governance and stakeholder support in ICDS implementation.

1.2.5.1 No records on survey and identification of beneficiaries

The primarily targets of ICDS are **(a) Children aged 0-6 years:** This is the core target group as the Scheme focus is on early childhood development; and **(b) Pregnant women and lactating mothers:** This aims to improve maternal health and nutrition, which directly impacts child health.

Household survey was stated to be conducted on an ongoing basis by AWWs/ AWHs for identification of eligible beneficiaries at the village level. Details were captured in the ICDS-CAS/ Poshan Tracker by the AWWs which was monitored at the Field level, Block level and at the State level by Supervisors, Poshan Coordinators and Consultants respectively. Audit observed that there was no consistency of data between Poshan Tracker portals. The total number of beneficiaries as per Poshan Tracker portal during 2022 was 6,36,140 whereas as per Departmental records the number of beneficiaries under Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) was 1,54,237. The year wise number of beneficiaries covered under SNP is shown in **Table-1.2**.

Table-1.2: Beneficiaries covered under SNP (as per feeding instructions)

Sl. No.	Category of beneficiaries	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
1.	Children (6 months -3 years)	65,584	62,674	52,840	57,201	46,778
2.	Severely Malnourished Children (6 months -3 years)	96	180	52	30	2,742
3.	Children (3 years -6 years)	62,493	63,099	48,552	64,089	59,437
4.	Severely Malnourished Children (3 years -6 years)	54	91	44	45	-
5.	Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers (PW&LM)	24,366	24,808	20,518	28,384	14,597
6.	AWWs & AWHs	4,488	4,488	4,488	4,488	4,488
Total		**1,57,081**	**1,55,340**	**1,26,494**	**1,54,237**	**1,28,042**

Source: Reply furnished by the Directorate of WCD

The number of beneficiaries covered under the scheme decreased year after year, except during 2021-22. Further, as records related to household surveys and identification of beneficiaries were not maintained, Audit could not ascertain whether all the eligible beneficiaries were covered during 2018-23.

> *The declining trend in ICDS beneficiary coverage, coupled with the lack of recorded reasons, raises concerns about gaps in the identification and enrolment process. The absence of household survey records suggests weaknesses in monitoring and accountability, potentially leading to the exclusion of eligible beneficiaries. Further, disruptions caused by the transition from ICDS-CAS to Poshan Tracker likely contributed to data inconsistencies. Strengthening data recording mechanisms, ensuring comprehensive household surveys, and addressing digital challenges are crucial for improving the reach and impact of ICDS in the future.*

1.2.5.2 No records on services delivered under ICDS

Section 3.1 of Poshan 2.0 guidelines states that Anganwadi Services Scheme provides the following package of services in an integrated manner to eligible beneficiaries:

(i) Supplementary Nutrition:

The Directorate of WCD implemented SNP under which supplementary nutrition was provided to beneficiaries in the form of 'Take Home Ration' (THR) and 'Hot Cooked Meals' (HCM). Details of implementation of Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP) are given in **Paragraph-1.2.6** of the report.

(ii) Pre-school and non-formal education:

As per the New Education Policy framework, the Directorate of WCD stated that the Department worked closely with the Education Department and provided non-formal Pre-School Activities (PSE) and Early Child Care Education (ECCE) based on Incremental Learning Approach (ILA). Voluntary organisations/ NGOs were also involved in providing education and care services to young children at the AWCs on ECCE days. Nutrition and Health Education was imparted through monthly sessions, small group meetings of Mothers/ *Mahila Mandals*, community and home visits.

(iii) Nutrition and Health Education, immunisation, *etc*.:

Health education, immunisation, health check-up and referral services, *etc*., were provided under convergence of ICDS with National Health Mission. Under ICDS, growth monitoring, immunisation, *etc.,* were conducted at the AWCs. The AWWs/ AWHs were assisted by Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA)/ Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife (ANM) at the village level. During field audit, it was observed that infantometers, stadiometers, *etc*., were available in all the sampled AWCs. Health check-ups were conducted at the health centres. It was stated that basic health, nutrition and development information related to childcare and development, infant feeding practices, utilisation of health services, management of child diseases, family planning and environmental sanitation *etc*., were provided. Under National Health Mission (NHM), the following activities, *inter alia,* were taken up:

- Identification/ detection of malnutrition and under-nutrition, particularly wasting and stunting among children, through routine screening by dedicated Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) as well as testing for anaemia by dedicated Mobile Health Teams.
- Mandatory tests for anaemia were conducted among all children visiting the District Early Intervention Centres established under RBSK. Prophylactic dose of Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) supplements was administered to all target age groups across the State throughout the year.
- Bi-annual de-worming of all target age group was done through administration of Albendazole tablets.

It was also observed that Convergence Action Plan (CAP) showing details of activities/ interventions was not prepared, as discussed in **Paragraph 1.2.10**. The Primary Health Centres, which implemented the schemes at grassroot levels, do not maintain a comprehensive list of beneficiaries specially covered under convergence with ICDS. The AWCs also did not maintain physical records of services received by ICDS beneficiaries under NHM.

Audit observed that while certain health-related services such as growth monitoring, deworming, anaemia testing, and immunisation were carried out under convergence between ICDS and NHM, the absence of a documented CAP and non-maintenance of beneficiary-level service records by both AWCs and PHCs significantly hindered the assessment of convergence effectiveness. The lack of disaggregated, traceable data on health interventions delivered through convergent action points to a systemic deficiency in planning, coordination, and monitoring of inter-sectoral services. The abrupt transition from ICDS-CAS to Poshan Tracker, coupled with technical and logistical constraints, including lack of compatible smartphones, further disrupted scheme oversight and real-time data capture. Consequently, Audit could not ascertain the extent to which the convergence objectives of improving child health and nutrition outcomes were achieved during the audit period.

The Department while accepting the facts stated (17 December 2024) that under POSHAN Abhiyan, ICDS-CAS was introduced, and all the field functionaries were trained properly for operating the platform. Unfortunately, without prior intimation, the scheme and the digital platform were decommissioned. A new scheme Poshan 2.0 was launched and a new digital platform Poshan Tracker was introduced. Further, 'Face Recognition System' was launched by the Ministry to restrict access to the platform and for availing assistances under the schemes. Smartphones of specific specifications were recommended by the Ministry, which are yet to be supplied to the AWWs. These abrupt changes hampered data management as well as scheme monitoring during the transitional period.

The reply does not adequately explain the Department's inability to ensure continuity in monitoring and convergence during the critical implementation period. Further, due to the absence of data/ records for the audit period, Audit could not analyse the overall effectiveness of ICDS and NHM initiatives.

> *The ICDS-NHM convergence, though well-intended, suffered from weak documentation, inadequate planning and digital transition issues. The lack of maintenance of records at both AWCs and PHCs resulted in non-verifiability of beneficiary coverage and service delivery. Additionally, the abrupt decommissioning of ICDS-CAS and challenges with Poshan Tracker adoption disrupted data management, making it difficult to track programme outcomes. Moreover, there was no evidence of alternative mechanisms instituted during the transition period for tracking service delivery. Without addressing these fundamental monitoring and data integrity issues, the effectiveness of ICDS and NHM remains uncertain.*

Recommendation: The Department may strengthen data management and reporting systems by mandating real-time entry of service delivery data through the Poshan Tracker App, ensuring availability of compatible smartphones to all AWWs, conducting periodic data audits and integrating ICDS and NHM databases.

1.2.6 Implementation of Supplementary Nutrition Programme

Clause 1.2 of the Broad Framework of ICDS states that ICDS beneficiaries would avail supplementary nutrition provision for 300 days in a year. The National Food Security (NFS) Act, 2013, lays down in Schedule-II, the standard for providing nutrition in the form of 'Take Home Rations' or nutritious 'Hot Cooked Meal' in accordance with the ICDS Scheme.

Supplementary nutrition items *viz.*, rice, wheat flour (Atta), masoor dal, groundnut, matar chana, high protein soya noodles, high protein soya biscuits, Energy Dense Fortified Food (EDFF), Vitamin 'B' Complex, calcium tablets, milk, sugar, edible oil and double fortified salt were provided under SNP in Mizoram. Procurements were made centrally by the Directorate of WCD through open tendering and as per recommendations of the State Purchase Advisory Board (SPAB). Food samples were tested at National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories (NABL) accredited laboratories and Regional Institute of Paramedical and Nursing Studies (RIPANS), Aizawl. The Directorate of WCD has two central nutrition godowns[3] at Aizawl and Lunglei from where food items were supplied to the ICDS Projects/ AWCs. In addition to the above items, locally available food items such as banana, papaya, orange, sticky rice, potatoes, beans, egg, bread, *etc*., were provided under locally available foods programme. The programme was implemented in 17 ICDS projects using one-third of the amounts sanctioned under SNP for each of the projects.

The number of beneficiaries covered under SNP was captured in the digital platforms ICDS-CAS (2018-19 to 2020-21) and Poshan Tracker (2021-22 and 2022-23). However, beneficiary data captured in ICDS-CAS could no longer be accessed while data captured in Poshan Tracker was found unreliable due to incomplete data as discussed at **Paragraph 1.2.5** of the report. Thus, the number of beneficiaries covered under SNP was

[3] Aizawl Nutrition Godown covers Aizawl, Saitual, Champhai, Khawzawl, Kolasib, Mamit and Serchhip districts while Lunglei Nutrition Godown covers Lunglei, Hnahthial, Lawngtlai and Siaha districts

compiled from feeding instructions[4] issued by the Directorate of WCD, as given in **Table-1.2** under **Paragraph 1.2.5.1**.

Audit observed the following shortcomings in the implementation of SNP in the State:

1.2.6.1 Feeding instructions not in conformity with Nutrition Norms

Clause 3.2.1 'Nutrition Norms' of Poshan 2.0 guidelines prescribes the quantity of nutrition (calorie and protein) to be provided per day to each category of beneficiary and clause 3.2.2 'Cost Norms' of the guidelines prescribes the cost of providing the nutrition per beneficiary per day, as shown in **Table-1.3**.

Table-1.3: Nutrition Norms and Cost Norms

Sl. No.	Category	Nutrition Norms		Cost Norms (in ₹)
		Calories (K Cal)	Protein (g)	
1.	Children (6 months to 3 years)	500	12-15	8.00
2.	Children (3 years to 6 years)	500	12-15	8.00
3.	Malnourished children (6 months to 6 years)	800	20-25	12.00
4.	Adolescent Girls, Pregnant Women and Lactating Mother	600	18-20	9.50

Source: Poshan 2.0 Guidelines

Feeding Instructions were prepared by the Directorate of WCD which contained 'Feeding Doses' and 'Feeding Days' for each item of food. Estimation of fund requirement for each allotment was made as per the feeding instructions *i.e.,* the lists of food items, quantities and rates of item were taken from the feeding instructions. Proposal for release of each allotment of fund was submitted to the State which released the funds accordingly. The feeding instructions were also issued to the Projects for supply/ distribution of nutrition to the beneficiaries.

Scrutiny of the feeding instructions revealed that the daily 'Feeding Doses' of a food item varied from one allotment to another. The number of 'Feeding Days' and the total quantity of a food item supplied during a year also varied from year to year. Feeding instructions of EDFF for Children (3 to 6 years), showing the variations in feeding dose and feeding days per year, analysed in respect of Khawbung ICDS Project, is given in **Table-1.4**.

Table-1.4: **Allotment of EDFF to Children (3-6 years)**

Year	Date of allotment	Qty. (Kg)	No. of Beneficiaries	Daily Dose (Gm)	Feeding Days
2018-19	31-10-18	2,645	1,343	98.47	20
Sub Total	---	**2,645**	---	---	**20**
2019-20	13-08-19	1,933	1,340	144.25	10
	23-03-20	580	1,340	144.28	03
Sub Total	---	**2,513**	---	---	**13**
2020-21	11-06-20	958	830	144.23	08
	12-02-21	2,590	830	104.00	30
Sub Total	---	**3,548**	---	---	**38**
2021-22	12-07-21	2,215	1,065	104.00	20
	23-02-22	1,249	1,201	104.00	10
Sub Total	---	**3,464**	---	---	**30**
2022-23	---	---	1,194	---	*Nil*

Source: Departmental records. EDFF was not supplied during 2022-23

[4] Feeding instructions were prepared as per the actual number of beneficiaries present at the AWCs

As shown in **Table-1.4** above, EDFF was not supplied during 2022-23 for 1,194 beneficiaries. In the other years, the daily feeding dose ranged from 98.47 gram to 144.28 gram per day per child, while the total feeding days ranged from 13 days during 2019-20 to 38 days during 2020-21, as against the maximum prescribed number of 300 days.

It was observed that feeding instructions were not based on the nutrition requirements of beneficiaries. Due to preparation of feeding instructions on the basis of the availability of fund and at the rates quoted by the suppliers, the nutritional requirements of the beneficiaries were not met in the process. Thus, feeding instructions were found to be not conforming with the Nutrition Norms.

The Department stated (17 December 2024) that feeding instructions were prepared based on fund position *i.e.,* availability of fund. The Department's efforts were to cover 300 feeding days in all possible ways. However, as funds were not released as per requirement and APIP, there was shortfall in supply of nutrition.

The core issue stems from prioritising budget constraints and supplier rates over nutritional needs of children and women, thereby compromising food quality and perpetuating malnutrition. This misallocation of public funds did not adequately address nutritional deficiencies, risking long-term health impacts such as stunted growth, weakened immunity and developmental delays. By neglecting dietary requirements, the programme undermines its goals of combating malnutrition, reducing its effectiveness and exacerbating vulnerabilities to disease. Such inefficiency wastes resources and was contradicts the ICDS purpose.

The inability to align feeding instructions with prescribed nutrition norms under Poshan 2.0 resulted in non-achievement of the prescribed dietary intake for children and pregnant/ lactating mothers. The nutrition supply was dictated by financial constraints rather than beneficiary needs, leading to irregular feeding schedules and insufficient calorie/ protein intake. The absence of a standardised, need-based approach to feeding allocation and the complete lack of supply in 2022–23 highlight lapses in the implementation of the SNP.

Recommendation: The State Government may institute a standardised, need-based feeding plan aligned with Poshan 2.0 norms by: (i) preparing annual feeding calendars based on beneficiary entitlements, (ii) ensuring allocation of funds matches nutritional requirements, (iii) publicly disclosing feeding schedules and menus at AWCs, and (iv) conducting quarterly reviews to monitor compliance and address supply gaps promptly.

1.2.6.2 Shortfall in supply of supplementary nutrition

The year-wise quantities of food items supplied under SNP during 2018-19 to 2022-23, as recorded in the Stock Registers of Central Nutrition Godowns at Aizawl and Lunglei, are given in **Table–1.5**.

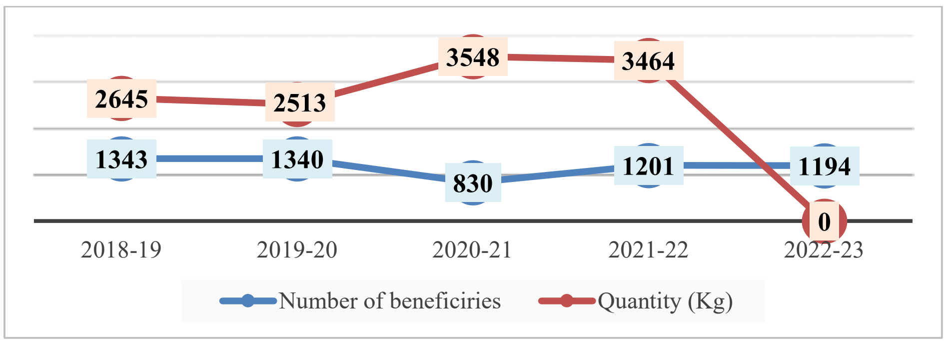
Table-1.5: Supply of nutrition under SNP during 2018-19 to 2022-23

Sl. No.	Items	Unit	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	Total
1.	Calcium tablets	Tin	59,660	14,280	8,424	22,695	9,210	1,14,269
2.	DF Salt	Kg	1,12,200	69,900	1,29,828	1,12,200	67,650	4,91,778
3.	EDFF	Kg	3,17,600	2,92,135	5,06,415	4,46,650	-	15,62,800
4.	Edible Oil	Litre	1,36,569	80,698	31,623	-	22,298	2,71,188
5.	Groundnut	Kg	2,42,944	1,47,701	2,38,669	1,38,508	94,669	8,62,491
6.	HP Biscuits	Kg	-	2,41,095	4,14,198	2,38,729	2,62,953	11,56,975
7.	HP Noodles	Kg	-	75,501	1,87,164	4,63,804	1,62,657	8,89,126
8.	Masoor Dal	Kg	6,67,224	6,77,751	8,08,646	-	-	21,53,621
9.	Matar Chana	Kg	3,60,754	3,18,116	1,40,485	3,40,390	1,32,485	12,92,230
10.	Milk	Litre	-	-	-	1,64,794	2,32,290	3,97,084
11.	Multi Vitamin	Tin	14,501	25,000	25,000	-	-	64,501
12.	Sugar	Kg	22,440	22,440	22,440	33,680	11,220	1,12,220
13.	Vitamin-B Complex	Bottle	7,46,370	3,53,562	3,63,140	3,89,990	4,39,785	22,92,847
14.	Wheat Flour	Kg	9,21,807	8,17,433	4,44,867	6,47,149	11,01,602	9,21,807

Source: Departmental record

As shown in **Table–1.5** above, High Protein (HP) Biscuits and Noodles were not supplied during 2018-19, Edible Oil during 2021-22, EDFF during 2022-23 and Masoor Dal during 2021-23. Further, there was wide variation in the year-wise quantity of food items supplied without corresponding variation in the number of beneficiaries. Analysis of the quantity of EDFF supplied under Khawbung ICDS project and the number of beneficiaries (Children of age group 3-6 years) covered revealed that variation in the quantity of EDFF supplied was not related to the number of beneficiaries covered, as depicted in **Chart-1.2**:

Chart-1.2: Supply of EDFF *vis-à-vis* number of Children (3 to 6 years)



Source: Departmental records

It can be seen from **Chart-1.2** above that the quantity of food items supplied without factoring the increase/ decrease in the number of beneficiaries would adversely affect the nutritional value of food items supplied to each category of beneficiary.

The requirement *vis-à-vis* supply (in terms of calories and protein values) of nutrition, in six out of seven sampled[5] ICDS projects, was analysed in audit. The nutritional requirement as per the Nutrition Norms for 300 days in a year was calculated based on the number of beneficiaries covered in the seven sampled projects (as detailed in ***Appendix-1.1***). The quantity of food supplied as per the Stock Registers (as detailed in ***Appendix-1.2***) was calculated based on the 'Nutritive Value of Indian Foods' published by National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad. The quantity of food supplied under locally available food as per locally available Food Registers is given in ***Appendix-1.3***. Audit analysis showing the shortfall in supply of supplementary nutrition is given in **Table-1.6.**

Table-1.6: Requirements *vis-à-vis* supply of nutrition under SNP

Particulars	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
	Kcal.[6]	Pro.	Kcal.	Pro.	Kcal	Pro.	Kcal.	Pro.	Kcal	Pro.
Aibawk ICDS Project										
Requirement	4,087	10,364	4,356	11,084	2940.6	7,499	4,385	11,263	3,569	9,105
Supply under SNP	2,695	8,181	3,178	10,676	3,598	13,167	2,196	7,546	3,206	9,932
Supply of LA Foods	55	176	41	66	46	115	49	126	-	-
Total supply[7]	**2,750**	**8,357**	**3,219**	**10,742**	**3,644**	**13,282**	**2,245**	**7,672**	**3,206**	**9,932**
Shortfall	1,337	2,007	1,137	342	-704	-5,783	2,140	3,591	363	-827
Per cent shortfall	***32.72***	***19.36***	***26.11***	***3.09***	***-23.93***	***-77.11***	***48.80***	***31.88***	***10.18***	***-9.08***
Aizawl ICDS Project										
Requirement	39,629	1,00,255	40,586	1,01,985	31,001	78,292	42,183	1,07,085	37,585	93,860
Supply under SNP	28,977	87,149	32,965	1,14,253	25,374	76,890	26,006	85,998	25,809	74,115
Supply of LA Foods	456	1053	510	1154	612	1357	738	1501	-	-
Total supply	**29,433**	**88,202**	**33,475**	**1,15,407**	**25,986**	**78,247**	**26,744**	**87,499**	**25,809**	**74,115**
Shortfall	10,196	12,053	7,111	-13,422	5,015	45	15,439	19,586	11,776	19,745
Per cent shortfall	***25.73***	***12.02***	***17.52***	***-13.16***	***16.18***	***0.06***	***36.60***	***18.29***	***31.33***	***21.04***
Khawbung ICDS Project										
Requirement	6,671	16,690	5,009	12,798	3,860	9,905	4,776	12,182	4,411	11,120
Supply under SNP	5,643	18,814	4,490	13,256	3,912	14,597	2,945	10,049	3,543	10,993
Supply of LA Foods	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total supply	**5,643**	**18,814**	**4,490**	**13,256**	**3,912**	**14,597**	**2,945**	**10,049**	**3,543**	**10,993**
Shortfall	1,028	-2,124	519	-458	-52	-4,692	1,831	2,133	868	127
Per cent shortfall	***15.42***	***-12.73***	***10.37***	***-3.58***	***-1.34***	***-47.37***	***38.35***	***17.51***	***19.67***	***1.15***
Champhai ICDS Project										
Requirement	13,426	33,812	11,125	28,321	9,951	25,468	11,672	29,752	10,473	26,347
Supply under SNP	10,348	33,365	10,601	35,735	9,507	34,940	6,755	22,289	8,522	26,185
Supply of LA Foods	122	320	145	384	138	416	158	486		
Total supply	**10,470**	**33,685**	**10,746**	**36,119**	**9,645**	**35,356**	**6,913**	**22,775**	**8,522**	**26,185**
Shortfall	2,956	127	379	-7,798	306	-9,888	4,759	6,977	1,951	162

[5] Out of the seven sampled ICDS Projects, complete data of supply made under SNP was not available for Darlawn ICDS Project and analysis was made on the remaining six projects

[6] (i) Kcal.=Calorie in 'lakh Kcal'**;** (ii) Pro.= Protein in 'Kg'

[7] Quantity of food items supplied is multiplied with the Calorie/ Protein content per unit of the food item to get the Calorie and Protein values of food supplied

Particulars	2018-19		2019-20		2020-21		2021-22		2022-23	
	Kcal.[6]	**Pro.**	**Kcal.**	**Pro.**	**Kcal**	**Pro.**	**Kcal.**	**Pro.**	**Kcal**	**Pro.**
***Per cent* shortfall**	***22.02***	***0.37***	***3.41***	***-27.54***	***3.07***	***-38.82***	***40.77***	***23.45***	***18.63***	***0.61***
Siaha ICDS Project										
Requirement	8,526	21,535	8,238	20,693	7,885	19,889	9,391	23,890	8,174	20,413
Supply under SNP	3,326	8,205	3,681	12,344	4,941	17,655	2,835	8,928	3,825	10,085
Supply of LA Foods	78	186	83	196	95	222	119	273	-	-
Total supply	**3,404**	**8,391**	**3,764**	**12,540**	**5,036**	**17,877**	**2,954**	**9,201**	**3,825**	**10,085**
Shortfall	5,122	13,144	4,474	8,153	2,849	2,012	6,437	14,689	4,349	10,328
***Per cent* shortfall**	***60.07***	***61.04***	***54.31***	***39.40***	***36.14***	***10.11***	***68.54***	***61.49***	***53.21***	***50.60***
Tuipang ICDS Project										
Requirement	6,703	16,945	6,319	16,038	5,858	14,771	6,718	17,161	5,881	14,692
Supply under SNP	3,326	8,205	3,681	12,344	4,941	17,655	2,835	8,928	3,825	10,085
Supply of LA Foods	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total supply	**3,326**	**8,205**	**3,681**	**12,344**	**4,941**	**17,655**	**2,835**	**8,928**	**3,825**	**10,085**
Shortfall	3,377	8,740	2,638	3,694	917	-2,884	3,883	8,233	2,056	4,607
***Per cent* shortfall**	***50.37***	***51.58***	***41.75***	***23.03***	***15.66***	***-19.53***	***57.79***	***47.97***	***34.96***	***31.36***

Source: Departmental records

As shown in **Table-1.6** above, shortfall in supply of Calories ranged from 3.07 *per cent* during 2020-21 (Champhai ICDS Project) to 68.54 *per cent* during 2021-22 (Siaha ICDS Project) while shortfall in supply of Protein ranged from 0.37 *per cent* during 2019-20 (Champhai ICDS Project) to 61.49 *per cent* during 2021-22 (Siaha ICDS Project).

The Department replied (06 December 2024) that feeding instructions and number of feeding days is directly dependent on the fund position and procurement was done as per availability of fund released.

Thus, it was observed that there was shortfall in supply of supplementary nutrition under SNP in Mizoram during the period covered in audit.

The consistent shortfall in calories and protein puts beneficiaries, especially young children and pregnant/ lactating women, at a significantly increased risk of malnutrition. This can lead to stunted growth and development in children, weakened immune systems and increased susceptibility to infections, anaemia and other micronutrient deficiencies and adverse pregnancy outcomes.

The core objective of ICDS is to improve the nutritional status of vulnerable populations. These shortfalls directly undermine the program's effectiveness in achieving this goal. Public funds are being spent on the ICDS programme, but due to the shortfalls in supply, the intended nutritional benefits are not being fully realised.

> *The inability to ensure consistent and adequate food supply under SNP severely impacted the intended nutritional benefits of Poshan 2.0. Large shortfalls in calorie and protein supply across multiple ICDS projects highlight systemic weaknesses in planning and implementation. The absence of a structured supply mechanism, non-alignment of supply with beneficiary numbers and irregular food distribution compromised the effectiveness of the SNP.*

Recommendation*: *The Department may establish a structured and demand-based procurement and feeding mechanism by: (i) preparing annual SNP supply plans based on updated beneficiary data and nutrition norms under Poshan 2.0, (ii) ensuring advance release of funds linked to feeding calendars, (iii) instituting buffer stock provisions to prevent disruptions, and (iv) monitoring nutrient delivery against norms through monthly calorie and protein gap analysis at the project level.

1.2.6.3 Abnormal increase in the rates of procurement of EDFF

Rule 173 Clause (ix) of GFR, 2017 (as adopted by the Government of Mizoram) states that the specifications of the required goods should be clearly stated without any ambiguity so that the prospective bidders can send meaningful bids. As stated under Clause (xix) (c), rejection of all bids is justified when the bids'/ proposals' prices are substantially higher than the updated cost estimate. Further, as per Clause (xx) (c), prices should be reasonable in comparison to market values. The Mizoram Public Procurement Rules, 2020 provides under Rule 37(1) that, bidding document shall contain, *inter alia*, schedule of requirements, specifications and allied technical details and price schedule. Further, the Competition Act, 2002 prohibits agreements that adversely affect competition, including bid-rigging or collusive bidding as outlined in Section 3(1)(d).

Audit noticed that EDFF was procured centrally by the Directorate of WCD through open tendering. Suppliers and rates, Freight on Road (FoR) for Aizawl and Lunglei were approved by the State Purchase Advisory Board (SPAB). The rate of procurement of EDFF was substantially increased during 2020-22 and further increased during 2022-23 with cumulative increase of 122 *per cent* and 124 *per cent* respectively for Aizawl and Lunglei, as shown in **Table-1.7.**

Table-1.7: Rates of supply of EDFF

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Year</th><th colspan="2">Name of supplier</th><th colspan="2">Rate per Kg</th><th colspan="2">Increase/ decrease per cent</th></tr>
<tr><th>Aizawl</th><th>Lunglei</th><th>Aizawl</th><th>Lunglei</th><th>Aizawl</th><th>Lunglei</th></tr>
<tr><td>2018-19</td><td colspan="2">Aasray Concept Foods Ltd., Guwahati</td><td>51.83</td><td>53.63</td><td>---</td><td>---</td></tr>
<tr><td>2019-20</td><td colspan="2">Orion Health Foods Pvt. Ltd. Shillong</td><td>48.88</td><td>51.88</td><td>(-) 5.69</td><td>(-) 3.26</td></tr>
<tr><td>2020-21</td><td rowspan="2">Rausheena Udyog Ltd. and Aasray Concept Foods Ltd. Guwahati</td><td rowspan="2">M/s Orion Health Foods Pvt. Ltd. Shillong</td><td rowspan="2">77.00</td><td rowspan="2">79.00</td><td rowspan="2">57.53</td><td rowspan="2">52.27</td></tr>
<tr><td>2021-22</td></tr>
<tr><td>2022-23</td><td colspan="2">Nutrikart, Zarkawt, Aizawl</td><td>115.00</td><td>120.00</td><td>49.35</td><td>51.90</td></tr>
</table>

Source: Departmental records

During the years 2019-23, the Director of WCD issued three Notice Inviting Tenders (NITs) for procurement of 888 MT of EDFF *viz*., on 14 January 2019 for 276 MT[8], on 29 June 2020 for 276 MT and on 31 October 2022 for 336 MT[9]. Supplies were to be made in a phased manner for a period of at least one year. The NITs specified that EDFF should contain not less than 500 kcal Calorie and 15 gram Protein per 100 gram and should be fortified with micro-nutrients (Vitamins & minerals).

During 2019-20, three firms[10] responded to the NIT issued on 14 January 2019 in which the lowest bidder M/s Orion Health Foods Pvt. Ltd., Shillong was approved (3 June 2019) by the SPAB. The rate of supply of EDFF during 2019-20 was lesser than the previous year by 5.69 *per cent* for Aizawl and 3.26 *per cent* for Lunglei respectively.

During 2020-21, the three firms responded to the NIT issued on 29 June 2020. Two firms *viz.,* M/s Aasray Concept Foods Ltd., and M/s Rausheena Udyog Ltd., Guwahati submitted the same bid of ₹ 77.00 per Kg (L1) for Aizawl while M/s Orion Health Foods Pvt. Ltd., Shillong submitted bid of ₹ 79.00 per Kg (L-1) for Lunglei. Thus, all the three suppliers were approved (15 December 2020) by the SPAB and the supply was continued during 2021-22 as well. The rate of supply of EDFF during 2020-21 was higher than the previous year 2019-20 by 57.53 *per cent* and 52.27 *per cent* for Aizawl and Lunglei respectively.

During 2022-23, two firms *viz*., M/s Rausheena Udyog Ltd., Guwahati and M/s Nutrikart, Zarkawt, Aizawl responded to NIT issued on 31 October 2022. As recorded in the meeting minutes of the SPAB (16 March 2023), the sample furnished by M/s Rausheena Udyog Ltd., the lowest bidder, did not contain the minimum requirement of 500 kcal Calorie and 15-gram Protein. Thus, M/s Nutrikart, Aizawl, the L-2 bidder, which quoted ₹ 115 per Kg and ₹ 120 per Kg for Aizawl and Lunglei respectively, was approved (05 April 2023) by the SPAB. The rate of supply of EDFF during 2022-23 was higher than the previous year 2021-22 by 49.35 *per cent* for Aizawl and 51.90 *per cent* for Lunglei respectively.

Comparison of the rates of supply EDFF during 2018-19 to 2022-23 with the cost per unit of its ingredients (raw material) *viz*., millets, sugar, pulses, *etc*., is given in **Table-1.8.**

Table-1.8: **Increase in rate of items**

Year	EDFF		Sugar		M. Dal		Jowar		Bajra		Ragi	
	Rate	PCI[11]	Rate	PCI	Rate	PCI	Rate	PCI	Rate	PCI	Rate	PCI
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*
2018-19	51.8		45		59		24.5		19.5		28.9	
2019-20	48.9	*-5*	45	*0*	69	*17*	25.7	*5*	20.0	*3*	31.5	*9*
2020-21	77	*57*	45	*0*	72.6	*5*	26.4	*3*	21.5	*7*	32.95	*5*
2021-22	77	*0*	45	*0*	72.6	*0*	27.6	*5*	22.5	*5*	33.77	*3*
2022-23	115	*49*	50	*11*			29.9	*8*	23.5	*4*	35.78	*6*

Source: Rates of EDFF, Sugar and M Dal are taken from supply orders for Aizawl and rates of millets (Jowar, Bajra and Ragi) are taken from the rates published by PIB

[8] 14,000 cases of 12 x 01 Kg packets = **168 MT** for Aizawl and 9,000 cases of 12 x 01 Kg packets =**108 MT** for Lunglei

[9] 14,000 cases of 12 x 01 Kg packets = **168 MT** for Aizawl and Lunglei each

[10] M/s Rausheena Udyog Ltd., Guwahati, M/s Aasray Concept Foods Ltd., Guwahati and M/s Orion Health Foods Pvt. Ltd. Shillong

[11] PCI= *Per cent* increase

As shown in **Table-1.8** above, while the cost per unit of ingredients varied from zero to 17 *per cent,* the rates of supply of EDFF varied from minus five to 57 *per cent*, which was abnormal.

Scrutiny of tender documents revealed that the lists of ingredients (raw materials) and quantity per unit of EDFF were not specified in the NITs. Records of preparation of cost estimates and assessment of market values were also not found. The bidders also did not furnish such information, without which, the reasonableness of the rates quoted could not be verified. During 2020-21, all the three firms submitted their bids on the last day for submission of bids *i.e.,* 28 July 2020. The financial bid of M/s Rausheena Udyog Ltd. was printed, while the other two firms submitted handwritten bids. Two firms[12] submitted the same bid (lowest) for Aizawl and the third firm[13] submitted the lowest bid for Lunglei, which led to the selection of all the three firms. This appears to be cartel formation among the bidders for controlling the supply rate of EDFF.

While preparing the Comparative Statements, the Department did not highlight the substantial increases in rates *vis-à-vis* the previous year's for evaluation by the SPAB. The SPAB also approved the rates without any observation on the reasons for the price increases. Non-observing and non-flagging of the substantial increase in rates precluded any possibility of negotiating with the L1 bidders. Consequently, the supply contracts were awarded without any effort to moderate the rates. The Department should have negotiated with the lowest bidder (L1) to reduce the rates further, which was not done.

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024), the Director, WCD stated that the Department realised the increase in rates only after being pointed out by Audit. It was also stated that though tenders were floated by the Directorate of WCD, selection of suppliers was made by the State Purchase Advisory Board (SPAB) and thus they had no control over the matter.

Thus, the non-adherence to GFR provisions by the Department adversely affected the efficiency and economy of the procurement process.

The procurement of EDFF under ICDS suffered from severe lapses in transparency, cost justification, and competitive bidding. Lack of detailed specifications, unexplained price hikes, and possible cartel formation indicate serious deficiencies in procurement planning and oversight. Non-negotiation of rates or non-rejection of abnormally high bids resulted in excessive expenditure, raising concerns about financial prudence and accountability in ICDS procurement.

Recommendation: The Department may institute a system of quarterly nutrition audits at the ICDS project level to track actual delivery of calories and proteins against prescribed norms, and initiate corrective action through reallocation of resources, revision of feeding schedules, and real-time adjustment of procurement plans to ensure full coverage of all beneficiaries under the Supplementary Nutrition Programme (SNP).

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[12] *i.e.,* M/s Aasray Concept Foods Ltd., and M/s Rausheena Udyog Ltd.
[13] *i.e.,* M/s Orion Health Foods Pvt. Ltd.

1.2.7 Inadequacies in monitoring of the scheme

Chapter 2 of the guidelines for Monitoring & Supervision of ICDS states that ICDS Scheme envisages an inbuilt system of monitoring through regular reports and returns at various levels. Five-tier monitoring systems *viz.,* National, State, District, Block and AWC levels have been put in place.

Chapter 2 of Poshan 2.0 guidelines provides that the Chief Secretary of the State shall coordinate the activities of various departments through a State Level Steering Committee (SLSC) to ensure effective convergence between various schemes/ programs having bearing on nutrition and review the progress on regular basis. The CDPO who is responsible for administration and implementation of nutrition and ICDS projects shall carry out major responsibilities *inter alia* as follows:

- Coordinate and evaluate deliveries in the District as a Key Performance Indicator of the District Magistrate/ Collector for nutritional improvement of beneficiaries, especially Severe and Moderate Acute Malnutrition children;
- Conduct periodic monitoring, including surprise spot-checks, assessing the quality of pre-school delivery, *etc*., to ensure quality and undertake necessary course of correction; and
- Ensure collation of monthly progress reports for the District and share with the State.

Further, Clause 2.6 of Poshan 2.0 guidelines provides that Poshan Tracker will be used in monitoring of the scheme which will enable real-time monitoring and tracking of all AWCs, AWWs and beneficiaries on defined indicators and in generating data, providing feedback to Program Managers and documenting the impact of scheme on nutrition indicators. The States/ districts will be able to make effective and timely interventions based on the data from the Poshan Tracker, thereby facilitating continuous evaluation and the progress of different components.

It was observed that SLSC was not constituted to review the progress of implementation of various schemes/ programs. During field audit of the sampled projects, the CDPO, Khawbung stated that proper monitoring could not be carried out on monthly basis due to shortage of staff.

On scrutiny of Poshan Tracker data, it was found that there was no mechanism for monthly/ quarterly/ annual feedback in the application and Monthly Report was available only from May 2022 onwards.

The Director of WCD stated (8 May 2024) that during 2018-19 to 2020-21, ICDS-CAS Dashboard was used as monitoring system at the State, District and ICDS Project levels. However, the application was decommissioned by the Ministry in 2020. Monthly Reports were submitted in a portal called Rapid Reporting System hosted by MoWCD. But this portal was decommissioned by the Ministry in February 2022. During 2021-22 and 2022-23, Poshan Tracker Dashboard was used as monitoring system at the State, District and Project levels.

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024), it was stated that the Poshan Tracker had significant challenges and had to undergo several upgrades since its inception. To address these issues, the Directorate engaged Lailan Consultancy Pvt. Ltd., Aizawl to develop a software solution aimed at improving data collection and maintenance under the ICDS.

The absence of a State-Level Steering Committee, inadequate monitoring at the district level, and frequent disruptions in digital tracking systems severely impacted the effectiveness of ICDS and Poshan 2.0 monitoring mechanisms. The lack of comprehensive data hindered evidence-based decision-making.

Recommendation: The Department may operationalise the State-Level Steering Committee (SLSC) and establish an integrated monitoring framework by mandating monthly reviews at all administrative levels, supported by a stable, state-managed digital platform developed in consultation with NIC or other accredited agencies, to ensure uninterrupted data flow, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making under Poshan 2.0.

1.2.8 No proper planning for achievement of Sustainable Development Goals

Clause 1.1 of Poshan 2.0 guidelines states that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) lies at the forefront of this programme design. Poshan 2.0 shall contribute to the SDGs, specifically, SDG-2 on Zero Hunger and SDG-4 on Quality Education.

As per information furnished by the Director of WCD, achievement of SDG on key indicators such as Maternity Benefits, Anaemia, Stunting and Underweight in children, *etc*., and progress made over the years are shown in **Table-1.9**.

Table-1.9: Status of achievement of SDG

Sl. No.	Indicators	2021	2023
1.	Beneficiaries received Maternity Benefits	21,628	37,210
2.	Children who are **Stunted**	2.34 *per cent*	22.50 *per cent*
3.	Children (4-59 months) who are **Anaemic**	No data	No data
4.	Children (0-4 years) who are **Underweight**	1.51 *per cent*	1.10 *per cent*

Source: Departmental reply and Poshan Tracker data

It was observed that targets were not set by the Department with respect to SDG-2 on Zero Hunger and SDG-4 on Quality Education. Supplementary nutrition was provided to beneficiaries in the form of Take-Home Ration/ Hot Cooked Meals and Early Child Care Education (ECCE) was carried out in the AWCs. These two programs are linked with the SDG-2 and SDG-4 respectively. As tangible targets were not set by the Department, progress made towards achievement could not be assessed in audit.

The Director stated (6 December 2024) that the State studies are being initiated to find out the root causes and for planning of tailored interventions for every ethnic tribal groups *viz.,* study of Diet Diversity and Nutrition Outcomes among women and children in Mamit District.

The absence of specific targets for SDG-2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG-4 (Quality Education) undermined the ability to measure programme effectiveness. While maternity benefits showed improvement, the rise in stunting rates and missing anaemia data raise concerns about the actual nutritional impact of Poshan 2.0.

Recommendation: The Department may develop and implement a robust data governance strategy, including seamless migration of legacy data, offline-compatible data entry modules for remote areas, multilingual user interfaces and periodic data validation protocols.

Conclusion:

The implementation of ICDS and Poshan 2.0 in Mizoram was marked by systemic weaknesses in planning, monitoring and service delivery. Despite substantial resource allocation, the absence of critical institutional mechanisms such as the State-Level Steering Committee, irregular convergence with health and education departments, and significant data gaps due to the abrupt transition between digital platforms hindered effective execution. Inconsistent distribution of supplementary nutrition, poor infrastructure in AWCs, inadequate training of frontline workers and limited community engagement further undermined the scheme's objectives.

Consequently, the programme fell short of achieving intended nutrition and development outcomes, compromising the well-being of its target beneficiaries - women, children and adolescent girls. Strengthening institutional oversight, restoring data integrity, and adopting a results-based, transparent implementation model are essential for improving impact.

Audit Objective-2:	***The available physical, human and financial resources were optimally utilised and convergence with other related programmes was ensured to maximise the benefit of ICDS.***

1.2.9 Insufficiency of physical resources

1.2.9.1 Insufficient number of AWCs

As per guidelines for Monitoring & Supervision of ICDS, the Population Norms for Setting up Anganwadi Centres were 400-800 per AWC in Rural/ Urban areas and 300-800 per AWC in tribal/ riverine/ desert/ hilly and other difficult areas.

As per Statistical Abstract of Mizoram 2021, the population of the State during the year 2011 was 10.97 lakh. As per Economic Survey of Mizoram for the year 2014-15, all the sanctioned 2,244 AWCs were operational. The average coverage of beneficiaries in the State was 489 beneficiaries per AWC[14] as per population of 2011. As per information

[14] Total Population of Mizoram/ No of AWCs

provided by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, the population of the State is expected to be 12.33 lakh by 2023 with coverage of 549 beneficiary per AWCs.

Substantial increase in population in some villages and setting up of new settlements had necessitated the creation of additional AWCs. The Directorate of WCD had requested (11 October 2022) the Government of Mizoram, SW&TA Department for creation of 21 additional AWCs under 'Anganwadi on Demand' provision. However, no additional AWC was created since 2014. During Joint Physical Verification (January to March 2024) of AWCs, the AWWs stated that they were already burdened with various responsibilities and the launch of Poshan Tracker coupled with lack of proper internet connectivity in the remote hilly regions, has added the task of data entry to their workload. Further, it was difficult for the AWWs/ AWHs to regularly cover all the additional households and beneficiaries within their jurisdictions as the population had increased over the years.

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024), Director, WCD stated that proposals of 66 new Anganwadi Centers are being submitted to the Ministry for consideration under *Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utharh Abhiyaan* (DAJGUA).

Thus, it was observed that though the population of the State increased over the years, no additional AWC was created after 2014 and the existing field functionaries had to bear the extra workload arising from population growth.

The inability to create additional AWCs despite population growth and rising demand had strained existing infrastructure and human resources, reducing the efficiency of service delivery under ICDS. The State's inaction on WCD's request for additional AWCs under 'Anganwadi on Demand' has left several settlements underserved. Additionally, the increasing workload of AWWs, compounded by digital reporting challenges in remote areas, has negatively impacted their ability to effectively implement ICDS services.

Recommendation: The Department may consider conduct a geo-tagged needs assessment of population growth and settlement patterns to identify underserved areas and submit timely proposals for sanctioning new Anganwadi Centres.

1.2.9.2 AWCs lacked basic infrastructure

As per MoWCD instructions dated (10 March 2011), an AWC must have a separate sitting room for children/ women, separate kitchen, store for storing food items, child friendly toilets and space for playing of children (indoor and outdoor activities) with safe drinking water facilities. Paragraph 2.2.1(ii)(a) of the Broad Framework of ICDS also provides that AWCs should be child friendly having all relevant infrastructure and the space should be at least 600 sq. ft. Paragraph 7.1 of the Broad Framework further states that AWC building with three-four rooms is needed at the village level. As per Paragraph 3.12 of Poshan 2.0, for leveraging convergence for food and nutrition, *Poshan Vatikas* (nutri-gardens) shall be set up at or near AWCs.

Audit conducted a Joint Physical Verification with the representatives of the Department (24 January to 21 March 2024) in which all the 70 sampled AWCs under seven ICDS

Projects were covered. Beneficiary Survey was also conducted in which 690 beneficiaries (415 Children, 173 Pregnant Women & Lactating Mothers and 102 Adolescent Girls) were covered.

It was found that most of the sampled AWCs had only one/ two rooms with attached kitchen against the Broad Framework norms of three/ four rooms with attached kitchen. There was no separate sitting room for children/ women and there was not enough space (600 sq. ft area as per Ministry guidelines) in all the 70 sampled AWCs. It was also found that the sampled AWCs lacked basic infrastructure/ facilities *viz*., electric connection (46 AWCs), water connection (8 AWCs), functional toilets (3 AWCs), *etc*., as has been given in **Table-1.14** under **Paragraph-1.2.10**. Responses to questionnaire received from the beneficiaries were captured as given in ***Appendix-1.4.*** Shortcomings observed during the Joint Physical Verification, *inter alia*, were as follows:

- PSE Kits, blackboard, playing equipment were not available in 17 sampled AWCs under Aizawl Urban, Aibawk, Champhai and Khawbung ICDS projects. Weighing scales were not in working condition in 19 sampled AWCs under Aizawl Urban, Aibawk, Champhai and Khawbung ICDS projects.
- 48 *per cent* of the of the surveyed parents on behalf of Children (0-6 years) stated that enough space was not available in the AWCs while 22 *per cent* stated that the AWC buildings were not in good condition;
- 67 *per cent* of the surveyed parents on behalf of Children (0-6 years) stated that electricity was not available in the AWCs; and
- Mothers' Committees played a commendable role in the maintenance of the AWCs. The AWWs/ AWHs relied solely on the Mothers' Committees for requirements arising in the AWCs. The Mothers' Committees voluntarily raised funds for maintenance of the AWCs.

Photographs taken during the Joint Physical Verification (January to March 2024) are shown below:

The approach road of Tuipang AWC, Tuipang ICDS Project was slippery during rainy seasons which was dangerous for children and pregnant women.

Kanan-II AWC, Champhai ICDS Project did not have sufficient playing area outside the Centre.

	
Children making use of the little space available for playing at Bethel-I AWC, Champhai.	*Cabbages grown at AWC Khuangleng-III AWC, Khawbung.*

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024), the Director, WCD stated that steps would be taken for providing all AWCs with basic infrastructure. Electricity will be provided through Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme by Power & Electricity Department to the greatest extent and those of the remote areas will be met from the Other Revenue Expenses of Poshan 2.0. Likewise, water supply in all AWCs in the rural areas will be covered through Jal Jeevan Mission by Public Health Engineering Department and urban areas will be covered through Other Revenue Expenses of POSHAN 2.0. Further, 1,600 Anganwadi Centres are being approved for upgradation to Saksham Anganwadi Centre and will be equipped with smart television, reverse osmosis water filter, Poshan Vatikas and rainwater harvesting system.

The infrastructure and basic facilities in AWCs remained grossly inadequate and did not meet ICDS norms and Poshan 2.0 guidelines. The lack of essential utilities, educational materials, and proper space undermines the effectiveness of the program in delivering quality early childhood care and nutrition. Furthermore, community-driven maintenance efforts highlight the gaps in government support.

Recommendation: The State Government may ensure time-bound execution of infrastructure upgradation of the sanctioned 1,600 Anganwadi Centres into Saksham Anganwadi Centres by leveraging convergence with concerned line departments.

1.2.9.3 Insufficient human resources

There were 27 sanctioned posts under ICDS in Mizoram covering 27 ICDS Projects in eleven districts in Mizoram as given in the table below. As per the guidelines of the Ministry, DPO is in charge of District ICDS Cell while CDPO is in charge of Project Cell.

During field audit, it was noted that the Department had shortage of field functionaries at critical levels which posed various challenges on the scheme implementation, as shown in **Table-1.10** below:

Table-1.10: Sanctioned Post *vis-à-vis* Posts held under ICDS as on 31 March 2023

Sl. No.	Name of Post	Sanctioned Post	Post Held	Vacant Post
1.	District Programme Officer	7	3	4
2.	Child Development Project Officer	27	20	7
3.	Circle Officer	90	65	25
4.	Anganwadi Workers	2,244	2,244	0
5.	Anganwadi Helper	2,244	2,244	0

Source: Departmental records

As shown in **Table-1.10** above, against the requirement of 11 DPOs for 11 Districts in the State, only seven posts were sanctioned out of which only three posts were filled. Besides, the posts of seven CDPOs and 25 Circle Officers (CO) were lying vacant.

The Director of WCD stated that proposals for the recruitment of staff were submitted to the State Government. However, no response was received from the State Government. The vacant posts of DPOs/ CDPOs were covered up by other DPOs/ CDPOs/ COs, *etc*., who held them as additional charges.

The Department stated (6 December 2024) that administrative and financial approval would be sought from both the Central and State Governments respectively.

The acute shortage of key field functionaries, particularly DPOs, CDPOs, and Circle Officers, seriously impacted the planning, monitoring, and execution of ICDS in Mizoram. The burden of additional charges on existing staff weakened supervision and decision-making, affecting the quality and efficiency of service delivery.

1.2.9.4 Inadequate training infrastructure

The Broad Framework of ICDS (Annexure-XI) states that training is the most crucial element in ICDS, since the achievement of programme goals depends upon the effectiveness of frontline workers. At the State level, there are two categories of training centres *viz*., (i) Middle Level Training Centres (MLTCs) for Supervisors and Instructors of AWWs/ AWHs and (ii) Anganwadi Workers Training Centres (AWTCs) for AWWs and AWHs. Further, Annexure-IV of Poshan 2.0 guidelines states that training for Instructors would be given at the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD) while training such as Induction Training, Job Training, *etc.,* for CDPOs/ Supervisors/ AWWs/ AWHs should be given in MLTC/ AWTCs. Those States which do not have AWTCs/ MLTCs would open them with the approval of the Ministry of WCD.

The DPOs, CDPOs and Supervisors in Mizoram attended Job Training and Capacity Building Trainings conducted at NIPPCD, Guwahati. There was no Middle Level Training Centre in Mizoram. There was only one Anganwadi Workers Training Centre at Aizawl having capacity of 35 trainees per batch. Induction, on-job and refresher courses and training based on 21 modules of Incremental Learning Approach were imparted to AWWs/ AWHs. Details of training given at the AWTC Aizawl is given in **Table-1.11.**

Table-1.11: Training conducted at AWTC Aizawl

Year	Course	No. of trainees	Expenditure (₹ in lakh)
2018-19	Job Training	315	25.76
	Induction	180	
2019-20	Job Training	350	27.71
	Induction	160	
2020-21	Job Training	280	19.68
	Induction	160	
2021-22	---	Nil	Nil
2022-23	---	Nil	Nil
Total		**1,445**	**73.15**

Source: Department's reply

During 2021-22 and 2022-23, no training was conducted for AWWs. As there was no institute in other districts, the entire field functionaries in the State depend on the training centre in Aizawl. Thus, there was insufficient training facilities/ infrastructure in the State.

During scrutiny of records, it was observed that the Director, Social Welfare Department proposed (31 August 2009) to the Ministry for opening of new AWTC/ MLTC. The Ministry conveyed (9 June 2010) "in principle" approval of the competent authority for opening one AWTC at Lunglei. Formal approval would be subject to finalisation of a building by the State Government and further assessment by NIPCCD. It was stated that the NIPCCD officials had carried out assessment, but no further communication was received, either from the Ministry or the NIPCCD. Therefore, finalisation of AWTC building at Lunglei was put on hold.

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024), the Director, WCD stated that prior to Poshan 2.0, fund for training was released as per State Training Action Plan (STRAP). However, after the launch of Poshan 2.0, the focus of the Ministry has shifted to online training through Diksha Portal. It was further added that providing training at the AWTC has been continuing in the State to augment the online trainings provided by the Ministry.

The impact of inadequate training infrastructure can be far-reaching. Without proper training, workers may rely on outdated information and practices, hindering their ability to provide the most effective services. It may lead to a lack of necessary skills in areas like growth monitoring and assessment, nutrition counselling and education, early childhood education techniques, health and hygiene promotion, community mobilisation and communication. Workers with limited training may struggle to implement interventions effectively, such as providing appropriate supplementary nutrition, conducting accurate health check-ups, or delivering engaging pre-school education. Lack of knowledge and skills can lead to missed opportunities for early detection and intervention of health problems, developmental delays, and nutritional deficiencies. Inadequate training can result in inconsistencies in the quality of services provided across different Anganwadi centres. Ineffective service delivery can negatively impact the health and nutrition status of children and women, potentially leading to increased malnutrition, illness, and developmental delays.

The training infrastructure in Mizoram was severely inadequate, hindering the capacity-building of frontline workers under ICDS. The non-establishment of an MLTC and additional AWTCs, despite the growing need, has weakened the skill development of AWWs and supervisors. The shift to online training under Poshan 2.0, without robust on-ground training facilities, risks compromising service quality at AWCs.

Recommendation: The State Government may take expeditious steps to operationalise the approved Anganwadi Workers Training Centre (AWTC) at Lunglei and establish a Middle Level Training Centre (MLTC) with prior approval of the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

1.2.9.5 Non-release of funds as per approved Annual Programme Implementation Plan

Paragraph 7.7 of the Broad Framework of ICDS provides that release of funds and fund flow mechanism under the ICDS Mission would be based on the State APIPs. Fund transfer will be channelled through the Consolidated Fund of the State.

During 2018-19 to 2022-23, a total amount of ₹ 362.26 crore was approved in the APIP (Central Share of ₹ 326.03 crore and State Matching Share of ₹ 36.23 crore). MoWCD sanctioned Centre Share of ₹ 272.21 crore out of which the State released ₹ 295.49 crore along with the State Matching Share (SMS) of ₹ 32.20 crore, as given in **Table-1.12**. There was overall shortfall to the tune of ₹ 57.85 crore (CS of ₹ 53.83 crore and SMS of ₹ 4.02 crore).

Table-1.12: Release of fund under ICDS

(₹ in crore)

Year	Approved in APIP			Sanctioned by Ministry	Opening Balance	Fund released by State				
	Centre Share	State share	Total			Centre Share	State Share	Fund Available	Expen-diture	Closing Balance
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
2018-19	43.89	4.88	48.77	52.44	0.36	63.37	4.23	67.96	60.77	7.19
2019-20	56.69	6.30	62.99	62.15	7.19	66.89	7.11	81.19	68.37	12.82
2020-21	99.90	11.10	111.00	52.66	12.82	54.48	7.36	74.66	69.57	5.09
2021-22	58.05	6.45	64.50	62.15	5.09	59.32	3.36	67.77	51.87	15.90
2022-23	67.50	7.50	75.00	42.81	15.90	51.43	10.14	77.47	77.47	0.00
Total	**326.03**	**36.23**	**362.26**	**272.21**		**295.49**	**32.20**	**369.05**	**328.05**	

Source: Departmental reply

It was observed that there were discrepancies between the amounts sanctioned by the Ministry and the amounts released by the State Government to the Department. The Centre Share of funds released by the State exceeded the amounts sanctioned by the Ministry for each year during 2018-19 to 2022-23. The Director of WCD stated that due to late receipt of funds from the Ministry, all funds could not be released during the respective financial years by the State Government. Funds which could not be released during a financial year were released in the subsequent years. However, scheme-wise details of fund released during the year and the unspent balances released in the subsequent financial years were not maintained. It was stated that before bifurcation of the Department, all expenditures were booked under the Social Welfare Department. After bifurcation (1 April 2020), all funds received by the Directorate were recorded in a cash book and no separate cash book/ account was maintained for each sub-scheme. It was only after the implementation of Public Financial Management System (PFMS) (during 2021-22) that Single Nodal Agency Accounts were created for each scheme.

Further, it was observed that funds were not released by the Ministry as per APIP. For instance, during 2020-21, an amount of ₹ 22.15 crore was approved for construction of 2,215 AWCs in the APIP which was, however, not released by the Ministry.

On analysis of fund released under supplementary nutrition programme, it was found that the amounts approved in the APIP were not fully released with shortages ranging from 27.14 *per cent* during 2019-20 to 46.40 *per cent* during 2022-23. Amount approved in the APIPs, and amount released to the Department during 2018-19 to 2022-23 is shown in **Table-1.13.**

Table-1.13: Fund position under SNP

(₹ in crore)

Year	Amount approved in APIP			Fund released by MoWCD	Amount released by the State			*Per centage* of Shortfall in release of fund *{(4-8)/4}* *100
	Centre *(90%)*	State *(10%)*	Total		Central Share	State Share	Total	
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*	*(8)*	*(9)*
2018-19	22.43	2.49	**24.92**	17.85	15.79	1.76	**17.55**	29.57
2019-20	24.67	2.74	**27.41**	20.42	17.58	2.39	**19.97**	27.14
2020-21	27.13	3.02	**30.15**	22.88	18.80	2.95	**21.75**	27.86
2021-22	22.88	2.54	**25.42**	18.63	14.52	1.03	**15.55**	38.83
2022-23	20.64	2.29	**22.93**	11.44	9.70	2.59	**12.29**	*46.40*
Total	**117.75**	**13.08**	**130.83**	**91.22**	**76.39**	**10.72**	**87.11**	***33.42***

Source: Departmental Reply

As shown in **Table-1.13** above, fund was not released by the Ministry under SNP as per the approved APIP. Further, funds released by the Ministry were not fully released to the Department during each financial year by the State, resulting in an overall shortfall to the tune of ₹ 14.83 crore (₹ 91.22 crore - ₹ 76.39 crore) for the five years period from 2018-2023 due to the which there was shortfall in supply of nutrition as discussed in **Paragraph 1.2.6.2**.

The Director of WCD stated that actual release of funds by the Ministry were typically lower than the approved APIP. After receipt of fund from the Ministry, the GoM released the funds along with the State's shares to the Department as per the proposals submitted by the Directorate of WCD, which in turn, were based on availability of fund with the State Government. The Director further stated that non-release of fund for construction of 2,215 AWCs as per APIP during 2020-21 was due to disruptions caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

The shortfall in fund releases by both the Ministry and the State Government, coupled with delays, irregular fund flow, and poor financial record-keeping, weakened the implementation of ICDS programs in Mizoram. The funding gap in SNP raises concerns about the adequacy of nutritional support for beneficiaries.

Recommendation: Government may institutionalise a system of scheme-wise financial tracking, including reconciliation of sanctions and actual releases.

1.2.10 Deficiency in the preparation of convergence action plans

A key pillar of the Poshan Abhiyan is to convergence all nutrition related schemes on the targeted population. Guidelines for Convergence Action Plan was issued by MoWCD on 2 November 2018. Section 3.2 of the guidelines provides that Convergence Action Plan Committees should be formed at the State, District and Block levels, with a mandate to review progress, identify gaps and introduce effective interventions as required, based on specific targets. Section 5.1 *ibid* states that a bottom-up planning process will be adopted in the development of the Convergence Action Plan (CAP). The State Convergence Plan should be included in the APIP and approved by State Empowered Programme Committee (SEPC) before submission to MoWCD. The State Convergence Committee should indicate a roll-out plan, assign responsibilities to each department to avoid any overlapping or consequent shifting of responsibilities and ensure timely issue of sanctions by each Department.

The State Convergence Committee was formed on 10 January 2019. The District Convergence Committees and Block Convergence Committees were formed[15] during 26 July 2018 to 10 January 2019. The State CAPs were prepared only for three years[16] *viz.,* 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2022-23.

During field audit, records of assessment and preparation of Block CAPs were not found. Scrutiny of records revealed that physical and financial targets were not specified in the CAPs. It was also stated that budgets for convergence with ICDS were not allocated by the line Departments. Without year-wise physical and financial targets being incorporated, CAPs were found inadequate.

During field audit, it was stated that requirements at the AWCs were submitted by the CDPOs to the DPOs in the Project Annual Status Report (PASR). However, the AWWs were not aware whether the requirements were incorporated in the District/ State CAPs. The AWWs had to approach the Village Councils/ line departments to get the required facilities at the AWCs which, however, could not be provided due to non-availability of funds. Thus, it was observed that a bottom-up planning process was not fully adopted in the preparation of the CAPs.

During Joint Physical Verification (January to March 2024), it was observed that the AWCs lacked basic infrastructure, implying that need-based plans were not prepared/ followed, as shown in **Table-1.14**.

[15] District and Block Convergence Committees were formed on 26 July 2018 (Aizawl, Champhai and Mamit districts), on 28 March 2018 (Lawngtlai and Siaha District) 10 January 2019 (Kolasib, Serchhip and Lunglei districts

[16] SCAP for the year 2021-22 was not prepared due to Covid pandemic

Table-1.14: Status of infrastructure in the sampled AWCs

Sl. No.	Name of Project	No. of AWCs without facilities: *(Out of 10 sampled AWCs per Project)*				AWCs needing repairs
		Electric connection	Drinking Water connection	Nutrition Garden	Playing Area	
1.	Aizawl Urban	2	0	9	8	2
2.	Aibawk	4	0	2	7	0
3.	Darlawn	9	0	8	6	2
4.	Champhai	6	3	6	9	6
5.	Khawbung	10	0	1	6	4
6.	Siaha	6	5	3	8	4
7.	Tuipang	9	0	3	5	5
Total		**46**	**8**	**32**	**49**	**23**

Source: Joint Physical Verification

The Director of WCD stated (27 June 2024) that a Convergence Cell was constituted (14 June 2023) under the Chairmanship of the Secretary, SWTA & WCD to regulate the functioning of the Convergence Committees. It was also stated that targets were set in consultation with the line departments CAP for the year 2024-25.

The implementation of the Convergence Action Plan (CAP) under Poshan Abhiyan was ineffective due to gaps in planning, lack of financial commitment and non-implementation of a bottom-up approach. The absence of Block-level CAPs, non-inclusion of AWW inputs, and non-allocation of funds by line departments severely weakened the convergence effort. Without clear physical and financial targets, a defined budget, and structured accountability mechanisms, the intended benefits of the ICDS-NHM convergence could not be realized effectively.

Recommendation: The Department may adopt a bottom-up planning approach in the preparation of Convergence Action Plans (CAP). The Department may also specify the Physical and Financial targets and earmarked budget for all the interventions by the respective line departments.

1.2.10.1 Execution of works not included in the Convergence Action Plan

In the State Convergence Action Plan, Rural Development Department was given the role of construction and maintenance of AWCs. The list of works proposed during 2018-19 to 2022-23, however, were not included in the State/ District/ Block CAPs.

During 2018-19, works for upgradation of 600 AWCs (₹ 12.00 crore[17]) were executed by the Directorate of WCD under Anganwadi Service (AWS) schemes. Again, during 2022-23, repair/ renovation *etc.,* works in 376 AWCs (₹ 11.09 crore) under 10 ICDS projects were executed by the erstwhile Social Welfare Department under Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PMAAGY). These works were not incorporated in the Convergence Action Plans and records related to execution of the works were not maintained by the Directorate of WCD.

[17] The works were sanctioned for the year 2017-18 @ ₹ 2.00 lakh per AWC

Records related to selection and execution of works were not available for Audit verification. During Joint Physical Verification (January to March 2024), it was found that 23 out of the 70 sampled AWCs needed urgent repairs **(Table-1.14**), which however, were not taken up under Convergence Action Plan. Proposals for repair work of the AWCs were not incorporated in the Annual Action Plan/ Convergence Action Plans for the years 2018-19 to 2022-23. A comprehensive list of works executed under various schemes was also not maintained by the Directorate of WCD. It was doubtful that priority list of works was prepared and works were planned for execution, based on the urgency of requirements. Non-inclusion of the works in the CAPs and execution of the works by the Department other than the Rural Development Department was irregular.

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024), the Director, WCD stated that works for upgradation of 600 AWCs was sanctioned in 2017-18, prior to implementation of Convergence Action Plans. It was also stated that repair/ renovation works of 376 AWCs under PMAAGY were executed by the SW&TA Department and the WCD was not involved in the process. It was also added that the Directorate of WCD retained the role of 'repair and maintenance' of AWCs while the role of 'construction' of AWCs was assigned to the Rural Development Department.

The reply is not acceptable as works such as repair/ renovation of AWCs were executed by different Departments without proper coordination. Non maintenance of comprehensive list of works *viz*., construction, repair and upgradation of AWCs is fraught with the risk of overlapping claims of execution of works under various schemes in the future.

The lack of planning, documentation, and coordination in the execution of AWC infrastructure works compromised the effectiveness of the ICDS infrastructure development. The irregular execution of works by departments other than the designated Rural Development Department further weakened accountability. Systematic planning, transparent prioritisation, and strict adherence to CAP guidelines are essential to ensure efficient utilisation of funds and timely infrastructure development at AWCs.

1.2.11 Improper storage of food items

Paragraph 5.1 under Chapter-3 of the operational guidelines for Food Safety and Hygiene in ICDS states that food materials should not be stored directly on the floor as it can absorb moisture and chances of contamination and spoilage increase. Shifting racks/ pallets should be used such that they are reasonably well above the floor level and away from the wall so as to facilitate effective cleaning and prevent harbouring of pests, insects or rodents.

It was observed that food items were stored directly on the floor without using shifting racks/ pallets at Nutrition Godowns at Aizawl Urban, Champhai, Khawbung, Siaha and Tuipang ICDS Projects as shown in photographs below:

Nutrition kept directly on floor at Nutrition Godown of Siaha Urban ICDS Project.

Nutrition kept directly on floor at Nutrition Godown of Khawbung Urban ICDS Project.

Further, it was also observed that sufficient space and facilities for proper storage of food items in the AWCs were not available. Food items were stored in open racks thereby putting them at risk of contamination/ infestation by rodents. This lackadaisical attitude in storing the foods items may lead to serious medical emergencies for beneficiaries.

Open, unsafe and improper food storage facility (next to toilet) at Zawngtetui, Khawbung ICDS Project.

Food items were kept in the seating Hall of beneficiaries at Venghlui-I AWC, Aizawl Urban ICDS Project.

During Joint Physical Verification (January to March 2024), the AWWs/ AWHs of all the sampled AWCs stated that funds were not provided for procuring storage facilities for the AWCs. As the Department did not provide funds, the AWWs/ AWHs had to approach the Village Councils and the Mothers' Committees for such requirements.

The Director, WCD stated (6 May 2024) that AWCs were constructed during 2003 and 2006 with meagre amount of ₹ 1.25 lakh and ₹ 1.75 lakh respectively. There was no separate provision for construction of nutrition storage facilities. The AWCs, where Mothers' Committees could not provide nutrition storage facilities had no option but to store the food items directly on the floor.

The Department's response is not tenable because as per Poshan 2.0 scheme guidelines, fund should be provided to AWCs *i.e.,* ₹ 2,000 per annum for Administrative expenses (to be utilised at AWC), ₹ 3,000 per annum for Maintenance of AWC building and ₹ 10,000 once in five years for Equipment/ furniture, but such funding was not provided to all 70 sampled Anganwadi centres during the period covered in audit.

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024) the Department stated that instructions were issued (December 2024) to all the AWCs to ensure compliance to guidelines for proper storage of food items. It was also stated that the village coordination committees also play a crucial role in proper maintenance of AWCs including provisions for safe storage of food items.

Recommendation*: *Sufficient fund may be allocated to the AWCs as per guidelines for construction of adequate storage facilities. Storage of food items may be done as per guidelines to prevent contamination, spoilage and wastage of resources.

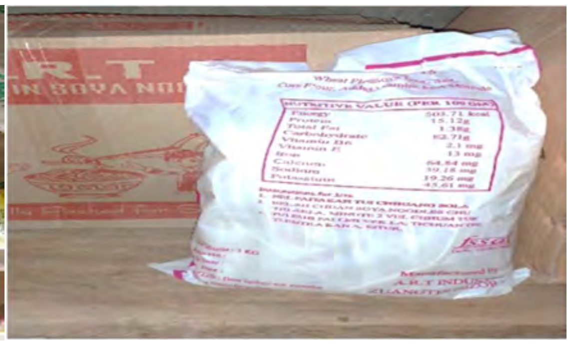
1.2.12 Improper packaging and labelling of food items

Paragraph 4 under Chapter 4 of the operational guidelines for Food Safety and Hygiene for Supplementary Nutrition in ICDS states that the packaging materials of all food products should be such that it provides protection to prevent contamination and damage. Packaging material should be those which are permitted under the Food Safety and Standards Act & Regulations *viz*., containers made of plastic materials should conform to the Indian Standard Specifications. Further, packets should carry proper labelling and information such as batch number, date of packing, best before date, *etc.*

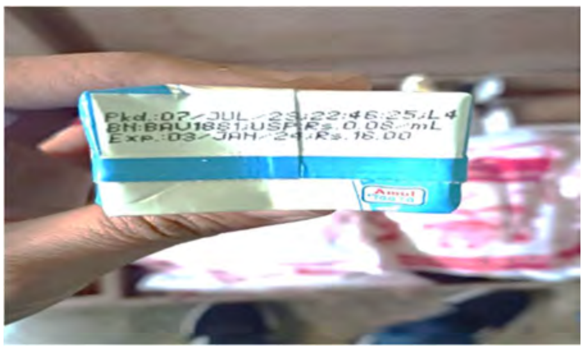
During Audit, it was observed that the packaging materials of HP Soya Noodles and Wheat Flour (*Atta*) supplied by M/s ART Industry, Zuangtui, Aizawl, were very poor. It was observed that packaging materials having permitted specifications were not used in packaging of food items supplied under SNP.

Labelling of basic information such as date of packing, date of expiry, best before date, *etc.*, were not available on the packages of Wheat Flour (*Atta*), HP Soya Noodle, Neumix EDFF and Groundnut. As a result, it was doubtful that the quality of the food items conformed to the prescribed specifications.

Torn package of HP Noodles.



Manufacture, expiry dates were not printed.



Expired toned milk at Hualngohmun AWC, Aibawk.

Torn wheat flour bag at Thingsen AWC, Siaha.

During Joint Physical Verification (February 2024) with the representatives of the Department, expired toned milk packets were found at Vengsang AWC-V and Kanan

AWC-II (Champhai ICDS Project), Leisenzo AWC-II under Khawbung ICDS Project), Hualngohmun AWC and Melriat AWC-II under Aibawk ICDS Project and food items were stored in torn packets in the AWCs.

The Director, WCD stated (6 May 2024) that, so far, no complaint or grievance was received regarding children getting sick due to consumption of expired milk/ food items with no labelling. However, the Department will take steps wherever necessary to improve the labelling of the food items.

The Department's response did not adequately address the risk that consumption of expired food items poses to the well-being of the beneficiaries. Proper food safety measures are essential, regardless of the absence of complaints as consumption of contaminated and substandard food items could have fatal consequences. The Department needs to proactively adopt food safety norms as prescribed.

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024), the Department stated that a Technical Committee was constituted in October 2024 to look into the matter to ensure supply of healthy food items. It was also stated that all suppliers are now instructed to provide a QR Code so that composition, manufacturing date, nutrition content could be tracked by AWWs and beneficiaries. It was further added that Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC), Circle Officer and CDPO shall take necessary checks to prevent deterioration of food items on monthly basis as per Scheme Guidelines of Mission Saksham Anganwadi and Poshan 2.0.

Non-compliance with prescribed packaging and labelling standards, along with the distribution of expired food items, poses serious health risks to ICDS beneficiaries. The Department's passive approach to food safety is unacceptable, as substandard and expired food can have fatal consequences.

Recommendation*: *The Department may stop procurement of items without proper labelling and those that do not fulfil the packaging standards. Food items may be distributed timely to prevent deterioration due to prolonged storage.

1.2.13 Usage of white sugar as sweetening agent

As per Paragraph 3.4 of Poshan 2.0 guidelines, white sugar should not be used and only jaggery should be used for sweetening.

During Joint Physical Verification (January to March 2024), it was found that all the 70 sampled AWCs were using white sugar as sweetening agent. Jaggery is considered a healthier alternative to sugar due to its less refined nature and retains some vitamins and minerals, such as iron, magnesium and potassium, which are usually lost during sugar refinement. Further, consuming white sugar since childhood could lead to obesity, high blood pressure and Type-2 diabetes which poses high risk of heart disease.

The Department stated that there was no industry/ entrepreneur that could supply jaggery on a large scale. However, there was a plan for procuring jaggery through fund allocated for Locally Available foods and the Department was on the look out for local suppliers for the item.

Conclusion:

The implementation of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in Mizoram suffered from systemic deficiencies in physical infrastructure, human resource availability, training capacity and financial management. Despite population growth, no new Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) were established post-2014, resulting in overburdened field functionaries and reduced outreach. A majority of AWCs lacked essential amenities such as adequate space, electricity, water, and sanitation, impairing service delivery. Acute shortages of key supervisory personnel and absence of adequate training infrastructure further impeded effective planning and monitoring. Moreover, persistent gaps in the release of funds against approved plans and non-adherence to prescribed packaging and food safety norms compromised the nutritional and health outcomes of beneficiaries. The absence of convergence in planning and lack of structured bottom-up inputs weakened the multi-sectoral approach envisaged under Poshan Abhiyaan. These deficiencies collectively undermined the objectives of ICDS in ensuring holistic early childhood care and nutrition.

Audit Objective-3:	***Whether effective awareness was created among the targeted beneficiaries under ICDS scheme.***

1.2.14 Information Education and Communication (IEC) Activities

Clause 4 of Annexure-III of the Broad Framework states that Advocacy and Education & Communication would be used for promoting early child development, maternal & child care and nutrition for creating an enabling environment by the ICDS Mission. With the aim of enhancing the community participation and ownership in ICDS, the following advocacy and IEC activities would be carried out to achieve this vision:

- Sensitisation and engagement of PRIs/ Mothers Committees/ SHGs on nutrition and child development;
- Social mobilisation campaign in partnership with Song and Drama Division of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting;
- Use of mass media for awareness generation;
- Awareness campaign/ village contact drives through local/ folk media;
- Inter-Personal Communication (IPC); and
- Voluntary action.

As per the scheme guidelines for National Nutrition Mission (Clause 4.4.2.3) and Poshan 2.0 (Annexure-II), the IEC activities would be carried out through print media, television, All India Radio and social media campaigns.

IEC activities were taken up through the following strategies/ approaches:

(a) Community-Based Approaches:

The Department stated that house-to-house surveys were carried out by AWWs to raise awareness among the target group. Monthly sessions, small group meetings of mothers/ Mahila Mandals, 'community home visits' and 'take home ration' days, *etc*., were being held periodically for imparting nutrition, health and hygiene education to the beneficiaries. Mothers' Committees in the villages played a commendable role in contributing funds, equipment, furniture, *etc.*, in the implementation of ICDS.

(b) Communication Channels:

To assist the AWWs in the dissemination of information and awareness of beneficiaries, audio-visual and electronic media were used, demonstrations were used to explain complex information in a simple and engaging way. The Department stated that programmes and talk shows were organised in Doordarshan Kendra and All India Radio stations. Nutrition Awareness Campaigns were broadcast in the form of media scroll and advertisements in local cable networks *viz*., Zonet and LPS. *Poshan Maah* and *Poshan Pakhwada* were organised every year in the month of September and March respectively. Activities such as awareness drive in print media, television, All India Radio and social media were undertaken under *Rashtriya Poshan Maah*. During *Poshan Pakhwada*, activities such as webinars for prevention and management of anaemia, cooking competitions for women, *etc*., were organised. Social media and digital platforms were leveraged to disseminate information and engage with younger audiences. Video clips were uploaded on a YouTube channel and Instagram handle *viz*., "***Poshan Abhiyan Mizoram***" for easy access by the beneficiaries.

Details of activities, however, were not maintained in the Poshan Tracker. Expenditure incurred on IEC activities during 2018-19 to 2022-23 is shown in **Table-1.15**.

Table- 1.15: Expenditure under IEC

(₹ in crore)

Sl. No.	Year	Expenditure incurred		
		Anganwadi Services	Poshan Abhiyan	Total
1.	2018-19	Record not available with the Directorate of WCD	1.50	1.50
2.	2019-20		1.52	1.52
3.	2020-21	0	0.90	0.90
4.	2021-22	0.10	0.20	0.30
5.	2022-23	1.17	1.76	2.93
Total		**1.27**	**5.88**	**7.15**

Source: Departmental reply

(c) Collaboration and Coordination:

The Directorate of WCD in collaboration with the NHM and NGOs played an important role in organising orientation programmes at grassroot level for workers such as teachers, AWWs, ASHA and Health Workers. IEC materials were disseminated across public and private health facilities. Awareness generation was also done through public announcement system and various social media platforms, *etc*. Moreover, nutrition and health education training comprised of basic health, nutrition and development, infant feeding practices, utilisation of health services, management of child diseases, family planning and environment sanitation were imparted to beneficiaries through monthly sessions, small group meetings of Mothers/ Mahila Mandals, community and home visits, THR days, *etc.*

Conclusion:

Although the Department undertook various IEC initiatives using mass media, digital platforms, and community-based approaches to enhance awareness under the ICDS Scheme, the absence of systematic documentation and data entry in the Poshan Tracker impeded the ability to evaluate outreach effectiveness. This shortcoming undermined evidence-based planning and course correction in communication strategy.

Recommendation: The Department may institute a robust documentation and reporting mechanism by mandating real-time entry of all IEC-related activities in the Poshan Tracker or a centralised MIS.

Audit Objective-4:	***Whether the delivery of services through ICDS was effective, efficient and economical in achieving the desired outcomes***

1.2.15 Under achievement of target

MoWCD issued (2 November 2018) guidelines for CAP in which targets were set to be covered under ICDS Mission by 2022 *i.e.*, during three years from 2019-20 to 2021-22. As per the guidelines, the ICDS Mission aimed to bring down stunting in children (0 to 6 years age group) from 38.40 *per cent* during 2015-16 to 25 *per cent* by 2022, to reduce anaemia among women and adolescent girls in the age group of 15-49 years and to reduce low birth weight. The primary goals of the POSHAN Abhiyan (ICDS Mission) as per paragraph 4.1 of the guidelines were as given in **Table-1.16.**

Table-1.16: Primary objective of POSHAN Abhiyan

Sl. No.	Objective	Target to be achieved by 2022 @ annual target from 2019-20
1.	Prevent and reduce **Stunting** in children (0-6 years)	By 6 *per cent* @ 2 *per cent* p.a.
2.	Prevent and reduce **Under-nutrition** in children (0-6 years)	By 6 *per cent* @ 2 *per cent* p.a.
3.	Reduce the prevalence of **Anaemia** among:	
	i. Children (6-59 months)	By 9 *per cent* @ 3 *per cent* p.a.
	ii. Women and Adolescent Girls (15-49 years)	By 9 *per cent* @ 3 *per cent* p.a.
4.	Reduce **Low Birth Weight**	By 6 *per cent* @ 2 *per cent* p.a.

Source: Guidelines for Convergence Action Plan

It was observed that achievements made during the period against the targets under Poshan Abhiyan (ICDS Mission) were not on record. The State had not prepared CAP for the year 2021-22 without which it could not be ascertained whether the State achieved the target by 2022 as per guidelines issued by MoWCD.

Further, achievements made during 2020-21 and 2022-23 were not shown in the State CAP. Indicators/ yardsticks to assess the outcome of the schemes were also not developed and there was no mechanism for monitoring the outcome against the yardsticks. Thus, targets *vis-à-vis* achievements during the period could not be analysed in audit. As per the State CAPs, the year-wise target and achievement in the State is given in **Table-1.17**.

Table-1.17: Targets and achievement in respect of the years for which the State CAPs were prepared.

Sl. No.	Objectives	2019-20		2020-21		2022-23	
		Target *(per cent)*	Actual *(per cent)*	Target *(per cent)*	Actual *(per cent)*	Target *(per cent)*	Actual *(per cent)*
1.	Reduce **Stunting** in children (0-6 years)	22.10	19.10	17.10	NA	25	NA
2.	Reduce **Under-nutrition** (Under-weight) children	6.00	4.00	2.00	NA	10	NA
3.	Reduce the prevalence of **Anaemia** among:						
	(i) Children (6 to 59 month)	10.30	7.30	4.30	NA	NA	NA
	(ii) Adolescent Girls	15.80	6.00	4.00	NA	30	NA
	(iii) PW&LM				NA	28	NA
4.	Reduce **Low Birth Weight**	0.00	5.00	3.00	NA	03	NA

Source: Departmental records

On comparison of State CAP 2019-20 with the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5, it was found that there were discrepancies between the two records on stunting, under-nutrition, anaemia, *etc*. The sources of data used in the State CAP were not available for verification. Thus, figures reported in the NFHS reports were considered in audit. On comparison of the NFHS-4 (2015-16) and NFHS-5 (2019-20) reports, it was found that prevalence of stunting, wasting and under nutrition among children and anaemia among women and children has increased in the State, as given in **Table-1.18**.

Table-1.18: Status as per NFHS reports

(Figures in *per cent*)

Sl. No.	Objectives	NFHS-4 *(2015-16)*	NFHS-5 *(2019-20)*
1.	**Stunting** in children (0-6 years)	28.10	28.90
2.	**Wasting** in children (0-6 years)	6.10	9.80
3.	**Underweight** in children (0-6 years)	12.00	12.70
4.	Malnutrition among women (15 to 49 years)	8.40	5.30
5.	**Anaemia**		
	1) Children (6-59 months)	19.30	46.40
	2) Non pregnant women (15-49 years)	24.70	34.80
	3) Pregnant women (15-49 years)	27.00	34.00

Source: NFHS Reports

Increase in the percentage of anaemic children and women in the State, despite the various measures taken up under various schemes such as ICDS, NHM, *etc*., was a cause of concern.

During the Exit Conference (17 December 2024), the Department stated that data for NFHS-5 was collected when Poshan 2.0 was in its initial stage of implementation. Progress made thereafter was reflected in the Poshan Tracker. However, data of the Poshan Tracker prior to 2023 was not reliable. It was further stated that anaemia testing kits were procured by the Department and mass testing was conducted wherein progress (reduction in anaemia cases) has been noticed.

The State could not track and document progress against POSHAN Abhiyan targets and nutrition indicators worsened despite multiple interventions. Data inconsistencies between State CAPs and NFHS reports raise concerns regarding transparency and the effectiveness of monitoring systems. The sharp rise in anaemia, stagnation in stunting, and increase in under nutrition highlight serious shortcomings in ICDS and NHM implementation.

Recommendation: The Department may identify the reasons for increase in prevalence of stunting, wasting and under nutrition among children and anaemia among women and children and address the issue on priority.

1.2.16 Conclusion

ICDS was implemented with heavy reliance on digital applications in which data played a key role for planning as well as monitoring of the scheme. The transition from ICDS-CAS to Poshan Tracker belatedly in April 2022, was poorly managed, leading to critical data loss and affecting the ability to monitor and evaluate ICDS implementation effectively. Persistent technical, connectivity and language-related challenges further hindered real-time data entry, impacting the accuracy of beneficiary tracking and service delivery. Non-redressal of these long-standing issues indicates a need for stronger digital governance and stakeholder support in ICDS implementation. Due to non-availability of data on implementation of the scheme during the period 2018-19 to 2022-23, proper analysis could not be carried out to assess the impact of the scheme on child nutrition and health outcomes in the State. There was shortage of staff at critical levels such as District Programme Officers (DPO), Child Development Project Officers (CDPO) and Circle officers, which affected the planning process *i.e.,* preparation of Annual Plans/ Annual Programme Implementation Plans (APIPs)/ Convergence Action Plans (CAPs) as well as monitoring and review of scheme implementation. Physical and Financial targets were not specified in the CAPs and funds were not provided in the Budgets of the respective line Departments. There was lack of basic facilities such as electric connection, drinking water connection, *etc*., noticed in the physically verified Anganwadi Centres (AWCs). Supply of supplementary nutrition under Supplementary Nutrition Programme was not in conformity with the prescribed Nutrition Norm and item-wise requirements per beneficiary per day for 300 days in a year were not worked out. Nutrition supplied were not based on the nutrition requirements of beneficiaries but on the basis of the availability of funds and the rates quoted by the suppliers. Audit noticed improper storage and labelling of food items in the AWCs.

The State did not have adequate training facilities at the State and District levels for strengthening the capacity building and training of field functionaries. The Poshan Tracker platform also required upgradation to incorporate mechanisms for effective monitoring and feedback.

There was an increase in the prevalence of stunting, wasting and under-nutrition among children, as well as anaemia among women and children and the State did not adequately monitor or effectively address these issues despite multiple interventions.

1.2.17 *Recommendations*

The State Government may-

(i) ***instruct the Department to strengthen data management and reporting systems by mandating real-time entry of service delivery data through the Poshan Tracker App, ensuring availability of compatible smartphones to all AWWs, conducting periodic data audits and integrating ICDS and NHM databases. The State Government may also instruct the Department to develop and implement a robust data governance strategy, including seamless migration of legacy data, offline-compatible data entry modules for remote areas, multilingual user interfaces, and periodic data validation protocols;***

(ii) ***instruct the Department to adopt a bottom-up planning approach in the preparation of Convergence Action Plans (CAP). The State Government may also instruct the Department to specify the Physical and Financial targets and earmarked budget for all the interventions by the respective line departments;***

(iii) ***ensure time-bound execution of infrastructure upgradation of the sanctioned 1,600 Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) into Saksham AWCs by leveraging convergence with concerned line departments;***

(iv) ***direct the Department to establish a structured and demand-based procurement and feeding mechanism by: (a) preparing annual Supplementary Nutritution Progrmme (SNP) supply plans based on updated beneficiary data and nutrition norms under Poshan 2.0, (b) ensuring advance release of funds linked to feeding calendars, (c) instituting buffer stock provisions to prevent disruptions, and (d) monitoring nutrient delivery against norms through monthly calorie and protein gap analysis at the project level;***

(v) ***take expeditious steps to operationalise the approved Anganwadi Workers Training Centre (AWTC) at Lunglei and establish a Middle Level Training Centre (MLTC) with prior approval of the Ministry of Women and Child Development; and***

(vi) ***instruct the Department to identify the reasons for increase in prevalence of stunting, wasting and under nutrition among children and anaemia among women and children and address the issue on priority.***

COMPLIANCE AUDIT PARAGRAPHS

HIGHER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

1.3 Irregular payments

The Department made an irregular salary payments of ₹ 3.88 crore to an Associate Professor and eight regular Professors who did not perform their official duty

As per FR 17(1) of the Fundamental Rules and Supplementary Rules (FRSR), Part-I (as adopted by Government of Mizoram) an officer shall begin to draw the pay and allowances attached to his tenure of a post with effect from the date when he assumes the duties of that post, and shall cease to draw them as soon as he ceases to discharge those duties, provided that an officer who is absent from duty without any authority shall not be entitled to any pay and allowances during the period of such absence.

A. Irregular Salary payment of ₹ 2.02 crore to an Associate Professor

Test check (November 2022) of records of the Principal, Government Kolasib College, Kolasib under Higher and Technical Education Department, Government of Mizoram revealed that the salary of a regular employee[18] was paid after deducting a certain sum and the deducted amount was paid to persons who were engaged to represent/ substitute the regular employee during the period of his unauthorised absence. As per information furnished (10 October 2024) by the Principal, Government Kolasib College, Kolasib a sum of ₹ 20,000[19], ₹ 30,000[20] and ₹ 50,000[21] were deducted and paid to the substitutes each month from the net salary of the regular employee from March 2017 to July 2024 (except for the month of February & March 2019) as detailed in ***Appendix-1.5.*** However, there was no record to indicate that the matter was reported to the higher authority by the College administration and there was no authorisation of the competent authority for engagement of the substitutes during the period of unauthorised absence. Thus, the regular employee was paid his salary even though he did not perform his duty in person and without any competent authorisation for his absence from duty to warrant the payment of his salary. Thus, the expenditure of ₹ 2.02 crore on the gross salary of the employee who did not perform his official duty was in contravention of FR 17(1) of FRSR and irregular.

Further, as can be seen in ***Appendix-1.5***, an amount of ₹ 25.80 lakh was paid out of the amount deducted from the salary of the Associate Professor to the persons who were not regular employees but who were hired to represent/ substitute the Associate Professor without any competent authorisation during the same period *i.e.*, from March 2017 to July 2024.

Thus, payment of salary to the Associate Professor who was on unauthorised absence and paying portions of his salary to persons hired as substitutes is in blatant violation of the principle of 'No work, No Pay' which is embodied under FR 17(1) of FRSR as 'an officer

[18] Shri D. Purkayastha, Associate Professor

[19] Paid to Smt. Jacqueline Lalthlengliani, MSc (Chemistry) from March 2017 to January 2019

[20] Paid to Smt. Lalrammawii, MSc (Chemistry) from April 2019 to September 2023

[21] Paid to Shri Mathew G. Lalzawmliana from October 2023 to July 2024

who is absent from duty without any authority shall not be entitled to any pay and allowances during the period of such absence'.

The matter was reported to the Department and Government in July 2024 and the State Government while agreeing to the Audit observation stated (14 October 2024) that preliminary inquiry was conducted by the Joint Director (Administration), Higher and Technical Education on 18 September 2024. It was also stated that as per the inquiry report, proxy engagement was resorted to in good faith for the benefit of the students of the Chemistry Department, as the Associate Professor who had an accident on 02 February 2001 with a head injury could not perform his official duties regularly due to his health problem. Ultimately, engagement of proxy was arranged collectively on a verbal decision of the College Principal and the College Executive Committee without obtaining permission from the authority. The Government further stated that due to the collective decision of the previous and present Principals and the College Executive Committee, fixation of responsibility and initiating disciplinary proceedings against a particular Principal or members of the College Executive Committee appears not feasible. It was further stated that as a corrective measure the monthly salary of the Associate Professor was credited directly into his account and his voluntary retirement is under process at the Government level.

The reply of the Government is, however, not tenable as the action of the College is in violation of the extant Rules and tantamount to provision of undue benefit to the Associate Professor who could have addressed his condition through other legally available means. Further, the reply was silent on the action taken to recover the irregular payment of his salary and whether the Associate Professor has resumed his official duty to warrant the direct crediting of his monthly salary into his Bank Account.

B. Irregular salary payment of ₹ 1.86 crore to eight regular Professors

A review was carried out of the records of the office of the Principal, Government Kolasib College, Kolasib. The review revealed discrepancies of salary payments to eight regular Professors for the period from July 2019 to June 2022 between the net payable amounts recorded in the acquittance roll and the actual amounts disbursed as per the bank payment statements/ schedules. These short payments were made without any documented justification.

In response, the Principal, Government Kolasib College stated (27 November 2024) that the short payment was due to deduction made at the rate of ₹ 15,000 per month from the salaries in respect of six Professors. Salaries of the other two Professors were deducted at the rate of ₹ 20,000 per month for their substitutes. Details of the substitutes was not provided to Audit. It was further stated that the amount deducted from their salaries were paid to his/ her substitutes in full every month. It was also added that the substitutes were paid in cash prior to August 2021. So, it can be concluded that the eight Professors drew gross salary of ₹ 1.86 crore without performing their duties and without any authorised leave as detailed in ***Appendix-1.6***. However, there was no record of authorisation from any higher authority for the College Administration to engage substitutes, deduct the salaries of the eight Professors and make payment from the same to the substitutes.

A review of records revealed that the College Administration irregularly disbursed salary payments totalling ₹ 14.76 lakh to 11 individuals designated as Assistant Professors through their bank accounts, despite the fact that their names were not found in the College's official employment records or payroll. These payments were made for varying periods between August 2021 and October 2022 without any documented justification as detailed in ***Appendix-1.7***.

On this being pointed out, the College Administration stated (November 2022) in the exit conference that payment of salaries to the individuals who were not on the payroll were made based on the substitution arrangement made by the College against Professors who were on leave in the interest of the College and Students. It was, however, further stated that authorisation of the competent authority for engagement of the substitutes as well as sanction of leave were not obtained since no such leave was applied to the competent authority by the regular Professors. It was also stated that the amounts deducted from the salaries of the Professors engaging substitutes were transferred to the College Main Account and thereafter transferred to the bank account of the substitutes without any bill/ voucher or challan.

The replies indicates that the College Administration deducted salaries from regular Professors who were absent without authorised leave and had not discharged their official duties. As the deducted amounts were first credited to the College's Main Account, it is evident that the engagement of substitutes was carried out with the full knowledge of the administration. However, the Audit could not establish a direct one-to-one correlation between the 11 individuals engaged as Assistant Professors and the absent regular Professors. Additionally, due to the non-availability of records, complete details regarding the engagement of substitutes for each Professor on unauthorised absence could not be verified. Furthermore, the specific amounts deducted for engaging substitutes could not be ascertained, as the deductions were not distinctly recorded.

The matter was reported to the Department and Government in September 2024. The State Government, while agreeing with the Audit observation stated (18 October 2024) that, with the intention to institute appropriate disciplinary action, show cause notices had been issued to 10 officials including two retired officials[22] to seek their explanation as to why the Government should not initiate action to recover the salaries paid to them without performing their official duties, for remaining on unauthorised leave and for engaging substitutes. On further enquiry, the State Government, while providing a copy of the notices issued (18 October 2024) to 10 officials and their respective explanation/ reply, stated (02 December 2024) that the case is being processed in the Department for further necessary action. It was also intimated (12 December 2024) that the Government had decided to initiate Disciplinary Proceedings against the then two Principals (retired) of the College and the eight regular Professors under Rule 14 (procedure for imposing major penalties) of the Central Civil Service (Classification, Conduct and Appeal) Rules, 1965. However, the progress of the Disciplinary Proceedings has not been intimated (May 2025).

[22] Dr C. Lalmuankima, acting Principal during the period from 01 July 2017 to 31 July 2021 and Pu T. Zahmingliana, acting Principal during the period from 01 August 2021 to 30 May 2024

The findings highlight serious financial mismanagement within the College, including unauthorised salary payments, irregular deductions, and lack of documentation. This indicates weak internal controls in payroll management and fund utilisation.

The engagement of substitutes and unauthorised salary payments to them violated government rules governing service conditions, salary disbursement, and leave sanctions. The initiation of disciplinary proceedings suggests that the implicated officials could face recovery of salaries, penalties, or even termination from service. This case underscores the need for a systemic audit of payroll and Human Resource practices across educational institutions in Mizoram.

Recommendations:

(i) The Department/ State Government should initiate action to recover the salaries paid to the employees who did not perform their official duties and were on unauthorised absence;

(ii) The Department/ State Government should initiate appropriate disciplinary action against defaulting officials in a timely manner; and

(iii) The College should implement a robust system for monitoring attendance, leave record and payroll management. It should ensure that all leave applications and approvals are documented and maintained.

SCHOOL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

1.4 Irregular payment

The Department made irregular salary payment of ₹ 1.28 crore to three employees who did not perform their official duty

As per FR 17(1) of the Fundamental Rules and Supplementary Rules (FRSR), Part-I (as adopted by the Government of Mizoram) an officer shall begin to draw the pay and allowances attached to his tenure in a post with effect from the date when he assumes his duties in that post, and shall cease to draw them as soon as he ceases to discharge those duties. The rules provide that an officer who is absent from duty without any authority shall not be entitled to any pay and allowances during the period of such absence.

Test check (March 2024) of the records of the Director, School Education, Aizawl under the School Education Department, Government of Mizoram revealed that salaries were paid to three regular employees, who did not perform their official duties, being on unauthorised absence during the period from January 2016 to September 2024. The details of the employees and the period of unauthorised absence are given in the **Table - 1.19**.

Table-1.19: Details of Government Employees drawing their salaries while on unauthorised absence

Sl. No.	Name of the Government Employees and their place of posting	Designation and Pay level	Unauthorised absence
1.	Asem Labanga Singh[23], Government Zohmun High School, Zohmun	Teacher (level-10)	From 01-01-2016 to 28-08-2024
2.	Thoudam Jadumani Singh[24], Government Sawleng High School, Sawleng	Teacher (level-10)	From 15-05-2023 to 20-09-2024
3.	Thiyam Ibochou Singh[25], Government Higher Secondary School, Siaha	Lecturer (level-11)	From 01-06-2023 to 11-04-2024

Source: Departmental records

It was also observed that proxies/ substitutes were engaged and increments were awarded in the month of July every year during the period of unauthorised absence.

The Director, School Education stated (9 December 2024) that the State Government notified (19 June 2024) an Office Memorandum (OM) directing all Government employees engaging proxies/ substitutes to return to their respective posts within a period of 30 days. The notification directed that all Government servants failing to return to duty within the stipulated period would be treated as absence without authorisation. The Director further stated that in the case of Shri Asem Labanga Singh who joined duty on 29 August 2024, the State Government decided (7 November 2024) to adjust the period from the date of issue of the OM up to the date of joining duty with Earned Leaved. On the other hand, in the case of Shri Thiyam Ibochou Singh, who joined duty on 12 April 2024 (prior to the OM notification), no leave was sanctioned.

The District Education Officer, Aizawl also stated (12 March 2025) that Earned Leave of 236 days and 265 days was sanctioned to Shri Asem Labanga Singh (joined duty on 29 August 2024) and Shri Thoudam Jadumani Singh, (joined duty on 23 September 2024) respectively. However, no action had been taken regarding the period of unauthorised absence not covered by the sanctioned leave.

Table-1.20 provides details of employees for whom no leave was sanctioned to regularise their period of unauthorised absence:

[23] Shri Lalthangmawia, Zohmun is engaged to represent/ substitute him at the rate of ₹ 20,000 per month. However, effective date of engagement and payment details not available

[24] Shri Lalbiaknunga is engaged to represent/ substitute him since 15 May 2023. However, rate of remuneration and payment details not available

[25] Smt. Vanlalruati, is engaged to represent/ substitute him at the rate of ₹ 25,000 per month. However, effective date of engagement and payment details not available

Table-1.20: Statement showing Government Employees drawing their salaries while on unauthorised absence

(Amount in ₹)

Sl. No.	Name of the Government Employees and their place of posting	Designation and Pay level	Period of Unauthorised absence between	Number of days during unauthorised absence	Number of days Leave granted (calculated from first day of unauthorised absence)	Number of days not covered by leave	Number of completed Months and days not covered by Leave	Gross salary drawn during unauthorised absence from duty[26]
1.	Asem Labanga Singh[27], Government Zohmun High School, Zohmun	Teacher (level-10)	01.01.2016 and 28.08.2024	3,163	236 (01.01.2016 to 23.08.2016 = 236 days)	2,927	96 months 5 days from 24.08.2016 to 28.08.2024	1,01,41,990
2.	Thoudam Jadumani Singh[28], Government Sawleng High School, Sawleng	Teacher (level-10)	15.05.2023 and 20.09.2024	495	265 (15.05.2023 to 03.02.2024 =265 days)	230	7 months 17 days from 04.02.2024 to 20.09.2024[29]	10,23,155
3.	Thiyam Ibochou Singh[30], Government Higher Secondary School, Siaha	Lecturer (level-11)	01.06.2023 and 11.04.2024	316	--	316	10 months 11 days from 01.06.2023 to 11.04.2024	15,91,339
Total				**3,974**	**501**	**3,473**		**1,27,56,484**

Source: Departmental records

Thus, three employees received regular salary payments despite not performing any official duties in person and without obtaining formal authorisation for their absence from the competent authority. Consequently, the expenditure of ₹ 1.28 crore incurred on their gross salaries was irregular and in contravention of Fundamental Rule 17(1) of the Fundamental Rules and Supplementary Rules (FRSR).

The matter was referred to the Government (10 March 2025) for clarification regarding the treatment of the period of these employees' unauthorised absence. The Government in its response (24 March 2025) stated that a final decision had not been taken. It was therefore evident that no action had been taken to recover the pay and allowances irregularly disbursed to the three employees during their unauthorised absence.

Despite being aware of the irregularity, the Department did not take timely corrective action or initiate recovery of the irregular payments. The Government, as of March 2025, had not taken a final decision, reflecting administrative inaction.

Further, the continuation of salary payments over multiple years without verification of physical attendance or leave sanction points to serious lapses in internal controls, payroll

[26] Fraction of the month is calculated by dividing the gross salary of the month by the number of days in that month and by multiplying the number of days on unauthorised absence

[27] Shri Lalthangmawia, Zohmun was engaged to represent/ substitute him at the rate of ₹ 20,000 per month. However, effective date of engagement and payment details not available

[28] Shri Lalbiaknunga was engaged to represent/ substitute him since 15 May 2023. However, rate of remuneration and payment details not available

[29] Saturday and Sunday on 21 and 22 September 2024 were excluded

[30] Smt. Vanlalruati, was engaged to represent/ substitute him at the rate of ₹ 25,000 per month. However, effective date of engagement and payment details not available

validation, and oversight by the Directorate of School Education and subordinate offices. Annual increments were granted during the period of unauthorised absence, aggravating the financial irregularity and further violating service rules.

Thus, the payment of salaries to the tune of ₹ 1.28 crore to three employees who were on unauthorised absence and were engaging other individuals as their substitutes was in blatant violation of the principle of 'No work, No Pay' which is embodied under FR 17(1) of FRSR as 'an officer who is absent from duty without any authority shall not be entitled to any pay and allowances during the period of such absence'.

Recommendation: The Department/ Government should initiate action to recover salaries paid to the employees for the period of their unauthorised absence.

SCHOOL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

1.5 Excess payment

Due to negligence, the State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha made excess payment of ₹ 1.50 crore against supplier's bill for free textbooks

As per Rule 13 of Central Government Account (Receipts and Payments) Rule, 1983 (adopted by the Mizoram Government), the following instructions shall be observed by all Government officers who are required to (a) receive Government dues and handle cash or (b) perform the functions of drawing and disbursing officers (with or without cheque drawing powers), or both:

- Every such officer (referred to in this Rule as the Head of the Office) should maintain a cashbook;
- All monetary transactions should be entered in the cash book as soon as they occur and attested by the Head of the Office in token of check; and
- The cash book should be closed regularly and completely checked. The Head of the Office should verify the totalling of the cash book or have this done by some responsible subordinate other than the writer of the cash book and initial it as correct.

The Public Financial Management System (PFMS) provides various stages of checks in bill processing by cheque Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDO) for e-payment in electronic/ digital payment. The DDO Maker of the bill feeds the information/ data into the system and then forwarded to the DDO Checker from where the bills move on to the PAO system. The bill passes through four layers in the PAO system before it is finally passed. From the Dealing Hand (DH), it moves to the AAO and then to the DDO (Admin) and finally digitally signed by the DDO (Admin)/ DDO Checker.

Test check (May 2024) of records of the State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha[31], Mizoram under School Education Department revealed that the State Project Director, on the advice of the State Council of Educational Research and Training, placed (16 March 2022) Purchase/ Supply Order for textbooks, to be provided to the students as free distribution for the academic year 2022-23, at a total cost of ₹ 16.99 lakh with

[31] Mizoram School Education Mission Society

M/s Bhabani Offset and Imaging System Pvt. Ltd., Guwahati, Assam. Scrutiny of records revealed that the firm submitted (28 June 2022) a supply bill for ₹ 16.99 lakh for supply of 37,042 textbooks of five[32] different Subjects. The State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha sanctioned (05 July 2022) ₹ 16.99 lakh debitable to the account head of free textbook for the year 2021-22 and payable to the firm's representative[33] through her personal Bank Account No. xxxxxxxxxx2975 by bank transfer. As per the entry made electronically in the cash book, ₹ 16.99 lakh was debited on 14 July 2022 *i.e.*, seven days prior to the date of actual payment of 21 July 2022.

Further scrutiny revealed that the Addl. State Project Director sent (20 July 2022) payment advice to the State Bank of India, Dawrpui Branch through PFMS for payment of ₹ 166.99 lakh instead of the sanctioned amount of ₹ 16.99 lakh, purportedly due to clerical error. The amount was debited on 21 July 2022 resulting in excess payment of ₹ 1.50 crore (₹ 1.67 crore - ₹ 0.17 crore).

The Society initiated corrective action to recover the excess payment of ₹ 1.50 crore after almost three months on 18 October 2022 when the Finance Controller wrote (18 October 2022) to Bandhan Bank, Aizawl Branch to freeze/ hold the Bank Account of the payee, with a copy to the account holder - the firm's representative for information.

The next formal effort to recover the money was made only after 18 months when the Society informed (01 May 2024) the firm's representative that since the money had not been refunded despite continuous verbal communication, the latter was 'informed' to refund the excess payment of ₹ 1.50 crore along with the bank interest accrued thereon, within one week's time, failing which, necessary legal action would be taken. It was further stated that non-compliance could also entail blacklisting of the firm from all future purchase or printing works of school textbooks in Mizoram.

It is clearly evident that even though the internal control system was in place, negligence on the part of the concerned officials resulted in non-detection of a 'clerical error' that led to excess payment of ₹ 1.50 crore. It is also evident that there was negligence in recovering the money given that the first effort to recover the money was made almost three months after the transaction date and the next effort was made 18 months after the first. Further, the fact that the Society merely forwarded to the payee a copy of the first letter to the bank, instead of asking her to refund the excess payment, is another evidence of negligence on the part of the Society officials in safeguarding the interests of the Society.

On this being pointed out, the State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, while agreeing to the Audit observation, stated (22 May 2024) in the exit meeting that necessary legal action will be initiated immediately against the firm's representative. However, even First Information Report (FIR), has not been filed against the defaulting supplier or the official concerned as of September 2024.

Audit observed that due to weak internal control mechanisms such as errors in data entry and verification, inadequate review of payment advice and non-review and

[32] Math Magic 2 (MZ), Math Magic 3 (MZ), Jyotirmay 6, Jyotirmay 7 and Jyotirmay 8

[33] Smt. C. Lalhmangaihtluangi, Armed Veng, Aizawl

non-reconciliation of transactions in a timely manner, there was a delay in detecting the error and pursuing recovery of the money. Moreover, since the Society did not promptly communicate the financial discrepancies to the responsible parties and did not carry out immediate corrective recovery actions, the chances of recovery remain doubtful.

The matter was reported to the Society, Department and Government in September 2024 and the State Government while agreeing with the Audit observation stated (07 October 2024) that the excess payment was detected immediately after the day of making payment as the PFMS reflected the debit amount on the following day and the firm was promptly informed verbally. It was also stated that the Society desired to make good the excess payment without any formal letter as the firm was the existing supplier of School textbooks during that year and was in good terms with the Society. Since the excess payment was not realised, the Society issued (23 September 2024) a legal notice to the firm's representative through the Standing Counsel of the Society. In the legal notice, the firm's representative was informed to refund the excess payment of ₹ 1.50 crore along with interest within a period of 15 days. It was also stated that in case of non-compliance with the legal notice, a lawsuit would be instituted in a court of law and the firm's representative would be made liable to pay all the legal expenses incurred by the Society in this regard.

However, the progress of the legal notice was not intimated to Audit. Further, the reply that the Society desired to make good the excess payment without any formal letter as the firm was the existing supplier of school textbooks and the firm was in good terms with the Society was untenable in view of the fact that the Society had forfeited the firm's Security Deposit of ₹ 10.96 lakh for the year 2021-22 for non-completion of supply of textbooks. The Society had also recommended to the State Council of Educational Research and Training for blacklisting of the firm from future printing works on 14 February 2022. Therefore, the claim that the firm was in good terms with the Society in July 2022, barely a few months after recommending for the blacklisting of the firm is questionable and defies logic. The inaction on the part of the Society is thus due to negligence of the Society's Officers.

Thus, due to negligence in the processing of the bill for payment of the cost of school textbooks, the State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, Mizoram made excess payment of ₹ 1.50 crore.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION DEPARTMENT

1.6 Idle expenditure

The Department extended undue favour to the Consultant/ Contractor in violation of extant Rules and subsequently appropriated liability to pay excess expenditure of ₹ 0.99 crore in the construction of Multi-Level Car Parking cum Multi-Utility Centre at Zodin, Aizawl. Further, delay in completion of the project has rendered the entire expenditure of ₹ 8.06 crore idle

As per Clause-1.3 of the Government of Mizoram, Finance Department's Office Memorandum dated 06 December 2010, any Department desirous of engaging Consultants shall mandatorily obtain prior permission from Finance Department *i.e.*, before going ahead with any part of the work(s) for which the Consultant is to be engaged and no ex-post facto permission will be granted. Also, as per Clause-4 of the Finance Department's Notification dated 08 September 2016, a firm selected for preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) will not be allowed to execute and monitor the works for the DPR prepared by them, *i.e.*, on Turnkey or Design-Build Consultant (DBC) basis.

Test check (November-December 2021) of records of the Director, Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation (UD&PA) Department revealed that Government of Mizoram, UD&PA Department accorded (12 October 2017) administrative approval and expenditure sanction of ₹ 25 crore for construction of Multi-Level Car Parking cum Multi-Utility Centre at Zodin, Aizawl under New Economic Development Programme (NEDP) of the State during 2017-18. In the execution of the project, the following violations and shortcomings were observed:

(a) Undue favour extended to the Consultant/ Contractor

Scrutiny of records revealed that the Director, UD&PA prepared and forwarded (15 March 2016) the guidelines for a competition of Preliminary Architectural Design for construction of Multi-Level Car Parking cum Multi-Utility Centre at Zodin Complex, Aizawl to the State Government for information and necessary action. As per the guidelines, bona fide students of a teaching institution recognised by the Council of Architecture, architects and firms who are registered with the Council of Architecture under the Architects Act, 1972 were eligible for the competition for a cash prize of ₹ One lakh for the winner. There was no provision for subsequent engagement of the winner as Consultant/ Contractor or whatsoever. The Department subsequently issued (25 April 2016) a press notice inviting all architects within Mizoram to participate in the competition. Six parties took part in the competition and M/s JMT Architects, Zarkawt, Aizawl was declared (08 July 2016) the winner of the competition of the Preliminary Architectural Design for construction of Multi-Level Car Parking cum Multi-Utility Centre at Zodin Complex, Aizawl.

Thereafter, the Department, without inviting any Expression of Interest from any intending Consultant and without obtaining prior permission as per Finance Department's Office Memorandum dated 06 December 2010, signed (11 September 2017) a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the winner of the competition of the Preliminary Architectural Design *i.e.*, M/s JMT Architects as Consultant to prepare the DPR for the construction of a Multi-Level Parking cum Multi Utility Centre at Zodin, Aizawl and to provide consultancy service for an amount of ₹ 45.00 lakh. The scope of work included preparation of design; site evaluation, analysis; design & site development; structural design; sanitary, plumbing, drainage, water supply and sewerage design; Electrical, electronic, communication systems and design; heating, ventilation & air conditioning design and other mechanical system; elevators, escalators, *etc.,* fire detection, Fire protection and Security systems *etc.;* and periodic inspection and evaluation of construction works.

Additionally, the Department again without inviting tender and in violation of Finance Department's Notification dated 08 September 2016, also issued (21 September 2018) a work order to the Consultant firm to execute the work of installation of the robotic car parking system for an amount of ₹ 8.95 crore as Contractor. An agreement was signed (25 September 2018) between the Department and firm.

This action of the Department in awarding the Consultancy project as well as the project for installation of the robotic car parking system violated the Finance Department's Office Memorandum dated 06 December 2010 and Notification dated 08 September 2016 and thus tantamount to extension of undue favour to the Consultant/ Contractor.

(b) Liability to pay an excess expenditure of ₹ 0.99 crore in the installation of robotic car parking

Scrutiny of records further revealed that the Consultant firm M/s JMT Architects prepared the DPR for installation of robotic car lifts at the rate of ₹ 7.96 lakh per car for parking 113 cars worth ₹ 8.99 crore. Also, the Consultant requested (27 July 2018) the Department to issue work order for installation of fully automated car parking system manufactured by M/s Precision Automation & Robotics India Ltd. (PARI), Maharashtra. Accordingly, the Department issued (21 September 2018) the work order to the firm to complete the work as per design within 36 months from the issue of the work order *i.e.,* to be completed by 21 September 2021. An agreement was signed (25 September 2018) between the Department and the firm M/s JMT Architects for the installation of robotic car parking system for ₹ 8.95 crore without specifying the rate and the number of parking units to be installed.

Consequently, the firm M/s JMT Architects purchased (10 June 2019) 100 numbers of mechanical parking equipment at a higher rate of ₹ 8.95 lakh per parking equipment worth ₹ 8.95 crore from M/s Tianjin Zhengda General Steel Pipe Technology Co. Ltd, Tianjin, China instead of 113 numbers of robotic car parking system manufactured by PARI, without any approval for change in the quantity of the car parking system and for a different model/ make of the parking equipment from a different vendor/ manufacturer. There was no record on why the consultant purchased 100 parking equipment instead of their DPR's quantity of 113 and the reason for purchasing this equipment from the Chinese firm instead of from the approved Indian firm - PARI. The Department stated (25 November 2024) that M/s JMT Architects submitted a revised/ final DPR on 10 February 2022 to the Department incorporating the robotic car parking at ₹ 8.95 lakh per car for 100 cars worth ₹ 8.95 crore *i.e.*, after a lapse of more than three years and four months from the date of issue of the work order, after more than two years eight months from the date of purchase of the equipment and more than four months from the stipulated date of completion. *Ex-post-facto* approval of the revised/ final DPR was accorded belatedly by the State Government on 3 August 2022 *i.e.*, after three years one month from the date of purchase resulting in a liability to pay excess expenditure of ₹ 0.99 crore (₹ 8.95 lakh *minus* ₹ 7.96 lakh = ₹ 99,000 x 100).

(c) Idle expenditure of ₹ 8.06 crore in the installation of robotic car parking

Clause-2.11 of the agreement signed (25 September 2018) between the Department and M/s JMT Architects provides that installation of robotic car parking system should be carried out within three to four months after receiving the materials at site and the project is to be completed as per design within 36 months from the date of issue of work order *i.e.*, by 21 September 2021.

The Department awarded a contract for the installation of a robotic car parking system for 100 cars, with a total payable amount of ₹ 8.95 crore. As of November 2024, payments amounting to ₹ 8.06 crore had been released to the contractor, after accounting for statutory deductions such as Performance Guarantee, Security Deposit, and GST Deduction at Source, leaving an outstanding liability of ₹ 0.89 crore.

According to the Department's response (11 December 2024), the materials and equipment for the robotic car parking system were delivered to the site in June 2019, and the physical installation was completed on 29 June 2024. However, the system remains untested and uncommissioned as of November 2024 due to the non-completion of power supply arrangements, including the installation of a transformer. This delay, attributed to inadequate coordination and deficient planning by the Department, has resulted in the non-utilisation of the asset for more than five years and five months since procurement and over three years and two months beyond the stipulated completion date of 21 September 2021. Consequently, the entire expenditure of ₹ 8.06 crore remains unproductive, reflecting weaknesses in project planning and execution.

The matter was reported to the Department and the Government in December 2024. The Government, while agreeing to the Audit observations, stated (17 January 2025) that the staff of the Department concerned had inadvertently submitted the draft DPR to Audit Party in which the cost of robotic car lift was ₹ 7.96 lakh per car for parking 113 cars. It was further stated that as per the approved and final DPR, the cost of robotic car lift is ₹ 8.95 lakh per car for parking 100 cars and there was no excess expenditure in the installation of robotic car parking.

The reply of the Government is not tenable as the DPR produced to Audit was the one based on which the work was executed and thus was not just a 'draft' DPR. The revised DPR was submitted by the Consultant/ Contractor only in February 2022 *i.e.*, two months after Audit and four months after the scheduled completion date. Further, obtaining *ex post facto* approval belatedly from the Government in August 2022, after three years and one month from the date of procurement of the parking equipment, only confirmed that the DPR provided to Audit was the valid DPR based on which the work was executed.

Thus, audit observed violation of government regulations in consultant engagement and project execution (i) in the engagement M/s JMT Architects as a Consultant; (ii) in the award of the contract for installation of the robotic car parking system to the same firm; and (iii) in the award of both consultancy services (₹ 45.00 lakh) and execution of the robotic parking system (₹ 8.95 crore) to the same entity without open competition.

The Department incurred excess expenditure of ₹ 0.99 crore due to cost escalation as the initial DPR prepared by the Consultant specified a cost of ₹ 7.96 lakh per robotic car lift for 113 cars (₹ 8.99 crore). However, the firm was later awarded a contract for ₹ 8.95 crore for only 100 car lifts, increasing the unit cost to ₹ 8.95 lakh. The *ex post facto* approval to the revised DPR obtained belatedly in August 2022 does not justify the additional cost burden, confirming an avoidable excess expenditure of ₹ 0.99 crore.

The delay of over five years from procurement and the Multi-Level Car Parking cum Multi-Utility Centre remaining to be commissioned reflects serious deficiencies in project planning and coordination. This has rendered the expenditure of ₹ 8.06 crore idle.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

1.7 Irregular expenditure

The Department incurred an irregular expenditure of ₹ Six crore on unapproved technical designs, drawings, estimates, *etc*. and did not execute the approved items of work valued at ₹1.56 crore

Rule 161 of the General Financial Rules, 2017, (as adopted by the Government of Mizoram) provides that subject to exceptions incorporated under Rule 154, 155, 162 and 166, invitation to tenders by advertisement should be used for procurement of goods of estimated value of ₹ 25 lakh and above. An organisation having its own website should also publish all its advertised tender enquiries on the website. Also, Clause 11 of the Central Public Works Department's General Conditions of Contract (GCC), 2019 stipulates that the contractor shall execute the whole and every part of the work in the most substantial and workmanlike manner both as regards materials and otherwise in every respect in strict accordance with the specifications and conform exactly, fully and faithfully to the design and drawings. Further, as per Clause 1.3 of the Government of Mizoram, Finance Department's Office Memorandum dated 06 December 2010 regarding the guidelines for engagement of consultants, any Department desirous of engaging consultants shall mandatorily obtain prior permission from the Finance Department *i.e.,* before going ahead with any part of the work(s) for which the consultant is to be engaged and no *ex-post-facto* permission will be granted for consultancy services rendered without the prior approval.

Test check (October 2023) of the records of the Director, Local Administration Department (LAD) revealed that the Chief Engineer (Buildings), Mizoram Public Works Department (MPWD) approved (10 September 2018) the detailed project report (DPR) based on MPWD's Schedule of Rate (SoR), 2013 for the construction of the Directorate office building, LAD for ₹ Six crore. LAD accorded Administrative Approval (05 October 2018) and Expenditure Sanction (01 February 2019) for ₹ Six crore for the construction of Directorate office building under the New Economic Development Policy of the State for the year 2018-19 at the then New Secretariat Complex now renamed as Mizoram New Capital Complex.

Audit observed the following violations in execution of the project:

(a) Irregular execution of works without an open tender and without obtaining prior approval from the Finance Department

As observed in the agenda note for the State Level Consultancy Evaluation Committee (SLCEC) meeting scheduled on 23 May 2019 for selection of consultancy firm for construction of directorate office building, the Department directly invited (3 April 2019) restricted tender from the State-empanelled firms. This was done without inviting any Expression of Interest and without obtaining prior approval from the Finance Department.

It was further observed that the Department recommended (16 April 2019) the selection of a private firm M/s Zothan Consultancy Services, Luangmual, Aizawl, as their financial bid of ₹ Six crore was the lowest amongst three valid financial bids. Thereafter, the Executive Engineer (LAD) issued the work order on 31 July 2019 at ₹ Six crore. The deed of agreement was signed on 6 August 2019 for construction of the Directorate office building of LAD. The contractor M/s Zothan Consultancy Services, Luangmual, Aizawl commenced the work on 15 December 2019 and completed it on 15 September 2023 at a cost of ₹ Six crore.

The construction of the Directorate office building for the LAD, Mizoram, was executed in contravention of key financial and procedural rules, resulting in non-compliance with mandated norms for public procurement and consultancy engagement. Despite the estimated project cost of ₹ Six crore, the Department bypassed the required open tendering process and directly invited restricted tenders from empanelled firms, thereby violating Rule 161 of the General Financial Rules, 2017, which stipulates open advertisement-based tendering for procurements above ₹ 25 lakh.

Furthermore, the Department did not obtain prior approval from the Finance Department before engaging consultancy services, contrary to Clause 1.3 of the State Finance Department's Office Memorandum dated 6 December 2010. This not only undermined transparency and competitive bidding but also weakened financial oversight, setting a precedent for procedural irregularities in high-value public works.

(b) Non-construction of the approved works worth ₹ 1.56 crore

Scrutiny of records further revealed that surprisingly, the Executive Engineer, LAD issued (31 July 2019) a work order for the construction of the Directorate office building at ₹ Six crore as per MPWD SoR 2019[34] instead of the approved MPWD SoR 2013. This work order, therefore, invalidated the DPR, structural/ technical designs, drawings, estimates, *etc.,* approved by Chief Engineer (Buildings), MPWD. Further, the deed of agreement signed (6 August 2019) did not provide the scope of work, contract amount and the MPWD SoR to be used. It is merely stated in Clause 2.2 of the agreement that the Executing agency shall execute the works at the approved cost as per the approved technical designs and drawings. Further, as per Clause 2.11 of the agreement, the Executing agency shall be fully responsible for all acts or omissions committed in the name of the agency.

As per the approved DPR estimate, the Directorate office building was to be constructed consisting of six stories *i.e.*, basement[35]-1, ground, first to fourth/ terrace floors and a

[34] SOR 2019 was effective from 1 February 2019

[35] Basement in Mizoram generally refers to the floors of a building which are below road level (road in front of the building)

provision of passenger lift with a capacity of eight persons. Further, as per the structural drawing, the construction of the building was to be started from Basement-4.

Scrutiny of records, however, revealed that in violation of Clause 2.2 of the agreement, the contractor prepared a revised estimate of ₹ Six crore (without drawings) based on SoR (2019), as per which the building was to be constructed for six stories starting from basement-3 to basement-1, ground and first to second floors. The contractor's revised estimate did not provide for the construction of the third & fourth floors and the passenger lift with a capacity of eight persons. Also, records showing approval of the contractor's revised estimate either from the Departmental Executive Engineer or the competent Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department were not available. Further, Audit observed that the Directorate office building was constructed as per the contractor's unapproved revised estimate as evident from the Computerised Measurement Books (MB)/ bill of quantity and running bill. A photograph of the Directorate office building is placed below:

Front view of the Directorate office building, LAD

Rear view of the Directorate office building, LAD showing the basements

Thus, the contractor did not construct the approved items of work worth ₹ 1.56 crore[36] as per the estimated plinth area (based on SoR 2013) by excluding the third & fourth floors and Passenger Lift without approval. This resulted in non-construction of the approved items of work worth ₹ 1.56 crore.

The issuance of the work order based on an unapproved SoR (2019) instead of the sanctioned SoR (2013) undermined the integrity of the Chief Engineer's approved DPR and estimates. The absence of critical details in the agreement reflected weak contract management and oversight, leaving room for deviations and ambiguities. The contractor's unilateral preparation and execution of a revised estimate without obtaining approval from the competent authority was a serious procedural violation. The omissions of key components such as the third and fourth floors and the passenger lift, coupled with deviations from the structural drawings, indicated non-compliance with the original project scope and objectives. The non-enforcement of Clause 2.2 of the agreement reflects

[36] Third Floor - ₹ 70.75 lakh *plus* Fourth/ Terrace floor - ₹ 43.18 lakh *plus* Passenger Lift - ₹ 42.00 lakh

lack of monitoring and supervision by the Department, compromising accountability and quality control.

(c) Construction of the Directorate office building without approved technical designs, drawings, estimates, *etc.*

As stated in the preceding paragraphs, the Directorate office building was constructed as per the contractor's unapproved revised estimate based on SoR 2019 at ₹ Six crore and not as per the approved DPR based on SoR 2013 in violation of Clause 2.2 of the agreement, thereby rendering the whole expenditure of ₹ Six crore irregular.

The matter was reported to the Department and the Government in November 2024 and the State Government, while agreeing to the Audit observation stated (20 December 2024) that the Department has no intention of deviating from the provisions of the General Financial Rules but acted upon the instructions from the Government. The Government also agreed that the building was constructed based on the revised plan, design and estimate without technical approval from the competent authority of the MPWD. The Department, however, belatedly obtained *ex post facto* administrative approval for the revised detailed estimate and drawing from the Government on 15 November 2023 *i.e.,* two months after the date of completion of the building.

The construction of the Directorate office building was executed in violation of the approved DPR and applicable financial and technical guidelines, leading to significant irregularities.

The entire expenditure of ₹ Six crore incurred on the construction was irregular, as the building was constructed based on an unapproved revised estimate using SoR 2019 instead of the approved DPR based on SoR 2013, in contravention of Clause 2.2 of the agreement.

The revised plan, design, and estimate were neither technically approved by the competent authority of MPWD nor aligned with the original DPR. This highlights serious lapses in adherence to established financial rules and technical procedures.

The Department's attempt to regularise the deviations by obtaining *ex post facto* administrative approval on 15 November 2023, two months after the completion of the building, further underscores its inadequate planning and oversight.

The State Government has acknowledged that the construction was carried out based on revised plans and estimates without the requisite technical approval, attributing the deviations to instructions from the Government. While this acknowledgment provides transparency, it does not absolve the Department of its responsibility to ensure compliance with the General Financial Rules and other governing procedures.