



SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTION OF INDIA
लोकहितार्थं सत्यनिष्ठा
Dedicated to Truth in Public Interest

Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the period ended March 2023



**Government of Kerala
Report No. 5 of 2025
(Compliance Audit – Civil)**

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Comptroller and Auditor General of India
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PREFACE

This Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the period ended March 2023 is prepared for submission to the Governor of Kerala under Article 151 (2) of the Constitution for being laid before the State Legislature.

The Report contains significant results of Compliance Audit of the Departments and Autonomous Bodies of the Government of Kerala including Departments of Agriculture Development and Farmers' Welfare, Higher Education and Women and Child Development.

The instances mentioned in this report are those, which came to notice in the course of test audit for the period 2022-23 as well as those, which came to notice in earlier years, but could not be reported in the previous Audit Reports. Instances relating to the period subsequent to 2022-23 are also included, wherever found necessary.

The audit was conducted in conformity with the Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

This Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India contains two Subject-Specific Compliance Audit paragraphs and three Compliance Audit paragraphs including instances of non-adherence to codal provisions, absence of supervisory control, idle investment, unfruitful expenditure etc., involving ₹22.94 crore. The major audit findings are mentioned below.

Subject-Specific Compliance Audit

Implementation of Integrated Child Protection Scheme and other Child Protection Schemes

Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) was introduced as a centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Women and Child Development in the year 2009-10, with the aim of providing institutional, family and community-based care to children and promoting preventive measures for protecting them from situations of vulnerability, risk and abuse, educating public on child rights etc. ICPS provides financial support for implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (Act).

Audit observed that the State has not framed rules to streamline the implementation of the scheme for childcare and protection, in violation of the stipulation of the Act to frame rules for carrying out the purpose of the Act. As of March 2023, registration of 165 Child Care Institutions (CCIs) in the five selected districts was not renewed. Audit noticed that in majority of the cases requiring renewal, delay happened at the end of DCPU, in forwarding the applications to the District Magistrates (DM), which in turn delayed the conduct of inspections by the DMs. Grading of CCIs had not been conducted till date (February 2024). There was a delay of 364 and 447 days in submitting of Social Investigation Reports (SIR) to Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB) and Child Welfare Committees (CWC) respectively. As SIRs hold a crucial role in the decision-making process of JJB/CWC, delay in their preparation could have adverse consequences for the child.

None of the 17 selected CCIs were updating the Individual Care Plans as stipulated in the Rules. Audit observed that children with special needs/mentally challenged children were kept in institutions which were not provided with the specified standards set for these children. None of the test checked CWCs at Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Wayanad had a system in place to extend special care and treatment to children requiring de-addiction from use of drugs, substance and liquor. Further, there were no exclusive homes for protection/treatment/rehabilitation of children with mental illness and Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Wayanad due to which addicts had to be accommodated along with normal children, which was not a desirable practice. In the selected districts, the outreach workers had not visited the foster families as prescribed in the ICPS guidelines. There were instances of prolonged spells

of absence of the children from CCIs, whose stay was terminated by issuing release orders without ensuring the well being and safety of the children. Considering the vulnerable circumstances of these children, in the event of an untoward incident which may occur during the period of overstay, the CCI/CWC/JJB/Government could land itself in a legally embarrassing position as regards the safety of the child. Home Study Reports (HSRs) *inter alia* containing details of Prospective adoptive Parents, were not prepared and uploaded in time in the selected districts.

Audit noticed that cradle points to receive abandoned children were installed only in two of the 14 Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAA) in the State. There was delay of 49 to 275 days in examination by District Medical Officer (DMO) in respect of children with special needs in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam districts, which impeded the declaration of the child as legally free for adoption. Audit noticed delay in conducting post adoption follow ups in the test checked districts. Due to non-conduct of post-adoption follow ups as prescribed, it could not be assessed on a periodical basis, as to whether the adopted child was having adjustment problems with the adoptive parents. In SAA Thiruvananthapuram, it was noticed that an amount of ₹16.91 lakh of adoption fee was diverted for meeting salary expenses.

Audit observed delay in completion of enquiry process regarding children in conflict with law which resulted in enhanced pendency in cases handled by JJB. Delay in completion of inquiry process by JJB would contribute to the undue extension of period of trial undergone by a CCL, which is not acceptable in terms of the child's right to live with dignity. In order to rescue children engaged in child labour, child begging and child trafficking, the DCPOs were directed (September 2020) to conduct rescue drives at least three times in a week. However, in the selected districts, the number of rescue drives conducted were much less than the targeted number of 156 during 2021 to 2023. Four children were disbursed with both Central and State sponsorships, which was in violation of Central/State sponsorship guidelines. The payment of State sponsorship to 56 Scheduled Caste (SC) and six Scheduled Tribe (ST) students, who were already in receipt of financial assistance from SC/ST Development Department, resulted in ineligible payment of financial assistance worth ₹20.78 lakh.

Audit observed that in the selected 17 CCIs, against the prescribed number of 340 inspections, the SIC conducted only six inspections during the audit period, which was a meagre two *per cent*. Further, the CWC had not conducted any inspection of the residential facilities for children in Ernakulam, during the period 2018-19 to 2022-23, while in Wayanad, the number of inspections during 2018-19 to 2020-21 ranged from seven to 15. Non-conduct of inspections by CWCs would adversely impact the possible improvements to the quality of services in CCIs. The Child Protection Management Information System (CPMIS), developed by C-DIT, for which ₹2.67 lakh was paid, could not be made functional even as of March 2024.

Recommendations:

- Adequate basic facilities may be provided for children and families approaching JJBs and CWCs.
- Government must ensure that children with special needs are provided safe stay with adequate facilities.
- Government must ensure that co-habitation of children with mental illness and those requiring de-addiction from drugs, liquor etc., along with normal children is not permitted.
- CWCs should conduct regular visits to CCIs and facilitate effective follow up to ensure that children in foster care lead a safe and comfortable life.
- Cradle Baby Points must be installed as prescribed under the Rules, for safe abandonment of babies.
- The Department should ensure that children in receipt of sponsorship from ICPS are not receiving financial assistance from SC/ST Development Department.

(Paragraph 2.1)

Implementation of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan

The Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) in September 2013, to be operated in the XII and XIII five-year plan periods. The major objective of RUSA was to enable and empower the States to develop sufficient capabilities to plan, implement and monitor initiatives for the higher education sector as a whole. The scheme was to be implemented in two phases i.e, RUSA 1.0 during the period 2013-17 and RUSA 2.0 during 2018-22.

The Kerala Higher Education Act of 2007 was amended by the State keeping in view the RUSA guidelines (September 2013) in July 2018 only, after a gap of five years. Audit observed that certain provisions in the amended Act were not in conformity with the provisions outlined in the RUSA guidelines. For instance, as per the RUSA guidelines, the Chairman of the Council shall be an eminent academic/public intellectual with proven leadership qualities. However, the amended Act provided for the State Minister for Higher Education to be the Chairman of the Council.

There was delay in preparation of State Higher Education Plan (SHEP). The baseline survey that was to be conducted prior to formulation of SHEP to analyse critical needs in terms of access, equity and excellence in higher education was not undertaken. There was delay ranging from 347 days to 4½ years in the submission of final Detailed Project Reports by seven selected institutions. Decision of GoK to restrict the scope of the scheme to Government institutions prevented 166 Government aided colleges having NAAC accreditation from being considered for RUSA 1.0. Government curtailed the

role of Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) from management of RUSA funds, thereby deviating from the provisions in RUSA guidelines. There was delay ranging from 19 to 395 days in allotment of State share to State Project Director (SPD).

Delay in submission of physical inspection reports by the State to Project Approval Board resulted in non-release of final instalment of State and Central shares to institutions. Audit observed that the actual spending on higher education during 2018-23 ranged from 0.44 *per cent* to 0.51 *per cent* of the GSDP in the State. GoK did not enhance spending on Higher Education sector, as envisaged under the scheme.

Even after three years of approval of original DPR, the Government College, Tripunithura was not able to decide upon the project to be executed and multiple options were being explored. Resultantly, the allotted fund remained unutilised. The SPD, without ensuring the completion of integration of VC facility at 31 locations, had effected full payment to KELTRON which resulted in infructuous expenditure of ₹1.24 crore. The project of construction of New Model Degree College at Wayanad approved in July 2018 was yet to commence as of February 2024, i.e., even after a lapse of more than five years. Institutions took up projects which were not included in original DPR and not accorded with technical sanction for execution. This apart, for work pertaining to the Seminar Complex at Kannur University, the Syndicate of the University, disregarding the guidelines of the scheme, extended undue favour to the contractor by sanctioning excess mobilisation advance as well as granting unjustified extension of one year. However, despite an expenditure of ₹5.13 crore from RUSA funds, the contractor had not completed the work even after a lapse of nearly five years from June 2019. Further, the Scientific Instrumentation Centre at Kannur University was not made functional even after a lapse of five years and the four instruments purchased for ₹2.20 crore for installation in the centre had to be kept at the disposal of the Heads of the Departments in various campuses of the University. The construction of auditorium at Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit (SSUS), Kalady was not completed even after a lapse of five years from the release of fund.

RUSA aimed at ensuring that issues of access, equity and quality are addressed in an equitable manner. By addressing equity issues such as converting existing building into fully disabled friendly and barrier free environment, significant impact was expected in the enrolment of students from deprived and marginalised sections. However, out of 16 test checked institutions, only four had included proposals for providing disabled friendly facilities for ₹239 lakh. Thus, low priority was being assigned by institutions to installation of disabled friendly features while selecting components under RUSA.

Non-constitution of Board of Governors and Project Monitoring Units in selected institutions indicated that low priority was assigned to timely review and decision making with regard to implementation of institutional projects. Audit analysis of the Geographic Information System in the RUSA website in January 2024 revealed that only 19 out of the 157 funded institutions had geo-

tagged their information on the status of project implementation. This indicated that the prospects of web-based monitoring system were not harnessed effectively in the State. During 2018-23 the number of guest/ contract faculty appointed in 15 selected institutions ranged from 42 to 47 *per cent* against the 10 *per cent* criteria specified in UGC norms. Pre-requisites of RUSA 1.0 and targets of RUSA 2.0 were not completely achieved by the State.

Recommendations: Government may ensure that

- All works undertaken are geo-tagged for effective implementation of web-based monitoring system.
- The spending on higher education is increased to two *per cent* of the GSDP as per the Memorandum of Understanding with Government of India.
- Recruitment of staff for faculty positions is carried out as per the norms for smooth functioning of the Institutes.
- Projects under RUSA should be completed in a time bound manner to achieve the targeted benefits and the option of taking action against officials responsible for severely delayed cases is explored.

(Paragraph 3.1)

Compliance Audit paragraphs

Audit noticed instances where funds released by the Government of Kerala for creating public assets for the benefit of the community remained unutilised/blocked due to misappropriation of Government money, unfruitful expenditure on buildings, idle investment, etc., owing to lack of administrative oversight and concerted action at various levels. The details are given below.

Misappropriation

- Non-adherence to codal provisions and absence of supervisory controls resulted in misappropriation of ₹1.28 lakh in Coconut Nursery, Valiyathura, Thiruvananthapuram.

Systemic deficiencies with regard to recording of entries in cash book and prompt remittances to appropriate heads of account and serious lapse in verification and attestation of entries in cash book being performed by a single official, has led to embezzlement of money in the Coconut Nursery. Furthermore, the misappropriated amount was replaced with Government money by authorities concerned, signifying weak internal controls.

Recommendation:

Government should ensure that codal provisions regarding day to day handling of monetary transactions, as laid down in Kerala Treasury Code and Kerala

Financial Code, are strictly ensured by Heads of Offices. Weak internal controls should be addressed on priority to prevent misappropriation of funds.

(Paragraph 4.1)

Unfruitful expenditure

- Lack of co-ordination in executing works and absence of effective monitoring by Kerala State Science and Technology Museum resulted in infructuous expenditure of ₹15.03 crore on two buildings and idle investment of ₹5.05 crore on equipment.

(Paragraph 4.2)

- An agricultural market complex at Vattavada set up at a cost of ₹2.45 crore in an unsuitable site without motorable approach road, is idling since its inauguration, for the last four years.

(Paragraph 4.3)

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1. About this Report

This Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (C&AG) relates to matters arising from Compliance Audit of Government Departments and Autonomous Bodies.

Compliance Audit refers to examination of transactions relating to expenditure of the audited entities to ascertain whether the provisions of the Constitution of India, applicable laws, rules, regulations and various orders and instructions issued by the competent authorities are being complied with.

The primary purpose of the Report is to bring to the notice of the State Legislature important results of audit. The audit findings are expected to enable the Executive to take corrective action as also to frame policies and directives that will lead to improved financial management of the organisations, thus contributing to better governance.

This chapter explains the profile of units under audit jurisdiction, planning and extent of audit and follow up on previous Audit Reports.

1.2. Profile of units under audit jurisdiction

There were 46 Departments in the State at Secretariat level during 2022-23. The Accountant General (Audit I), Kerala (AG (Audit I)), conducts audit of 33 Secretariat Departments, all Public Sector Undertakings/ Autonomous Bodies thereunder and Local Self-Government Institutions (LSGIs) in the State. The Departments are headed by Additional Chief Secretaries/ Principal Secretaries/ Secretaries, who are assisted by Directors/ Commissioners and subordinate officers under them. The Accountant General (Audit II), Kerala, conducts audit of 14 Departments¹.

A comparative position of expenditure incurred by the Government during the year 2022-23 and in the preceding four years is given in **Table 1.1**.

¹ In the case of Fisheries and Ports Department, auditee institutions under Fisheries is audited by AG (Audit I) and Ports by AG (Audit II).

Table 1.1: Comparative position of expenditure

(₹ in crore)

Disbursements	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Revenue expenditure	110316.39	104719.92	123446.33	146179.51	141950.93
General services	50827.13	55504.03	50360.72	70110.00	69831.68
Social services	38210.77	34044.77	44832.44	50695.61	50275.91
Economic services	12379.77	9107.25	18760.72	15713.81	12280.82
Grants-in-aid and contributions	8898.72	6063.87	9492.45	9660.09	9562.52
Capital expenditure	7430.54	8454.80	12889.65	14191.73	13996.56
General services	197.96	157.42	259.84	268.26	306.89
Social services	1784.29	1090.64	2277.90	3342.63	3030.08
Economic services	5448.29	7206.74	10351.91	10580.84	10659.59
Total	117746.93	113174.72	136335.98	160371.24	155947.49

(Source: Finance Accounts for the respective years)

1.3. Authority for Audit

The authority for audit by the C&AG is derived from Articles 149 and 151 of the Constitution of India and the Comptroller and Auditor General's (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971 (C&AG's (DPC) Act). C&AG conducts audit of expenditure of the Departments of the Government of Kerala (GoK) under Section 13 of the C&AG's (DPC) Act. C&AG is the sole auditor in respect of 24 Autonomous Bodies which are audited under Sections 19 and 20(1) of the C&AG's (DPC) Act. In addition, C&AG also conducts audit of 121 Autonomous Bodies which are substantially funded by the Government, under Sections 14 and 15 of the C&AG's (DPC) Act besides 1,158 educational institutions², 50 Public Sector Undertakings and 1,200 LSGIs³. Principles and methodologies for various audits are prescribed in the Auditing Standards and the Regulations on Audit and Accounts, issued by the C&AG.

1.4. Organisational structure of the Office of the Accountant General (Audit I), Kerala

Under the directions of the C&AG, the Office of the AG (Audit I) conducts audit of 33 Government Departments and Offices, PSUs, Autonomous Bodies and Institutions thereunder, which are spread all over the State.

1.5. Planning and conduct of audit

The audit process starts with the assessment of risks faced by various Departments of Government based on expenditure incurred, criticality/complexity of activities, level of delegated financial powers, assessment of overall internal controls and concerns of stakeholders. Previous audit findings are also considered in this exercise. Based on this risk assessment, the frequency and extent of audit are decided.

² Government-aided Colleges: 184;
Government-aided Higher Secondary Schools: 846; and
Government-aided Vocational Higher Secondary Schools: 128.

³ Grama Panchayats: 941, Block Panchayats: 152, District Panchayats: 14, Municipal Corporations: 6 and Municipalities: 87.

After completion of audit, Inspection Reports (IRs) containing audit observations are issued to the Heads of the Offices and Departments. The Departments are requested to furnish replies to the audit observations within four weeks from the date of receipt of the IRs. Whenever replies are received, audit observations are either settled or further action for compliance is advised. The important audit observations arising out of these IRs are processed for inclusion in the Reports of the C&AG of India, which are submitted to the Governor of the State under Article 151 (2) of the Constitution of India for placing in the State Legislature.

During 2022-23, the Office of the AG (Audit I) utilised 25,860 party days to carry out the audit (compliance, performance and financial audits) of 680 units of various departments/ organisations under its jurisdiction. The Audit Plan covered those units/ entities, which were vulnerable to significant risks as per risk assessment.

1.6. Lack of responsiveness of Government to Audit

1.6.1. Outstanding Inspection Reports

The Handbook of Instructions for Speedy Settlement of Audit Objections/ Inspection Reports/ timely disposal of draft audit paragraphs and matters pertaining to the Public Accounts Committee, issued by the State Government in 2017 provides for prompt response by the Executive to the Inspection Reports (IRs) issued by the Accountant General for rectification, in compliance with the prescribed rules and procedures and accountability for the deficiencies, lapses etc., noticed during audit inspection. The Heads of Offices and next higher authorities are required to comply with the audit observations contained in the IRs, rectify the defects and omissions and promptly report their compliance to the Accountant General within four weeks of receipt of IRs. Half-yearly reports of pending IRs are being sent to the Secretaries of the Departments to facilitate monitoring of audit observations.

As on 30 September 2023, 5,550 IRs (27,156 paragraphs) (issued upto 31 March 2023) were outstanding in respect of 31 Departments. Details of IRs and paragraphs outstanding are given in **Appendix 1.1**.

1.6.2. Response of Departments to the paragraphs included in this Report

Compliance Audit paragraphs were forwarded to the Additional Chief Secretaries/ Principal Secretaries/ Secretaries of Departments concerned during February 2024 to July 2024 for furnishing replies. Response of Government was received for the two Subject-Specific Compliance Audit paragraphs and two out of three Compliance Audit paragraphs featured in this Report. The replies received were suitably incorporated in the Report.

1.6.3. Follow up on Audit Reports

According to the Handbook of Instructions for Speedy Settlement of Audit Objections/ Inspection Reports/ timely disposal of draft audit paragraphs and matters pertaining to the Public Accounts Committee issued by the State Government in 2017, the Administrative Departments should submit Statements of Action Taken Notes on audit paragraphs included in the Reports of the C&AG directly to the Legislature Secretariat, with copies to the Accountant General within two months of their being laid on the Table of the Legislature. As of September 2023, two Administrative Departments did not comply with the instructions and did not submit Statements of Action Taken Notes of 13 paragraphs for the period 2018-19 to 2020-21 as detailed in **Appendix 1.2**.

1.6.4. Paragraphs pending discussion by the Public Accounts Committee

Seventy-one paragraphs pertaining to five Departments for the period 2016-17 to 2020-21 were pending discussion by the Public Accounts Committee as of September 2023 (**Appendix 1.3**).

SUBJECT-SPECIFIC COMPLIANCE AUDIT

CHAPTER II

WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

2.1. Implementation of Integrated Child Protection Scheme and other Child Protection Schemes

2.1.1. Introduction

‘Child Protection’ is about protecting children from any perceived or real danger or risk to their life, personhood and childhood. It is about reducing their vulnerability to any kind of harm and ensuring that no child falls out of the social safety net and that those who do, receive necessary care, protection and support so as to bring them back into the safety net. Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) was introduced⁴ as a centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Women and Child Development in the year 2009-10. The scheme aimed to provide institutional, family and community-based care to children and promote preventive measures for protecting them from situations of vulnerability, risk and abuse, educating public on child rights, etc. ICPS provides financial support for implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015⁵ (Act).

Government of Kerala (GoK) also funds schemes for care and protection of children, viz., (i) Our Responsibility to Children (ORC) and (ii) Innovative Projects - including 12 sub schemes (**Appendix 2.1**).

2.1.2. Organisational setup

The Women and Child Development Department (WCDD) of the State is headed by the Principal Secretary at Government level. At the field level, it is headed by the Director, Women and Child Development Department. In order to ensure effective implementation of ICPS at State and District level, the State Child Protection Society (SCPS) and 14 District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) were set up (August 2014) in the State. There were 27 Government Child Care Institutions (CCIs) and 697 NGO⁶ run CCIs in the State. Besides, State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA) functioned as a unit under the SCPS, dealing with adoption of children and related matters. The DCPUs in 14 Districts are headed by the District Child Protection Officers (DCPOs). The Child Care Institutions⁷, Child Welfare Committees (CWC) and Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) function in all 14 districts.

⁴ Three schemes, viz., i) Programme for Juvenile Justice for Children in need of care and protection and Children in conflict with Law, ii) Integrated Programme for street children, and iii) Scheme for assistance to homes for children (Shishu Greh) were incorporated in the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS).

⁵ By repealing the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000, Government of India enacted the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 (Act).

⁶ Non-Governmental Organisation

⁷ Includes Specialised Adoption Agencies, Children’s homes, Observation homes, Special homes, Open shelters and Places of safety

2.1.3. Audit objectives and criteria

The Compliance Audit was conducted to ascertain whether:

- adequate mechanisms and structures were in place for the planning and implementation of ICPS and other Child protection schemes, as envisaged in the scheme/guidelines of Government of India (GoI), and the schemes of the State Government;
- rehabilitation and social re-integration were being achieved through the schemes as envisaged in the guidelines of the scheme, Act and Rules;
- the funds were adequate and received on time and subsequently routed to societies/units (viz., SCPS, DCPUs and SARA) to manage the scheme effectively and efficiently; and
- effective monitoring mechanism was in place to supervise the implementation, progress and evaluation of schemes in accordance with the provisions contained in the guidelines, Act and rules.

Audit adopted the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016, Guidelines of ICPS and Adoption Regulations, 2017 and 2022 as the major criteria against which audit observations were framed. The efficacy in implementation of State schemes was evaluated against the norms prescribed by Government orders/instructions.

2.1.4. Scope and methodology of audit

The Department of Women and Child Development was responsible for the implementation of ICPS and other Child Protection Schemes in the State. Audit was conducted from April to September 2023 and covered the Child Protection Schemes implemented during the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23.

The scope of audit extended to the implementation of child protection schemes in five⁸ out of 14 districts in the State, selected using Stratified Sampling. Audit methodology included scrutiny of records and registers, conduct of joint physical verification and obtaining data through issue of requisitions to the Government, SCPS, DCPUs, JJBs, CWCs, Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAA) and CCIs (**Appendix 2.2**). Only those CCIs that have received grant from the Government were sampled for scrutiny. As on 31 March 2023, 11,114 children were inmates of various CCIs in the State. In the CCIs located in selected districts, the inmate strength was 675. Audit also obtained data from departments like Police, Labour, Health and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Development which partake in implementing child protection measures in the State.

⁸ Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Wayanad and Kannur

An Entry Conference was conducted with the Principal Secretary, Women and Child Development Department on 16 May 2023 wherein the scope, methodology, criteria, etc., were discussed and agreed upon.

The Exit Conference was held on 17 May 2024 with the Principal Secretary, Women and Child Development Department, wherein the audit findings of the Compliance Audit were discussed in detail.

Audit findings

2.1.5. Funding

The ICPS is being implemented in the State with financial assistance from both GoI and GoK. Every year, State Government submits budget proposals before the Project Approval Board. After approval by the Project Approval Board, GoI releases the Central share to the State Government after adjusting the unspent balance of previous year, if any, available with State Government. On receipt of Central share, State Government releases the Central share along with matching State share to implementing units.

During the period 2018-22, the proportion of financial assistance to be borne by GoI for various components of the scheme ranged from 35 to 90 *per cent* depending upon the project components⁹. From the year 2022-23 onwards, the mode of funding was shifted from the conventional mode¹⁰ to the Public Financial Management mode¹¹ and the funding pattern to 60:40 between Centre and State.

The Central funds were allocated based on the fixed inmate strength of 50 and 25, at the CCIs, by GoI on the basis of standards of accommodation. As the number of children in the CCIs does not remain static, the State did not request for funds on the basis of actual inmate strength in the CCIs. Instead, the State had proposed to receive and release entire funds allocated by GoI, admissible as per scheme guidelines.

The funds received from GoI and GoK during the five-year period covered in audit and the expenditure incurred are shown in **Table 2.1**:

⁹ All structural components viz., State Project Support Unit (SPSU), State Child Protection Society (SCPS), State Adoption Resource Agency (SARA), District Child Protection Units (DCPU), Regulatory bodies like Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB), Child Welfare Committees (CWC), all Homes/SAAs run by Government/NGOs, Open Shelters.

¹⁰ Routed through State budget

¹¹ The Public Financial Management System (PFMS) is a web-based online software application developed and implemented by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, Government of India

Table 2.1: Details of funds received, expenditure incurred and unspent balance during 2018-19 to 2022-23

(₹ in lakh)

Year	Funds received			Total expenditure ¹²	Unspent balance of GoI share which was revalidated/adjusted against next year's release ¹³
	GoI share ¹⁴	GoK share ¹⁵	Total		
1	2	3	4 (2+3)	5	6
2018-19	1263.47	1383.27	2646.74	2351.89	216.95
2019-20	1487.50	991.67	2479.17	1093.21	733.20
2020-21	1135.82	1246.01	2381.83	1808.06	783.85
2021-22	607.45	1132.37	1739.82	1809.30	357.57
2022-23	1284.88	1212.54	2497.42	3005.66	580.24

(Source: Utilisation Certificates furnished by GoK and abstracts of Detailed Appropriation Accounts)

Central funds ranging from ₹216.95 lakh to ₹783.85 lakh which remained unspent each year, were revalidated by GoI and adjusted against the release of next year.

The Principal Secretary assured to examine the scope of rationalising the budget in response to Audit suggestion to factor in the number of inmates, during Exit Conference (May 2024). Government stated in reply (August 2024) that as the second instalment from GoI is released only at the fag end of every financial year, it was not possible for all components to be fully utilised within the limited period remaining in the financial year.

2.1.6. Structural framework for implementation of ICPS

The JJ Act defines the 'child' as a person who has not completed 18 years of age. A 'child in conflict with law' (CCL) is defined as one who was alleged or found to have committed an offence and who has not completed 18 years of age on the date of committing the offence. A 'child in need of care and protection' (CNCP) is defined as one who is found without any home or settled place of abode or means of subsistence/found working in contravention of labour laws in force or begging, living on the street or who resides with a person who has injured, exploited, abused or neglected the child, etc. To decide upon the course of action to be adopted, a CCL is produced before a JJB, comprising a Metropolitan Magistrate or a Judicial Magistrate of First class with two social worker members, of whom one shall be a woman. A CNCP, is to be produced before a CWC comprising the Chairperson and members having a minimum of

¹² Figures booked by Office of the Accountant General (A&E) Kerala under the ICPS head of account '2235-02-102-61' (till 2021-22) and '2235-02-102-19' (from 2022-23).

¹³ As per utilisation certificates furnished to GoI

¹⁴ As per utilisation certificates furnished to GoI

¹⁵ Figures furnished by SCPS

seven years of experience of working with children in the field of education, health or welfare or a practising professional¹⁶ or a retired judicial officer.

Audit examined whether the mechanisms and structures prescribed by legislations were in place to enable effective implementation of the scheme, as detailed below:

2.1.6.1. Inconsistency of provisions in scheme guidelines vis-à-vis the Act

As per Sections 35 and 36 of the Act, a child who is an orphan, surrendered or appears to be abandoned and below six years of age can be placed by the CWC in a Specialised Adoption Agency (SAA) only. If the child is above six years of age, they can be placed in a Children's home.

Guidelines of ICPS and Mission Vatsalya¹⁷, lay down measures to support State and NGO run SAAs where adoptable children below six years of age are provided residential care. These guidelines however state that no child shall remain in the care of an SAA for more than a period of one year.

Audit observed that the above clause in the guidelines restricting the period of stay of a child in SAA to one year may not be in the best interest of the child. In usual practice, a child who is less than six years of age, if not adopted, will have to be retained in a SAA until the child attains the age of six or gets adopted, whichever is earlier. Further, the time limit cannot also be applied to children coming from unfavourable family environment who were temporarily accommodated in SAA, and not for adoption. Thus, the time limit of one year set by guideline for stay of a child in SAA besides not being child-friendly, was not compatible with the Act, and may need to be reviewed.

Government stated (April 2024) that, as per Section 1(4) of the JJ Act, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, the provisions of the Act shall apply to matters concerning children in need of care and protection and hence, considering the best interest of the child, the Act will prevail.

2.1.6.2. Non-framing of State Rules

Section 110 of the Act requires the State Government to make rules to carry out the purposes of the Act. Despite the Central Act and Guidelines of the scheme, formulated in September 2015 and 2014 respectively, for the effective implementation of child protection legislation and achievement of child protection goals, the State has not framed any Rules. The State Government is currently adhering to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Amendment Rules, 2022, formulated by GoI and all activities are conducted in accordance with these Model Rules.

During the course of audit, instances demanding specific intervention of Government in the form of a norm/regulation were noticed, as detailed in

¹⁶ with a degree in child psychology/psychiatry/social work/sociology/human development or in the field of law

¹⁷ ICPS was renamed as Child Protection Services Scheme in 2017 and has been subsumed under Mission Vatsalya from 2022-23.

Paragraph 2.1.6.3. Formulation of State Rules for implementation of the Act would contribute to enhancing the efficiency of SCPS and DCPUs in complying with the provisions of the Act in State specific scenarios.

Government replied (April 2024) that redrafting of draft State rules in alignment with the amendments made to the JJ Rules in 2022, was in progress and was expected to be submitted soon.

2.1.6.3. Functioning of CCIs without valid registration

Section 41(1) of the Act states that all institutions, whether run by State Government or voluntary/non-governmental organisations should be registered, regardless of whether they are receiving grants or not from the Central/State Government. The period of registration shall be five years which was to be renewed quinquennially. The application for registration/renewal of an institution was to be submitted to the Government. At the time of registration, the State Government shall determine and record the capacity and purpose of the institution.

The CCIs were to seek renewal three months prior to the expiry of period of registration and an application of registration was to be disposed within 60 days from the date of receipt of application. Rule 21(6) of JJ Model Rules 2016 states that post registration, the Government shall annually review the facilities, staff strength, infrastructure and compliance with standards of care, rehabilitation and re-integration services and management of the CCI. The decision on renewal of registration shall be based on the annual review done in the year in which the renewal is sought. Neither had the Rules nor any orders of State Government specified an authority to conduct annual review of CCIs till September 2022, after which, the Rules were amended, authorising the District Magistrate (DM) to conduct annual inspection of CCIs. The DCPUs were to scrutinise the applications for registration received from CCIs and forward them to the DM, who, after conducting inspection of the CCI, conveyed his remarks to the Director, WCDD.

A total of 214 CCIs were functioning in the five selected districts during 2022-23, of which 165 were required to renew their registration before March 2023. Of these, registrations of only three CCIs in Kannur district were renewed before the date of expiry of registration. **Table 2.2** depicts the details regarding the submission of applications for renewal of registration and delay in processing them at DCPU level in the five selected districts during 2022-23.

Table 2.2: Details of delay in submission and processing of applications for renewal during 2022-23*

	Thiruvananthapuram	Alappuzha	Ernakulam	Wayanad	Kannur	Total
Total number of CCIs during 2022-23	84	26	71	12	21	214
No. of CCIs requiring registration before 31 March 2023	70	22	46	9	18	165
Number of applications received	59	21**	45	9	18	152
Number of CCIs which had not applied	11	1	0	0	0	12
No. of CCIs which had been re-registered	0	0	0	0	3	3
No. of cases in which delay occurred at DCPU level for more than six months	32	22	9	0	7	70

*as on 31 March 2023; ** one application received for cancellation.
(Source: Data furnished by DCPUs)

Audit observed that in majority of the cases requiring renewal, delay happened at the end of DCPU, in forwarding the applications to the DM. This in turn delayed the conduct of inspections by the DMs. Renewal of registration has not been granted (October 2023) to 149 CCIs¹⁸, consequent upon which the CCIs were functioning without a valid registration. It was also seen that 12 CCIs had not even submitted applications for renewal of registration. As valid registration to function is a mandatory requirement, non-renewal before expiry of registration and functioning without registration is against the provisions in the Act.

Government replied (April 2024) that a circular was issued to DCPOs to issue a temporary receipt to an institution while receiving the application, which could be considered as provisional registration as per Section 41(4) of JJ Act. It was also stated that detailed instructions will be issued to all DMs for processing the application in time and the process of CCI registration would be monitored by the SCPS within regular intervals.

Issuing a temporary receipt as acknowledgement of the application cannot be regarded as provisional registration. Hence, the contention of Government that the institutions could continue functioning on the basis of temporary receipt is unacceptable.

2.1.6.4. Grading of institutions

Paragraph 6(ii) of Mission Vatsalya guidelines issued in July 2022 envisages the State Government to take up exercise to grade each CCI at fixed intervals. The grading was to be done based on infrastructure, quality of services, wellbeing of children especially in terms of health and education, restoration and rehabilitation of children, etc. The grading of CCIs including designing of

¹⁸ 152 (CCIs requiring renewal) minus 3 (renewal granted) = 149

parameters and indicators was to be carried out in consultation with National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD), Bangalore.

Audit found that no such grading of CCIs had been done by the State Government till date (February 2024).

Government replied (April 2024) that the State has initiated a social audit of all the institutions in the State with the collaboration of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which is to be considered as the initial process of grading. After the social audit, the State has planned to contact NIPCCD Bangalore for further support in grading the institutions.

The reply was not acceptable as the process of social audit would not suffice the objective of grading. The fact that the grading process, mandated as per guidelines, remains unimplemented, indicates that the Government was not keen on its implementation.

2.1.7. Rehabilitation and Social Re-integration

The process of rehabilitation and social re-integration of children was to be undertaken preferably through family based care such as by restoration to family or guardian, adoption or foster care. If this was not resorted to, rehabilitation and social re-integration was to be attained through institutional care. Deficiencies noticed by audit in the measures adopted to ensure the well-being of the child in the course of rehabilitation and social re-integration are elaborated below:

2.1.7.1. Deficiencies in preparation of Social Investigation Report

Social Investigation Report¹⁹ (SIR) presents detailed information on the circumstances of the child, the situation of the child on economic, social, psycho-social and other relevant factors, and the recommendation thereon. As per Rule 19(3) of JJ Rules, CWC shall assign the case of a child to a Social Worker/Case Worker/Child Welfare Officer or to any recognised NGO for conducting the social investigation. The JJB and CWC shall take into account the SIRs prepared in Form 6 and Form 22 respectively, by the Probation Officer or NGO along with the evidence produced by the parties producing the child. Information so collected formed the basis for arriving at a conclusion regarding the future course of action to be taken with respect to the supervision/custody of the child. The SIR was to be completed and submitted by the social worker within 15 days from the date of first production of the child before the JJB/CWC.

Audit undertook an assessment of timeliness in submission of SIRs in 100 cases each, which appeared before the JJB and CWC in the selected five districts during 2018-23 (**Appendix 2.3**). It was observed that there was delay extending to 364 and 447 days in submitting SIRs to JJB and CWC respectively.

¹⁹ Rule 2(xvii) of JJ Rules

In a specific instance in Ernakulam district, a child placed in a CCI, whose SIR was not prepared, was sent (2011) to foster care at the age of 4 ½ years and was subsequently adopted by the foster family in 2016. Later, in May 2019, the child was returned to institutional care by the mother citing difficulty in handling the child at home. However, SIR of the child was not seen prepared even at this stage. Audit observed that the child eventually committed suicide (July 2020) in the institution.

Timely preparation of SIR of the child at least on re-joining institutional care from foster setup would have helped CWC gain an insight into the psycho-social status and mental stature of the child, which could have facilitated effective counselling measures. As SIRs hold a crucial role in the decision-making process of JJB/CWC, delay in their preparation could have adverse consequences for the child.

Government replied (April 2024) that the completion of SIR has been delayed due to lack of adequate staff in DCPUs, especially considering the high volume of cases they need to address within their respective districts. The State has proposed to the Central Government, the posting of one extra social worker for DCPUs to resolve this issue. It was also assured that directions will be given to DCPOs to take steps to complete social investigation in time.

2.1.7.2. Lapses in preparation and review of Individual Care Plan

As per Rule 2(xi) of JJ Model Rules, Individual Care Plan (ICP) is a comprehensive development plan for a child based on age and gender specific needs and case history of the child, prepared in consultation with the child, in order to restore their self-esteem, dignity and self-worth and nurture them into a responsible citizen. Accordingly, ICP shall address the needs of a child pertaining to health and nutrition, emotional and psychological support, education and training, etc. The ICP in Form 7, as prescribed in the JJ Model Rules encapsulating personal details and progress report of a child requiring institutional management shall be prepared by the Child Welfare Officer or Case Worker. The progress report of the child was to be prepared every fortnight for the first three months and thereafter on a monthly basis. Further, the ICPs were to be forwarded to the CWC within a fortnight for approval. The management committee²⁰ of the institution was to review the ICPs quarterly.

Audit noticed that none of the 17 selected CCIs were updating the ICPs as stipulated in the Rules. Neither were the ICPs forwarded to CWC nor were they reviewed by the management committee. At SAA Wayanad, though the ICPs were prepared, they were not seen forwarded to the CWC. The DCPUs attributed the shortfall in preparation of ICPs to dearth of counsellors and lack of awareness of the available staff regarding ICP updation.

As ICPs are designed to assess the needs and progress of the child, their preparation is crucial in evaluating the developmental stages of the child. Hence,

²⁰ Comprising DCPO as Chairperson, Person-in-charge as Member-Secretary, Probation Officer or Child Welfare Officer or Case Worker, Medical Officer, Psychologist or Counsellor, Workshop Supervisor or Vocational Instructor, etc., as members.

ICPs need to be prepared carefully and meticulously as envisaged in the guidelines.

Government replied (April 2024) that a surprise inspection committee will be formed at the district level to visit institutions and verify the availability of ICPs for all children. It was also stated that follow up training for counsellors on preparation of ICP will be conducted promptly.

2.1.7.3. Inadequate facilities in Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees

Rule 6(10) and 16(12) of JJ Rules require the State Government to provide infrastructure to the JJBs and CWCs respectively. Provisions in ICPS guidelines specify that the room where the CWC and JJB holds its sittings should be well equipped with sufficient space, necessary furniture and equipment, be well lit and have a child friendly environment. Section 7 of JJ Act mandates JJB to ensure that all procedures are conducted in a child friendly manner and that the venue does not appear intimidating to the child and does not resemble regular courts. JJ Model Rules insist that the JJB shall not sit on a raised platform. The waiting rooms for children and families should have provisions for drinking water as well as indoor recreation for children. List of facilities that were available/deficient in the JJBs and CWCs in the selected districts are given in **Appendix 2.4**.

Audit also observed that the space provided for the functioning of JJB in Thiruvananthapuram district resembles a court to the extent that the members of the JJB are conducting the procedures from a raised platform. Further, CWC Thiruvananthapuram did not have sufficient space for the waiting area, as seen in the photograph below.



Figure 2.1: Families and children stand, waiting outside CWC Thiruvananthapuram due to non-availability of facilities (October 2023)

Government should ensure that the children and families who approach the JJB/CWC are provided with basic facilities like waiting room, supply of drinking water, etc., and a child friendly environment.

Government replied (April 2024) that the non-recurring fund allotted by the Central Government to the JJBs/CWCs in selected districts could be utilised to ensure sufficient facilities in these Boards and Committees. It was added that the facilities for the remaining districts will be financed from the State fund.

2.1.7.4. Inadequate facilities at Government Children's Home for Girls, Kannur

The physical infrastructure required in a CCI had been prescribed in Rule 29(iv) of JJ Rules. The requirements include dormitories, sick room, recreation room, etc.

A joint physical verification (September 2023) at the Government Children's Home (GCH) for Girls, Kannur conducted along with the authorities of the institution revealed that the CCI did not have a sick room, outdoor play ground, recreation room, library and counselling room. Audit also found that the Children's Home did not have sufficient beds for the 26 inmates and the store room was congested.



Figure 2.2: Beds being arranged without in-between space, to accommodate more children at Government Children's Home for Girls, Kannur (September 2023)

Providing adequate facilities as prescribed in the Rules is to be prioritised, as these requirements have been framed with the intention of providing a congenial growing atmosphere to the child.

Government replied (April 2024) that an amount of ₹25 lakh has been sanctioned to Government Children's Home, Kannur for infrastructure works and renovation works and that after the completion of these works, recreation room, library and counselling room and storeroom will be set up.

2.1.7.5. *Children with special needs not provided with requisite facilities*

Section 53.1 (ii, iii) of the Act envisaged that the institutions in the process of rehabilitation and re-integration of children with special needs shall provide equipment such as wheelchairs, prosthetic devices, hearing aids, braille kits, etc., and extend appropriate education for children with special needs. Rule 36(4) of JJ Rules states that specialised trainers and experts shall be appointed to cater to the educational needs of children with special needs, whether physical or mental. Learning disorders are to be identified, assessed and reported in ICP and further assistance given to the child by trained professionals.

Audit observed that certain CCIs were not complying with the aforementioned statutes, in the following instances.

- The Home for Orphans and Destitute children (Boys), Vaduthala was registered as a CCI in Ernakulam district and was granted (December 2017) registration with validity of five years, for functioning as a Children's home with inmate capacity of 35. Despite 13 to 35 children with special needs residing in the CCI per year during 2018-23, no specialised trainers were seen appointed to train the children and learning disorders were not assessed and reported upon.
- On a scrutiny of files relating to the CCI at DCPU Ernakulam, Audit noticed that the DM Ernakulam had conducted (April 2023) an inspection of the CCI for renewal of registration. On detecting that the facilities provided by the CCI were not adequate to suit the needs of special children, the DM had served notice (July 2023) to the CCI. However, the report on the physical inspection of the institution was not available at the DCPU. Despite repeated requests made by Audit to the DM to produce the report of the inspection conducted in the CCI, this was not complied with (February 2024). Thus, Audit could not gather information about the nature of deficiencies in the running of the CCI, as pointed out by the DM, based on which notice was served to the CCI. Also, the extent of compliance on the part of the CCI in this regard, could not be ascertained.
- ICPS guidelines state that the Scheme shall provide for institutional care of children with special needs by supporting a specialised unit within the existing homes or by setting up specialised shelter homes for children with special needs. Audit noticed that in three out of seven Children's Homes test checked, 24 children²¹ with special needs were accommodated during the period covered in audit. These Homes did not set up specialised units within, to extend support and care to children with special needs.
- As per directions of CWC Ernakulam, a mentally and physically challenged girl aged 12, who was also a victim of sexual abuse registered

²¹ GCH for Girls, Alappuzha – 13, GCH, Ernakulam – 5, GCH for Boys, Kannur – 6

under the POCSO²² Act, 2012, was admitted (June 2019) to the Home for Orphan and Destitute (Girls), Pachalam in Ernakulam. This institution was not registered as a CCI for accommodating girls. The CWC had placed the child in this institution, as there was no registered special home for differently abled girl children in Ernakulam district. Records at DCPU Ernakulam mentioned that, as the CCI faced difficulties in handling the child in co-residence with normal children, it requested the CWC to shift the child to another institution. However, CWC directed the institution to retain the child as there was no alternate care home to which the child could be accommodated. Hence, the child continued in the institution until she succumbed to death in January 2021, from pneumonia. Following the demise of the child, the Programme Manager, ICPS conducted an inquiry into the situation which led to the death of the child and reported (February 2021) that the institution did not have sufficient staff for extending care and protection to the child and that appropriate measures to rehabilitate the child were not undertaken on time.

In the above instances, CWC could not shift the children from the resident homes to an alternate facility, as such a facility was not available in the entire district. This resulted in the children with special needs/mentally challenged children being kept in institutions which were not provided with the specified standards set for these children. Considering the fact that 96 *per cent* (697 out of 724) of CCIs in the State were run by NGOs, Government should carry out periodical checks to ensure that these CCIs are adhering to the prescribed standards, so that the inmates are provided with facilities envisaged by the Act and Rules.

Accepting the audit observations, Government replied (April 2024) that State-level inspection committee will be reconstituted soon to conduct surprise inspections at the CCIs in the State. Directions will also be issued to district-level inspection committees to inspect the CCIs in the district and take remedial actions. Department level inspection committee will be formed at district level to conduct surprise inspection at CCIs in the district to ascertain that CCIs have minimum facilities. It was further stated that the Home Management Committee will also follow up and monitor the existing facilities in CCIs.

2.1.7.6. Co-habitation of children with mental illness and children requiring de-addiction from drugs, liquor, etc., along with normal children

As per Rule 80(1) of JJ Model Rules 2016, the JJB/CWC/Children's Court may send the child who is mentally ill or addicted to alcohol or drugs or any other substance to a fit facility for such period as may be certified by a medical officer or mental health expert, as necessary for proper treatment of the child. In the

²² Protection of Children from sexual offences

selected districts, 179 cases²³ of children with mental illness and 138 cases²⁴ of children requiring assistance for de-addiction from use of drugs, substance, liquor, etc., were attended to by the CWCs during the period of audit.

Rule 80(3) of JJ Model Rules 2016 states that State Government may set up separate Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for children addicted to use of liquor, substance, etc., on the basis of appropriate age groups. Audit noticed that none of the test checked CWCs at Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Wayanad had a system in place to extend special care and treatment to children requiring de-addiction from use of drugs, substance and liquor. Further, there were no exclusive homes for protection/treatment/rehabilitation of children with mental illness at Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Wayanad due to which the child addicts had to be accommodated along with normal children, which was not a desirable practice.

The following adverse incidents were noticed in audit:

- The GCH for Boys, Thiruvananthapuram, with a total inmate strength ranging from 55 to 80 during the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23, was seen accommodating 11 to 28 children with mental illness and related behavioural problems along with normal children.
- At GCH for Girls at Mayithara, Alappuzha, children who were under psychiatric treatment were accommodated along with normal children during the five year period of audit.
- At GCH Wayanad, children with mental disabilities/special needs were residing with normal children during the five year period of audit.

Audit observed that no special facility was provided for managing mentally ill children in these CCIs. The staff of these institutions were not trained to handle such children. Further, co-habitation of children with mental illness along with normal children may turn detrimental to both categories of children. Considering the number of cases that require de-addiction, Government has to view the matter very seriously and urgent intervention is required as usage of drugs, substance, etc., puts the life of younger generation at risk. Integrated Rehabilitation Centres for child addicts on the basis of appropriate age groups may be set up as suggested under Rule 80(3).

Government replied (April 2024) that as per the directions of High Court JJ Committee, a de-addiction centre exclusively for children will be started at Thavanur in Malappuram District. Necessary directions will be given to CCIs to provide special facilities for mentally ill children. Child Welfare Committees will be given directions to declare NGO run JJ Homes with facilities to accommodate children with special needs and for de-addiction, as fit facilities and utilise them for rehabilitating children with special needs/ addicted children.

²³ Thiruvananthapuram – 26, Ernakulam – 5 (data for 2018-19 to 2020-21 not furnished), Kannur – 9 (details for 2018-19 to 2020-21 not available), Alappuzha – 133 and Wayanad – 6

²⁴ Thiruvananthapuram – 76, Ernakulam – 16 (data for 2018-19 to 2020-21 not furnished), Kannur – 0 (details for 2018-19 to 2021-22 not available), Alappuzha – 43 and Wayanad – 3

2.1.7.7. *Functioning of Open Shelters*

Section 43 (2) of the Act states that the open shelters shall function as a community-based facility for children (up to the age of 18 years) in need of residential support, for protecting them from abuse, weaning them or keeping them away from life on the streets. These institutions were not meant to provide permanent residential facilities but were to complement the existing institutional care facilities on a short-term basis. Rule 22(7) stipulates that in cases where the child requires more than short-term care and protection exceeding 24 hours, he may be produced before CWC for initiating further appropriate steps.

Audit observed that CWC had issued (June and July 2022) orders permitting stay of two persons in the Open Shelter at Thiruvananthapuram even after attaining the age of 18, which was violative of provisions of the Act.

Audit also came across instances in which two children continued to stay in the open shelter for prolonged periods (one year and 2 ½ years) from the date of joining the shelter. As an open shelter is meant for temporary stay, continued stay for longer periods when facilities like Children's homes where the children can lead a normal life are available, is against the provisions of the Act and Rules. The CWC, which is to ensure the overall welfare of vulnerable children, was itself circumventing rules, which was not justifiable.

The Rules stipulated that the Open Shelters have to submit monthly information to the DCPU regarding the details of children availing the service in Form 29. Of the three Open Shelters²⁵ in selected districts, only one Open Shelter in Ernakulam had furnished monthly information regarding its inmates during the period 2018-19 to 2022-23.

Government replied (April 2024) that instructions have been given to DCPOs concerned to collect monthly information from Open Shelters and submit to the State office and that this would be monitored regularly.

2.1.7.8. *Deficiencies in operation of foster care system*

Foster care system enables a child to be placed for the purpose of alternate care in the domestic environment of a family, other than the child's biological family, that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care. It aims to eventually re-unite the child with own family when the family circumstances improve, and thus prevent institutionalisation of children in difficult circumstances. Children in need of care and protection could be placed in foster care including group foster care²⁶ through the order of the CWC for a short or extended period of time.

Table 2.3 shows the number of families who were extending foster care facilities in selected districts and the number of children being accommodated in these foster care families during the period covered in audit.

²⁵ at Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam and Kannur

²⁶ As per Section 2(32) of the JJ Act, "group foster care" means a family like care facility for children in need of care and protection who are without parental care, aiming at providing personalised care and fostering a sense of belonging and identity, through family like and community based solutions

Table 2.3: Details of families extending foster care facilities in selected districts during 2018-23

	Thiruvananthapuram	Alappuzha	Ernakulam	Wayanad	Kannur	Total
No. of families providing foster care	46	27	11	22	36	142
No. of children accommodated under foster care programme	48	25	27	29	37	166
No. of group foster care units	0	0	1 ²⁷	0	0	1
No. of children accommodated under group foster care	0	0	118	0	0	118

(Source: Data furnished by SCPS)

Audit noticed the following deficiencies in the operation of foster care system in test checked districts:

- ICPS Guidelines entrust the DCPU with the responsibility to ensure that the outreach worker²⁸ visits each foster family once a week for the first month, followed by monthly visits. These visits facilitate assessment of the extent to which the children in foster care adjust to the new environment and are comfortable with it. No such visits were being conducted by outreach workers in the selected districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Kannur and Wayanad.
- Rule 23(18) of JJ rules require the CWC to conduct monthly inspection of the foster families or foster care givers to check on the well-being of the child. This would include interaction with the child, its foster parents, their biological children, school teachers, parents of origin and neighbours. In the selected districts of Ernakulam and Wayanad, no inspection of this manner was seen conducted by the CWC during the audit period. As regards Kannur, the DCPU replied that the details of such inspections were not available on record.
- Rule 23(17) of JJ Rules require the DCPU to maintain a record of each child in foster care in Form 34. This form captures details of ICP, Home Study Report, Child Study Report, record of visits made to the foster family, etc. Audit noticed that in four selected districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Wayanad and Kannur, these details regarding children in foster care were not maintained in Form 34.

In the absence of regular visits to the foster family by CWC and outreach workers and systematic updating of details of foster care in the prescribed format by DCPUs, the authorities were evidently not in active contact with the child sent to foster care and could not assess the extent to which the child was adapting to his environment.

²⁷ SOS Children's Village

²⁸ Outreach workers act as a link between the community and the DCPU and shall be responsible for identifying families and children at risk and offer necessary support services.

Government replied (April 2024) that instructions will be issued to CWCs to conduct inspections of foster families, either in person or in online mode, and that the District Magistrates will also be directed to monitor these inspections. Additionally, DCPOs will be instructed to ensure that Outreach workers/Social Workers attached to DCPUs visit each foster family/ foster caregiver regularly to monitor the well-being of the child.

2.1.7.9. Leave of absence of children and overstay on leave

As per Rule 18 of JJ Rules, any child in need of care and protection shall be produced before the CWC and the CWC, after interaction with the child, may issue directions for placing the child in a Children's Home. Section 98 of JJ Act empowers CWC and JJB to permit leave of absence to any child placed in an institution on special occasions like examination, marriage of relatives, serious illness of parent or emergency of like nature, under supervision, for a period generally not exceeding seven days in one instance. If a child fails to return to the Children's Home on expiry of leave period, the JJB or CWC can cause him to be taken back to the home concerned or issue release order permitting the child to live with parents or guardian. Scrutiny of records revealed certain instances wherein children going on leave from CCI did not return to the institution and the CCI and CWC did not initiate timely follow up measures, as detailed below:

- Five children within the age of six years who proceeded on leave²⁹ from SAA Wayanad did not return to the CCI on expiry of leave. Of these, in the case of three siblings who proceeded on leave on 01 January 2023, the release order of CWC terminating their stay in the Home to join family, was seen issued after eight months on 12 September 2023.

Audit observed that the fourth child who went on leave on 13 April 2023, had not returned to the Home till date (February 2024). Neither had the CCI informed the above fact to CWC nor has CWC issued any release order to the child.

As regards the fifth child who left SAA Wayanad on 16 March 2020, the CCI did not inform CWC that the child had not returned on expiry of allotted leave. CWC issued release order of the child from the institution, on request of parents, on 05 January 2022.

- A girl child, aged 11 years, who was placed in GCH Kakkanad, Ernakulam on 13 December 2021 went on leave, on the very next day of admission, as per orders of CWC. Though the granted leave period expired on 27 December 2021, the child did not return to the Children's Home. The institution reported the matter to CWC on 23 March 2022 only and CWC issued release orders after nine months, on 06 January 2023.

²⁹ One child in March 2020, three children in January 2023 and one child in April 2023

- On a scrutiny of Admission and Discharge registers and Attendance Book at GCH for Boys Nooranad, Alappuzha, Audit observed that two children aged eight years who proceeded (November 2018 and April 2019) on leave from the institution as per orders of CWC, did not return on expiry of leave. Further, the fact of overstay of the children was brought to the notice of CWC by the CCI belatedly in January 2019 and August 2019 only and the release orders of these children from GCH were seen issued by CWC in July 2022. While the Act specifies the number of days for which a child can go on leave as seven, the orders of CWC do not always limit the leave period to seven days or specify the number of days of leave. In this case, CWC had issued orders (March 2019) permitting the children to go on leave for two months which was much in excess of the prescribed limit.

Such instances as cited above, make way for situations wherein during the period of overstay between expiry of leave and issue of release order, the child remains physically absent from the institution and the whereabouts of the child are not being traced and the safety of the child is compromised. After a prolonged spell of absence of the child from the institution, without even ascertaining the status of well-being of the child, release order is issued, terminating their stay in the CCI. Considering the vulnerable circumstances of these children, in the event of an untoward incident which may occur during the period of overstay, the CCI/CWC/JJB/Government could land itself in a legally embarrassing position as regards the safety of the child.

Government assured (April 2024) that the Superintendents of CCIs have been instructed to report the matter to the CWC, if the children did not return to homes after leave within the stipulated time of seven days. It was also stated that necessary instructions will be given to the CWCs to issue release orders to the children who have not returned after leave. Audit underscores the need for CWCs/CCIs to pro-actively enquire the whereabouts of children gone on leave, so as to ensure their well-being and safety, before granting release orders to them.

2.1.7.10. Efficacy in implementation of adoption procedures

Adoption Regulations, 2017 and 2022 framed by Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) and notified by Central Government define any orphan or abandoned or surrendered child, declared legally free for adoption by the CWC, a child of a relative³⁰, or a child of spouse from earlier marriage who has been surrendered by the biological parents for adoption by the step-parent, as a child eligible for adoption. Audit examined whether a system was in place in the State, to ensure that adoption procedures were followed strictly in compliance with the regulations framed. The observations of Audit are detailed in the following paragraphs:

³⁰ As defined under Section 2(52) of the Act

Delay in preparing, uploading and revalidating Home Study Reports

‘Home Study Report’ (HSR)³¹ contains details of Prospective adoptive Parents³² (PaP) or foster parents, and shall include social and economic status, family background, description of home and atmosphere and health status. The CWC was to obtain the HSR of the foster family through the DCPUs.

Regulation 29(3)(d) of Adoption Regulations, 2017 states that every Specialised Adoption Agency (SAA) shall complete the HSR of PaPs, within one month from the date of their registration and submission of required documents. The period by which HSR was to be completed was extended to two months vide Regulation 30(3)(d) of Adoption Regulations, 2022 and it was also to be ensured that revalidation of HSR was to be done prior to its period of expiry.

Scrutiny of records pertaining to HSRs revealed following shortfalls during the audit period:

- In Ernakulam district, out of a total of 124 cases, HSRs were completed after a delay of 13 to 58 days in eight cases. In Wayanad district, the delay ranged from five to 245 days in 21 cases. In Kannur district, the delay ranged from three to 1031 days in 29 cases.
- The Regulations also envisage that the HSR shall be posted on the designated portal by the SAA within a period of three days from the date of completion of HSR.

However, in seven cases in Alappuzha district, the delay in uploading the HSR on the designated portal ranged between nine and 80 days. In Wayanad district, in 26 cases, the delay ranged between three and 158 days. In Kannur district, in 27 cases, the delay ranged between three to 225 days.

- In three cases in Alappuzha district, revalidation was not done before the date of expiry of HSR and the delay in revalidation ranged between 81 to 153 days. In Wayanad district, in four cases, though revalidation was due between April 2020 and September 2022, it has not been conducted till date (October 2023). In Kannur district, in 28 cases, the delay was in the range of 12 to 390 days.

As the CWC, before placing the child in foster care, shall obtain the HSR of the foster family through the DCPU, the timely preparation and uploading of HSR is a crucial step in ensuring congenial homes for adoptable children. Further, children with special needs were to be considered for placement in foster family, only if the HSR of the foster family supports its fitness and has facilities for care of such children.

Government replied (April 2024) that directions have been given to DCPUs at Ernakulam, Kannur and Wayanad districts to conduct home study in 174

³¹ Rule 2(viii) of JJ Rules

³² Section 2(49) of the Act defines “Prospective adoptive Parents” as a person or persons eligible to adopt a child as per the provisions of Section 57 of the Act.

pending cases at the earliest and to Alappuzha DCPU to upload the pending HSR by collecting documents from the applicants.

Non-setting up of cradle points and signages

Adoption Regulations, 2017 and 2022³³ insist that every SAA shall set up cradle baby points at its own home and may install cradles at primary health centres, hospitals, nursing homes, etc., to receive abandoned children. The SAA is to be nominated as a Cradle Baby Reception Centre and shall be equipped with all basic facilities for infants. The Cradle Baby Reception Centre was to be linked to cradle points at the Primary Health Care Centres/Hospitals/Nursing homes, etc. The DCPU shall facilitate procurement of cradles for the cradle points. Further, to provide guidance to biological parent/s to safely abandon children, the CARA had directed (September 2022) all SAAs to mandatorily display cradle signage at various places.

Audit noticed that cradle points were installed only in two³⁴ out of the 14 SAAs in the State. Among the test checked five districts, only Thiruvananthapuram had a cradle point at SAA. As regards cradle points installed at sites other than SAA, there was one³⁵ cradle at Alappuzha and two cradles at Ernakulam³⁶. There were no places for safe abandonment of children in Wayanad and Kannur districts. Non-availability of cradles as stipulated indicates that the DCPUs did not facilitate procurement of cradles as required by the Guidelines of ICPS. Further, there were no signages erected near any of these cradle baby points.

Instances of newborn babies being abandoned in unsafe and unhygienic surroundings can be avoided only by promoting more cradle points to hand over the infants and spreading awareness regarding the location of such points. Safe abandonment can benefit the newborn from possible loss of life and protect them against any possible harm or abuse when thrown in an inhuman manner into trash, garbage, bushes, etc. Installation of cradle baby points and erecting signages for easy detection as prescribed, would enable better chance of saving the life of an abandoned newborn.

Government stated (April 2024) that Kerala State Child Welfare Council has been directed to set up baby cradle reception centres in connection with SAA/hospitals in the State using MLA funds.

Delay in medical examination of adoptable children with special needs

Regulation 36 (8) of Adoption Regulations, 2022 requires the DM to refer children having health issues or suspected special needs/ conditions to the Chief Medical Officer of the District (District Medical Officer (DMO)) within 24 hours of receipt of information about such children from the respective SAA or CCI. The DMO shall then examine the health status of the child and assess

³³ w.e.f. 23 September 2022

³⁴ Thiruvananthapuram and Malappuram

³⁵ at Women and Child Hospital, Alappuzha

³⁶ at Little Flower Hospital, Angamaly and General Hospital, Ernakulam

whether the child is having any ailment or special needs, within a period of 15 days.

On a scrutiny of records in the SAAs in the selected districts, it was noticed that in Thiruvananthapuram SAA, the DMO was not conducting examination of health status of the children within the prescribed period of 15 days. The delay in examination by DMO, Thiruvananthapuram ranged from 228 to 275 days in respect of children with special needs. Details of delay are shown in **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4: Details of delay in conducting medical examination by DMO

Child	Date on which examination was due	Date on which examination was done	Delay (in days)
Thiruvananthapuram			
Child 1	20.12.2022	20.09.2023	275
Child 2	20.12.2022	20.09.2023	275
Child 3	02.02.2023	Pending (October 2023)	Pending
Child 4	05.02.2023	20.09.2023	228
Child 5	25.01.2023	20.09.2023	239

(Source: Data furnished by Kerala State Council for Child Welfare)

The delay in conduct of medical examination hinders the declaration of child as legally free for adoption. As this would delay the process of adoption, the medical examination should be conducted within the time limit as prescribed in the rules.

Government replied (April 2024) that Medical Examination Report (MER) of children with special need was transferred to DMOs concerned via Child Adoption Resource Information and Guidance System (CARINGS) portal for detailed examination of their health status. It was further stated that due to the delay on the part of DMO, the Government intervened in this matter and the MERs of these children were completed and the same have been updated in the CARINGS portal.

The reply is not justifiable as such inordinate delay on the part of the DMO could restrict the chances of children with special needs being chosen for adoption. Hence, this step of medical examination and issue of MER must be accorded top priority.

Delay in conducting post-adoption follow up

Regulation 13 of Adoption Regulations, 2017 states that the SAA, which has prepared the HSR, shall prepare the post-adoption follow up report on six monthly basis for two years (four follow ups) from the date of pre-adoption foster placement with the PaPs. This report is to be uploaded in the CARINGS portal along with photographs of the child.

Audit noticed delay in conducting post-adoption follow ups in the test checked districts, which is detailed in **Appendix 2.5**.

Due to non-conduct of post-adoption follow ups as prescribed, it could not be assessed on a periodical basis, as to whether the adopted child was having adjustment problems with the adoptive parents. As the Regulations envisage the

SAA to arrange for counselling for adoptive parents and adoptees in such cases if required, regular conduct of these follow ups is very crucial.

Government replied (April 2024) that strict direction has been given to SAAs for the disposal of pending cases in a time-bound manner.

Diversion of adoption fee for other than adoption related expenses

Regulation 2(3) of Adoption Regulations, 2017 and 2022, define adoption fee as the fee to be received from the PaP directly, in case they are living in India and through Authorised Foreign Adoption Agency/Central Authority/Government department, in cases of inter-country adoptions. The adoption fee collected can be utilised for meeting expenses related to the welfare of children, maintenance of home and expenses incurred for finalising the adoption. The recognition of an SAA could be suspended or revoked for misuse or diversion of adoption fee for purposes other than the purposes for which it was received.

On scrutiny of records maintained at the SAAs in the selected districts, it was noticed that in Thiruvananthapuram and Ernakulam, expenses related to fish and hen farming, pet animal maintenance, cable and internet charges, repairs of two wheelers, etc., were met out of adoption fee collected. It was also noticed that an amount of ₹16.91 lakh of adoption fee was diverted for meeting salary expenses of SAA, Thiruvananthapuram. However, no action was seen taken against the SAAs for non-permissible use of adoption fee.

Government replied (April 2024) regarding the diversion of Grant-in-aid and adoption fee by the SAA, that direction will be given to DCPOs concerned for examining the same and to submit inquiry report, based on which necessary action will be taken.

2.1.7.11. Delay in completion of inquiry process by Juvenile Justice Board

Provisions in the Act³⁷ and JJ Rules³⁸ state that the State Government shall constitute for every district, one or more JJBs for exercising the powers and discharging its functions relating to children in conflict with law. In Kerala, JJB has been constituted in all the 14 districts. The Board shall sit on all working days for a minimum of six hours, commensurate with the working hours of a Magistrate court, unless the case pendency is less and the State Government issues an order in this regard.

Section 14 (1) and (2) and Section 15 of JJ Act states that when a Child in conflict with law (CCL) is produced before the JJB, it shall hold an inquiry which shall be completed within a period of four months from the date of first production of the child before the JJB, unless the period is extended for a maximum of two months considering the circumstances of the case.

In violation of the above, Audit noticed that in Thiruvananthapuram, inquiry of all 1,263 children produced before JJB, Thiruvananthapuram during the audit period was extended beyond six months, due to delay in submission of final

³⁷ Section 4

³⁸ Rule 3, 4

report and mental assessment report by counsellors. Inquiry of all 265 children produced before JJB, Wayanad was extended beyond six months, as the Board met only once in a week. In Alappuzha, out of 213 children produced before the JJB, inquiry of 64 children was extended beyond six months, for which no reasons were furnished.

Audit observed that the time lag in completion of inquiry process contributed to enhanced pendency in cases handled by JJB, as seen in **Table 2.5**.

Table 2.5: Details of pending cases and period of pendency with respect to the cases handled by JJB

Year	Thiruvananthapuram		Alappuzha		Ernakulam		Wayanad		Kannur	
	No. of pending cases	Period of maximum pendency	No. of pending cases	Period of maximum pendency	No. of pending cases	Period of maximum pendency	No. of pending cases	Period of maximum pendency	No. of pending cases	Period of maximum pendency
2018-19	273	7 years	109	5 years	384	6 years	10	4 years	296	1 year
2019-20	309	8 years	144	5 years	271	6 years	16	3 years	240	2 years
2020-21	380	9 years	164	5 years	287	6 years	31	2 years	286	3 years
2021-22	425	10 years	172	5 years	207	6 years	37	1 year	329	4 years
2022-23	413	11 years	190	6 years	251	5 years	29	less than one year	256	5 years

(Source: Data furnished by SCPS and DCPUs)

It was seen that there were cases with pendency of more than 11 years in Thiruvananthapuram and more than six years in Alappuzha. In Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Kannur districts, the JJB did not sit on all working days, despite higher pendency of cases.

The Chief Judicial Magistrate (CJM) or the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) was to review the pendency of cases of JJB once every three months and direct the Board to increase the frequency of its sittings or recommend the constitution of additional Boards. The status of pendency and reasons thereof, were to be reviewed every six months by a High Level Committee³⁹.

In contravention of the above, the CJM or the CMM did not review the pendency of cases every three months in Wayanad and Alappuzha. Further, the High Level Committee was not constituted in the State till date (February 2024).

Government replied (April 2024) that action will be taken in collaboration with the Police and Judicial Departments to ensure prompt submission of final reports and maintain full-time judicial officers in the JJBs. It was further stated that a directive will be issued to facilitate the review by the CJM and the DM, as well as to ensure the prompt formation of High Level Committee.

Delay in completion of inquiry process by JJB would contribute to the undue extension of period of trial undergone by a CCL, which is not acceptable in terms of the child's right to live with dignity.

³⁹ consisting of the Executive Chairperson of the State Legal Services Authority, who shall be the Chairperson, Secretary of the Home Department, Secretary of WCDD and representative nominated by the Chairperson.

2.1.7.12. Lack of trained Child Welfare Police Officers in police stations

Complying with Section 107 of the Act, to co-ordinate all functions of police relating to children, the State Government shall constitute Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU) in each district and city, headed by a police officer not below the rank of a Deputy Superintendent of Police. In every police station, at least one officer not below the rank of Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) had to be designated as the Child Welfare Police Officer (CWPO) to exclusively deal with children who are either victims or perpetrators. Further, all police officers of SJPU shall be imparted special training, especially at induction as CWPO, to enable them to perform their functions more effectively.

Audit observed that SJPU has been constituted in all the 20 police districts in the State. Though CWPOs were posted in all the 249 police stations in selected districts, in 45⁴⁰ stations, officers below the rank of ASI were being posted as CWPOs.

Audit further noticed that apart from the CWPOs posted to two police stations each in Thiruvananthapuram City, Alappuzha and Kochi City and 20 stations in Ernakulam Rural who have received special training, none of the CWPOs in other stations in the test checked districts were imparted training in this regard.

As per information furnished by selected police districts, a total of 1186, 77 and 1322 children respectively had been apprehended for producing before JJBs, involvement in drug/substance cases and involvement in criminal cases during the period covered in audit. Considering the volume of juveniles involved in such cases, Government must take serious initiative to provide appropriate training to CWPOs as envisaged in the Act.

Government replied (April 2024) that due to transfer of trained officials, appointment of untrained officers has occurred and to address this, funds⁴¹ have been allocated for an extensive training program for the CWPOs in SJPU with the co-operation of Police Department.

2.1.7.13. Lapses in execution of central sponsorship programme

Section 45 of JJ Act and Rule 24 of JJ Rules mandate the State Government to make rules for the purpose of undertaking various programmes of sponsorship of children through DCPUs. Paragraph C(3) of Chapter X of ICPS guidelines elaborates the reasons and criteria for selection of children for central sponsorship programme. Sponsorship programmes were aimed at providing supplementary support to families with medical, nutritional, educational and other needs of the children with a view to improve their quality of life.

The criteria of the scheme stipulated that children below 18 years hailing from families with annual income not exceeding ₹30,000 and ₹24,000 per annum in cities (other than Metro cities) and rural areas respectively, were to be

⁴⁰ Thiruvananthapuram City – 2, Thiruvananthapuram Rural – 2, Alappuzha – 1, Kochi City – 5, Ernakulam Rural – 24, Kannur City – 10 and Wayanad – 1

⁴¹ vide Proceedings of Member Secretary, SCPS dated 01 December 2023.

considered for sponsorship. The sponsorship amount was limited to ₹2,000⁴² per month per child and the period of sponsorship was not to exceed three years. The transaction was to be made through a joint account of the child with parent, preferably mother, in a bank or post office. Funds for central sponsorship were allotted by GoI to the extent of 60 *per cent*, while the remaining 40 *per cent* was allotted by the State Government.

The pattern of allotment of funds by the Government and the expenditure incurred in selected districts were as given in **Appendix 2.6(a)**. Audit observed the following deviations from the rules, in the execution of the programme in Wayanad district.

- Out of 88 children covered under the programme, sponsorship was paid beyond the age of 18 years in three cases, leading to excess payment of ₹0.50 lakh. Details are given in **Appendix 2.7**.
- In two out of 18 records test checked, transactions relating to the programme were made through single account, as against the requirement of a joint account.
- In one out of 18 records test checked, sponsorship amount was granted to a child where the annual family income exceeded⁴³ the prescribed limit of ₹24,000.

The above lapses are indicative of the ineffective monitoring exercised by the DCPUs.

2.1.8. Other Child Protection Schemes

There were 12 sub schemes under innovative projects for child care and protection, funded by the State Government. Audit analysed whether the mode of implementation of these schemes complied with extant Government orders and instructions, as detailed in following paragraphs:

2.1.8.1. Our Responsibility to Children

Our Responsibility to Children (ORC) was introduced (2015) by the State Government with the objective of creating a safe, nurturing environment where vulnerable children involved or at the risk of getting involved in destructive behaviour are brought to the mainstream, equipped and empowered with life skills, support and knowledge to realise their full potential and become productive members of the society.

ORC operates at three levels, *viz.*, school, district and State. While the State Governing Body of ICPS oversees all ORC activities in the State, the District Level Action Group (DAG)⁴⁴ managed by the District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) guides the implementation of the project in the district. At the school

⁴² Revised to ₹4000 from 2022-23

⁴³ ₹30,000

⁴⁴ consists of ORC co-ordinator and representatives of the District Collector, District Police Chief, General Education Department, Health Department, etc.

level, the head of the school has the overall charge of the ORC unit⁴⁵. Class teachers identify⁴⁶ students in need of expert evaluation and management and refer the student to the nodal teacher. The nodal teacher, in consultation with the counsellor undertakes an inquiry and determines school level measures for children with moderate issues and refers children with severe issues to the District Resource Centre (DRC).

While the number of schools in which ORC was implemented in 2015 was 93, 380 schools in the State joined the scheme in 2022-23. In the selected districts, the number of schools implementing the scheme ranged from 110 to 137 during the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23. Audit noticed the following deficiencies in the selected districts regarding the implementation of the scheme.

- The guidelines required the DCPO to organise consultative sessions with the nodal teachers and counsellors once every quarter to obtain feedback on the functioning of the project in the schools. Similarly, the DAG managed by the DCPO was to meet before the 10th of each month. However, this was not seen complied with, in four⁴⁷ selected districts.
- An Expert Resource Group (ERG) was to be formed by the DRC consisting of a panel of specialists who can treat specific issues that are beyond behavioural issues. The ERG was expected to provide training to the mentors/expert teachers on a regular basis.

In Alappuzha and Kannur districts, there were no specialists under the ERG for the years 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21. In Ernakulam district, only one specialist⁴⁸ was available during 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Though trainings were to be conducted on a regular basis, it was seen that no trainings were conducted by the ERG in Alappuzha in 2018-19 and 2019-20 and in Kannur in 2018-19 and 2020-21. In Thiruvananthapuram, no trainings were conducted during 2018-19 and 2019-20.

In the absence of a regular and consistent interaction between the DCPO, nodal teachers and counsellors and lack of specialists in ERG, audit could not ascertain that the mentors and teachers were sufficiently trained to handhold the vulnerable children to realise their full potential and become productive members of the society.

The DCPU was to maintain a subgroup of District Voluntary Mentors (DVMs) comprising retired teachers, qualified parents, etc., experienced in dealing with children. These mentors were to be imparted regular training on matters related to mentoring children and were expected to engage with the child at least once every week. The DAG has to appoint District Mentor Co-ordinators (DMC) from the pool of DVMs. The DMCs were responsible for regular monitoring of

⁴⁵ ORC team includes a nodal teacher, counsellor and school Junior Public Health Nurse

⁴⁶ Students with behavioural, learning and emotional problems are identified

⁴⁷ Alappuzha, Thiruvananthapuram, Kannur, Wayanad

⁴⁸ ORC Psychologist

the quality of care provided to the children and were to visit each school every three months to supervise the activities.

- Audit observed that in Wayanad and Kannur districts, the pool of volunteers was not being maintained. In Wayanad district, Audit noticed that DVMs were available only during 2018-19 (91 DVMs) and only one⁴⁹ training was conducted for DVMs. In Kannur district, the DVMs were available only for the years 2018-19 (50 DVMs) and 2019-20 (20 DVMs) and only one⁵⁰ training was conducted for DVMs till date. As DVMs were not available for the remaining years, DMCs were also not selected.
- In Ernakulam district, though a pool of DVMs were being maintained, only two trainings on matters relating to mentoring children have been conducted in each year during the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23. The visit to schools by DMCs in Ernakulam district was only 50 *per cent* during 2018-19 and 2019-20, three *per cent* in 2020-21⁵¹, 58 *per cent* in 2021-22 and 43 *per cent* during 2022-23.

Government replied (April 2024) that a directive will be issued to all DCPOs to ensure that consultative sessions are held regularly in all quarters, as outlined in the guidelines. It was also stated that training sessions were planned by ERGs and efforts to re-activate district voluntary movement were underway.

2.1.8.2. *Saranabalyam*

The scheme Saranabalyam was implemented by the State Government with the objective of making the State free from child labour, child begging and child trafficking. In order to rescue children engaged in child labour, child begging and child trafficking, the DCPOs were directed (September 2020) to conduct rescue drives at least three times in a week.

Audit noticed that in the selected districts, the number of rescue drives conducted were much less than the targeted number of 156⁵² during 2021 to 2023 as shown in **Table 2.6**:

⁴⁹ in 2018-19

⁵⁰ in 2019-20

⁵¹ COVID period

⁵² 52 weeks x 3 inspections = 156

Table 2.6: Details of rescue drives conducted by DCPOs during the period 2018-19 to 2022-23

Period	Thiruvananthapuram		Alappuzha		Ernakulam		Wayanad		Kannur	
	No. of rescue drives conducted	No. of children rescued	No. of rescue drives conducted	No. of children rescued	No. of rescue drives conducted	No. of children rescued	No. of rescue drives conducted	No. of children rescued	No. of rescue drives conducted	No. of children rescued
2018-19	8	3	106	15	3	2	0	0	0	0
2019-20	21	22	118	20	6	4	42	0	42	20
2020-21	3	8	11	9	1	1	27	0	30	2
2021-22	8	7	16	11	2	11	25	0	47	1
2022-23	17	5	25	10	2	31	12	0	52	0
Total	57	45	276	65	14	49	106	0	171	23

(Source: Data furnished by SCPS)

Audit noticed that 182 children could be rescued during the drives undertaken in the audit period. Hence, the authorities may consider stepping up the number of inspections/rescue drives to identify children involved in begging, labour and trafficking.

Government replied (April 2024) that the Department has developed plans to enrich capacity building of district level stakeholders, reframing existing evaluation indicators and that proposals for the same would be submitted.

2.1.8.3. State sponsorship program - Vijnanadeepthi

In line with the criteria governing the Central sponsorship programme detailed in paragraph 2.1.7.13, the State Government launched (October 2017) the State sponsorship programme, Vijnanadeepthi to grant sponsorship to 1000 children in the State per year. The pattern of allotment of funds by the Government and the expenditure incurred in selected districts were as given in **Appendix 2.6 (b)**. It was noticed that a total of 789 children⁵³ were granted State sponsorship in selected districts during the period covered in audit. Audit conducted a test check of records relating to granting of sponsorship to these children and came across the following deficiencies in DCPU, Wayanad.

- In six out of 119 cases, sponsorship was granted to children beyond the age of 18 years resulting in an excess payment of ₹0.54 lakh (**Appendix 2.7**).
- As against the prescribed period of three years, Audit noticed that out of 119 cases, sponsorship was granted (February 2018 to August 2021) in excess of permissible amount in 20 cases for seven additional months and in 26 cases, for six additional months, resulting in excess payment of ₹5.92 lakh⁵⁴.
- In three⁵⁵ out of 10 records test checked, sponsorship was seen granted to children where the annual family income exceeded the prescribed limit of ₹24000.

⁵³ Thiruvananthapuram – 305, Alappuzha – 106, Ernakulam – 128, Wayanad – 119, Kannur - 131

⁵⁴ (20 cases x ₹2,000 x 7 months) + (26 cases x ₹2,000 x 6 months) = ₹5,92,000

⁵⁵ ₹36,000 (2 cases) and ₹48,000

Government replied (April 2024) that a comprehensive report has been requested from the DCPOs and further action will be taken once detailed report is received.

2.1.8.4. *Simultaneous receipt of Central and State ICPS sponsorships/ICPS sponsorship and financial assistance from other departments*

The guidelines for Central sponsorship consider children receiving financial assistance under any similar scheme of Government as not eligible for sponsorship under the scheme, whereas guidelines for State sponsorship consider children receiving any type of financial assistance from the Central/State Government as ineligible for assistance under the programme.

A total of 1,320⁵⁶ children received sponsorships in the five selected districts during the period covered in audit. Scrutiny of related data revealed instances of children simultaneously receiving both the Central and State sponsorship as detailed in **Table 2.7**.

Table 2.7: Details of children simultaneously receiving both the Central and State sponsorship

(₹ in lakh)			
	Districts	Period	Amount
Child 1	Thiruvananthapuram	April 2022 to September 2022	0.12
Child 2	Thiruvananthapuram	April 2022 to September 2022	0.12
Child 3	Ernakulam	September 2021 to December 2022	0.40
Child 4	Wayanad	December 2021 to February 2022	0.06

(Source: Data from DCPUs)

The total excess sponsorship paid amounted to ₹0.70 lakh.

- Sixty nine children belonging to Scheduled Castes (SC) category and six children belonging to Scheduled Tribes (ST) category were in receipt of Central/State sponsorship from WCDD. Of these, 56 SC and all six ST children were in receipt of financial assistance from SC/ST Development Department and hence were not eligible for sponsorships from WCDD. This resulted in ineligible payment of financial assistance worth ₹20.78 lakh⁵⁷ from WCDD.

As both sponsorship guidelines have clearly barred double payments of similar nature, before grant of financial assistance, the DCPUs should make adequate enquiries, at least in schools or at SC/ST Development Departments to ensure that the children were not in receipt of other similar financial assistance. Payment of multiple financial assistance to the same beneficiary, apart from the possibility of depriving an eligible child of its rightful share, is a violation of the guidelines.

Government replied (April 2024) that a comprehensive report has been called for from the DCPOs. Further action will be taken once the detailed report is received.

⁵⁶ Central sponsorship – 531, State sponsorship - 789

⁵⁷ ₹19.30 lakh for 56 SC children and ₹1.48 lakh for six ST children

2.1.8.5. Sanctioning of Juvenile Justice Fund without the orders of Child Welfare Committee

Section 105 of JJ Act and Rule 83 of the Rules required the State Government to form a Juvenile Justice Fund and make adequate budgetary allocations towards this fund. The fund may also receive donations, voluntary contributions, etc. Accordingly, the State Government formed a fund, Balanidhi and issued guidelines (November 2017) as to its collection and utilisation and selection of beneficiaries. Clause 3 under Section IV of the above guidelines states that a child can be granted financial assistance as per the medical certificate, on the basis of recommendation of the CWC and the DCPO.

Audit noticed that 84 children in the State have been granted financial assistance for medical treatment during the audit period, of which 24 children⁵⁸ were from the selected districts. Twenty two of these 24 children have been granted financial assistance without the recommendation of CWC, as specified in the guidelines.

Government replied (April 2024) that the Department will ensure that procedures followed align with guidelines and that as part of guaranteeing the timely release of funds, the said clause has been omitted in the newly proposed guidelines submitted to the Government in October 2023. The action of the Government in omitting the said clause is not justifiable as it may cause infringement of eligibility criteria.

2.1.9. Monitoring

Monitoring is a continuous process of collecting and analysing information about a programme, and comparing actual against planned results in order to judge how well the intervention was being implemented. Audit analysed whether the monitoring mechanisms as envisaged in the Act and Rules were in place to impart efficiency to the implementation of child protection schemes.

2.1.9.1. Shortfall in conduct of inspections

State/District Inspection Committees

As per Section 54 of the JJ Act and the provisions⁵⁹ contained in the rules, the State Government shall appoint Inspection Committees for the State and districts, for all institutions registered or recognised to be fit under the Act. The Inspection Committees were to mandatorily conduct visits to all facilities housing children in the area allocated, at least once in three months and submit reports of the findings of such visits within a week of their visit, to the District Child Protection Units or State Government, as the case may be, for further action.

⁵⁸ Thiruvananthapuram -16, Alappuzha - 1, Ernakulam - 1, Wayanad - 3 and Kannur - 3

⁵⁹ Rule 41(4) of JJ Model Rules states that the SIC shall carry out random inspections of the institutions and Rule 41(10) states that the DIC shall carry out inspection of the facilities housing children in the district at least once every three months

Audit observed that the State Inspection Committee (SIC) and District Inspection Committees (DIC) have been formed in the State in 2017 and 2018 respectively. However, in the selected 17 CCIs, against the prescribed number of 340 inspections⁶⁰, the SIC conducted only six inspections during the audit period, which was a meagre two *per cent*. The DCPO Kannur replied to audit that, though a DIC was formed in the district, it was not reconstituted since November 2020. Owing to this, Inspection Reports have not been submitted to the DCPU and corrective actions could not be initiated. In Wayanad district, though Inspection Committee was formed, no inspections were seen conducted in the selected CCIs. The number of inspections conducted in test checked districts during the audit period are detailed in **Appendix 2.8**. In the absence of regular inspections of the CCIs, the lack of facilities and problems encountered by children would go unnoticed.

Government replied (April 2024) that the inspections were carried out as part of renewal of the JJ registration and detailed instructions will be issued to carry out periodic inspections at Children's Homes. However shortfall in inspections and its adverse consequences were noticed in the course of audit, which need to be addressed urgently.

Non-conduct of inspection by Child Welfare Committees

The CWC was to conduct at least two inspections per month, of residential facilities for children in need of care and protection and recommend action for improvement in quality of services extended, to the DCPU and the State Government.

Audit noticed that the CWC has not conducted any inspection of the residential facilities for children in Ernakulam, during the period 2018-19 to 2022-23. In Wayanad, the number of inspections during 2018-19 to 2020-21 ranged from seven to 15. Thiruvananthapuram and Kannur districts did not furnish any records to audit in this regard.

Non-conduct of inspections by CWCs would adversely impact the possible improvements to the quality of services in CCIs.

Government replied (April 2024) that all CWCs have been directed to conduct inspections. Furthermore, detailed instructions will be provided to all CWCs to conduct periodical visits to CCIs.

Non-conduct of inspection in JJB by the District Judge

The Rules required the District Judge to conduct an inspection of the JJB once every quarter and appraise the performance of the members of the JJB on the basis of their participation in the proceedings of the Board and submit a report to the Selection Committee constituted under Rule 87 of the Rules.

⁶⁰ (17 CCIs) x (four inspections per year) x (five years)

Audit noticed that in the selected districts of Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Wayanad and Kannur, no inspection in this regard has been conducted during 2018-19 to 2022-23.

Government stated (April 2024) that the matter will be included as an agenda item in the upcoming Juvenile Justice Committee meeting to seek a decision on ensuring periodic inspections by the District Judge.

Non-conduct of inspection in CWC by the District Magistrate

The District Magistrate (DM) who was the District Collector was to inspect and review the functioning of the CWC once in every quarter and submit a report on the performance of the Chairperson and the members of the CWC, on the basis of their participation in the proceedings of the CWC, to the Selection Committee.

Audit noticed that in Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Ernakulam, and Wayanad districts, no inspection in this regard had been conducted by the DM during 2018-19 to 2022-23. In Kannur district, no inspection had been conducted by the DM since June 2022.

Government replied (April 2024) that a directive will be issued to all DMs, instructing them to ensure periodic inspections of CWCs.

2.1.9.2. Housing of district offices away from district headquarters

As per the ICPS guidelines⁶¹, the DCPU shall function under the overall administrative control and supervision of the DM of the district concerned. In the detailed counter affidavit⁶² filed (November 2019) by the State Government in the Hon'ble High Court of Kerala, it was stated that steps were being taken to make sure that all the DCPU offices were housed at the district headquarters.

Audit noticed that among the DCPUs in the selected districts, the DCPU at Ernakulam district alone was housed at the district headquarters, which was the seat of administrative head of implementation of ICPS and other child protection programmes at the district level. Three of the remaining four DCPUs were located away⁶³ from the district headquarters. Even after four years of filing of affidavit, the State Government has not complied with its own undertaking to the Hon'ble High Court of Kerala regarding functioning of DCPUs at the district headquarters.

Government replied (April 2024) that the DCPUs are currently functioning in District headquarters at only four locations in the State. Steps will be taken to relocate the DCPUs to District headquarters in consultation with the DM, taking into account the availability of space at the headquarters.

⁶¹ Item 1.1 in Annexure 1

⁶² Submissions as regards Paragraph 95.3 of the judgment of the Hon'ble Apex Court in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 473 of 2005 contained in counter affidavit to WP(C) No. 23669 of 2019(S), Bachpan Bachao Andolan vs State of Kerala on 17 November 2021.

⁶³ Thiruvananthapuram – 10 kms, Wayanad – 10 kms, Kannur – 22 kms

2.1.9.3. *Non-functioning of Child Protection Management Information System*

Rule 84 (ix) of JJ Rules required the SCPS to maintain a State level database of all children in institutional and non-institutional care and update it on a quarterly basis.

The WCDD entered into an agreement (May 2020) with the Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (C-DIT) for the design and development, technical support and annual maintenance of website and software for Child Care Homes Management. Accordingly, a Child Protection Management Information System (CPMIS) software was developed⁶⁴ by C-DIT for maintenance of data relating to ICPS. The admission of inmates to the childcare homes, their transfer and release, etc., were to be recorded online in the CPMIS and monitored by WCDD. An amount of ₹2.67 lakh was paid (September 2020) to C-DIT for this purpose.

Though the agreement was signed and payment made as early as in May 2020 and September 2020 respectively, the portal could not be made functional due to technical reasons even as of March 2024.

Government replied (April 2024) that a plan has been devised to integrate all websites and portals under the umbrella of SCPS into a single platform. To facilitate this, the State has allocated ₹23 lakh for the project and an agency has been selected for execution.

Lack of effective utilisation of Track Child portal

Rule 18(7) of JJ Model Rules envisaged that in the case of an abandoned/lost/orphaned child, the CWC, before passing an order granting interim custody of the child pending inquiry, shall ensure that, the information regarding such child is uploaded on a designated portal. Regulation 6(6) of Adoption Regulations, 2017 states that for tracing out the biological parents or the legal guardians, the CWC may direct the DCPU to advertise the particulars and photograph of the child in a national newspaper with wide circulation within three working days from the time of receiving the child and also ensure entry of data in the designated portal (Track Child portal⁶⁵ or Khoya Paya portal⁶⁶).

Audit scrutiny revealed that in Thiruvananthapuram, details of 46 orphaned/abandoned/missing children were not uploaded in the portal. Neither was the existing data in portal referred to, to ascertain whether the child was a

⁶⁴ Scope of the project included Child Care Homes registration and renewal, ownership and manager database, Childcare homes management, inmate registration and approval, inmate database management, Individual Care Plan for inmates, JJB and ICPS dashboards, etc.

⁶⁵ Track Child portal provides an integrated virtual space for all stakeholders and ICPS bodies which includes Central Project Support Unit (CPSU), SCPS/Units and DCPUs, CCIs, Police Stations, CWCs, JJBs, etc. in the 35 States/UTs. It also provides a networking system amongst all the stakeholders and citizens to facilitate tracking of a "Child in distress". It requires data entry and updating at various levels such as Police stations, CCIs/Homes, Shelters, CWCs and JJBs, etc.

⁶⁶ Khoya Paya portal helps parents to register and report online the details of their missing children. Parents, whose child is missing, can register to report a missing child, give details of a missing child and search details of missing child.

missing child. Further, the particulars and photographs of the children were advertised only in two regional vernacular dailies instead of a national newspaper. In Alappuzha, though five abandoned/missing/orphaned children were found since the formation of SAA in 2022-23, the data was not uploaded in Track Child Portal/Khoya Paya portal. Moreover, the particulars and photographs of the children were advertised only in regional vernacular dailies, that too after 19 to 79 days. In Ernakulam and Kannur, the portal was not found utilised for uploading of data and ascertaining that the received children were missing from their homes.

Government stated (April 2024) that the DCPUs have been instructed to input data into the portal and that training sessions will be arranged for persons concerned to ensure proficient utilisation of the portal. It was also stated that instructions will be given to all DCPOs, to publish the particulars of an orphan or abandoned child in national newspaper with wide circulation for tracing out the biological parents or legal guardians as per Regulation 6(7) of Adoption Regulations, 2022.

Non-maintenance of databases

- Rule 85(viii) of JJ Model Rules 2016 requires the DCPO to assess the number of children in difficult circumstances and create district-specific databases to monitor trends and patterns of children in difficult circumstances. Audit noticed that in the selected districts, the DCPOs have neither assessed the number of children nor created any database to monitor the trends and patterns of children in difficult circumstances. Given the fact that considerable number⁶⁷ of children in conflict with law received psycho-social support through KAVAL scheme⁶⁸ during 2018-19 to 2022-23, formulation of database would help identify more such children in need of intervention in these districts.

No remarks were offered by Government in this regard.

- Rule 85(xix) of JJ Model Rules 2016 requires the DCPO to maintain a database of medical and counselling centres, de-addiction centres, hospitals, open schools, education facilities, apprenticeship and vocational training programmes and centres, recreational facilities for children with special needs, etc., and forward the same to JJBs, CWCs, Children's Courts and SCPS. Among the selected districts, Thiruvananthapuram, Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Wayanad were not maintaining a database of de-addiction centres, hospitals, etc., which would limit the scope of timely rehabilitation of vulnerable children from difficult circumstances, children with special needs or mental illness, etc.

No remarks were offered by Government in this regard.

⁶⁷ ranging from 54 to 96 in Ernakulam, 17 to 119 in Wayanad, 98 to 151 in Thiruvananthapuram, 3 to 54 in Alappuzha and 36 to 64 in Kannur

⁶⁸ KAVAL is a State Scheme that aims at social re-integration and rehabilitation of children in conflict with law (under ICPS)

2.1.10. Conclusion

While the JJ Act stipulated that a child less than six years has to be placed in a SAA till adoption, provisions in the ICPS and Mission Vatsalya guidelines permitted a child to be accommodated in an SAA for not more than one year, which was not consistent with the provisions of the Act. Though the Act requires the State Government to formulate rules for streamlining the implementation of the Act, the State Government has not complied with the same, which would have facilitated effective management of State specific scenarios. While registration to function as a CCI was a mandatory requirement, non-renewal of registration before its expiry led to the CCIs functioning without registration. Children and families who had to approach the JJB/CWC during their sittings were not provided with basic facilities like waiting room, drinking water, etc., and child friendly environment. Alternate facilities to accommodate children with special needs were not established, which resulted in children with special needs being forced to continue in CCIs not meeting specified standards. Certain selected CCIs had to accommodate mentally challenged children alongside normal children, even though no special facilities were available and the staff was not equipped to manage such children. Facilities to accommodate children with mental illness and children requiring de-addiction from use of drug, substance and liquor were inadequate. Children permitted to go home on vacation and overstaying without the orders of CWC could put Government in a legally embarrassing situation in case of an untoward incident during the period of overstay. Monthly inspection of the foster families or foster care givers to check on the well-being of the child was not performed adequately. Sufficient number of cradle baby points were not seen installed for safe abandonment of children. Payments were seen made in violation of guidelines in both Central and State sponsorship schemes. Delay in examination of children with special needs in the SAAs by the DMOs in two test checked districts ranged from 49 to 275 days. Only a few CWPOs have been imparted appropriate training as per the requirement in the Act. Twenty two out of 25 children have been granted financial assistance from Juvenile Justice Fund without the recommendations of the specified authorities. In two SAAs, expenditure from adoption fee collected was incurred on unspecified items. There was shortfall in conduct of inspection of facilities housing children, by the State and District Inspection Committees, CWCs, etc. The operationalisation of software intended for maintenance of data relating to ICPS was delayed due to recurrent technical glitches.

2.1.11. Recommendations

- Adequate basic facilities may be provided for children and families approaching JJBs and CWCs.
- Government must ensure that children with special needs are provided safe stay with adequate facilities.

- Government must ensure that co-habitation of children with mental illness and those requiring de-addiction from drugs, liquor etc., with normal children is not permitted.
- CWCs should conduct regular visits to CCIs and facilitate effective follow up to ensure that children in foster care lead a safe and comfortable life.
- Cradle Baby Points must be installed as prescribed under the Rules, for safe abandonment of babies.
- The Department should ensure that children in receipt of sponsorship from ICPS are not receiving financial assistance from SC/ST Development Department.

CHAPTER III HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

3.1. Implementation of Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan

3.1.1. Introduction

The Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched by the Ministry of Human Resource Development⁶⁹ (MHRD) in September 2013, to be operated in the XII and XIII five-year plan periods⁷⁰. The major objective of RUSA was to enable and empower the States to develop sufficient capabilities to plan, implement and monitor initiatives for the higher education sector as a whole. The scheme aimed to improve the quality of State Universities and colleges and enhance their existing capacities so that they emerge as dynamic, demand-driven, quality conscious institutions, responsive to rapid economic and technological developments at the national and international levels.

The scheme was to be implemented in two phases, i.e, RUSA 1.0 during the period 2013-17 and RUSA 2.0 during 2018-22. Government of India (GoI) approved (February 2022) continuation of the scheme till 31 March 2026 for further review. In the State, the Principal Secretary of Higher Education Department acts as the State Project Director (SPD) and the Director of Collegiate Education is the State Project Coordinator of RUSA.

The components of RUSA 1.0 and 2.0 undertaken for implementation in the State are detailed in **Appendix 3.1**.

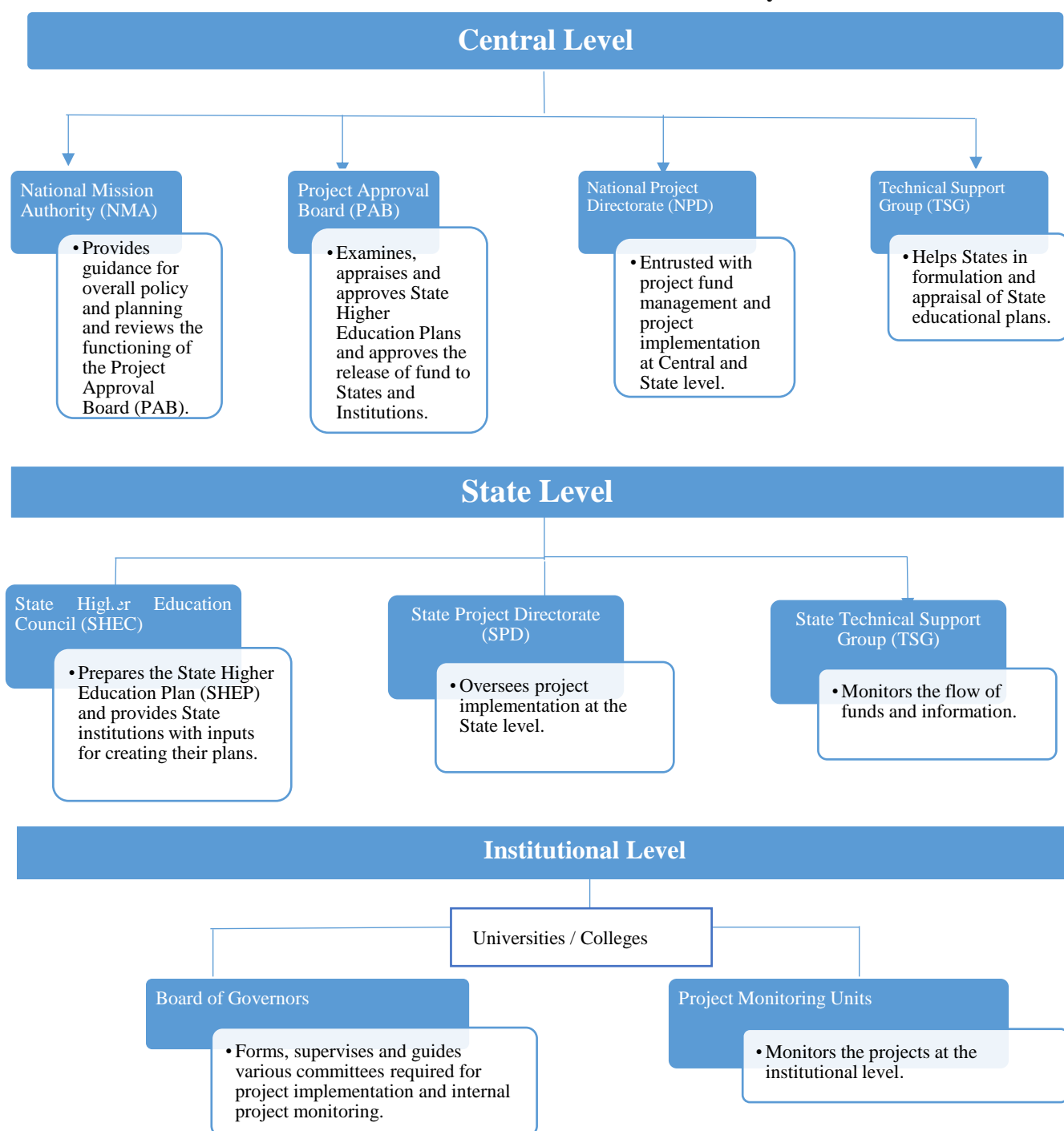
3.1.1.1. Institutional Hierarchy in RUSA

The participative and inclusive institutional structure envisaged in RUSA guidelines at the Central, State and Institutional level and the roles and powers of the various bodies are shown below in **Chart 3.1**:

⁶⁹ Renamed as Ministry of Education by a gazette notification issued in August 2020

⁷⁰ XII five year plan covered the period 2012-17 and XIII five year plan pertained to the period 2017-22

Chart 3.1: Institutional Hierarchy in RUSA



3.1.2. Audit Objectives, Scope and Methodology

The Compliance Audit was conducted from May to August 2023 with a view to assess whether;

- the implementation of RUSA scheme was planned properly, effectively and efficiently to improve access, equity and quality in higher education in the State;
- the Scheme was executed efficiently in compliance with the extant instructions and Guidelines;
- adequate initiatives were taken for effective financial management of RUSA funds; and
- monitoring and evaluation of the scheme was effective.

Audit scrutinised records pertaining to the period from 2018-19 to 2022-23 at Higher Education Department, Government of Kerala (GoK), State Project Directorate and in the selected Universities/institutions in four selected districts⁷¹. All four Universities in the selected districts were taken up for audit. Twenty *per cent* of RUSA funded institutions (12 institutions) and 10 *per cent* of institutions which did not receive funds under RUSA 1.0 and 2.0 (nine institutions) were selected through Simple Random Sampling without Replacement method using IDEA software. The selected institutions are listed in **Appendix 3.2**. An Entry Conference was held with the State Project Coordinator, RUSA on 24 May 2023 wherein the audit objectives, scope and methodology adopted were discussed and agreed upon. On conclusion of audit, an Exit Conference was conducted on 23 April 2024 with the Principal Secretary to Government, Higher Education Department, wherein the audit findings were discussed in detail. Reply of GoK was received (April 2024) and has been suitably incorporated in the paragraphs.

Audit findings

RUSA was an umbrella scheme to be operated in mission mode which would subsume other existing schemes⁷² in the sector. In order to realise the intended outcomes, a set of commitments towards reform process have to be made by the States which must be fulfilled during the course of implementation of RUSA. These commitments were non-negotiable and were at two levels, *viz.*, commitment given by the States to the Centre and commitment given by institutions to the State. Unless these commitments were fulfilled, the States and institutions were not to be considered eligible to avail grants under the scheme. Audit examined the extent of compliance to these commitments, and the resultant observations are detailed below:

⁷¹ Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Palakkad and Kannur

⁷² Schemes of Model Degree Colleges and Sub-mission on Polytechnics were subsumed under RUSA in addition to schemes under UGC.

3.1.3. Non-conformity between certain clauses in the amended Kerala State Higher Education Act 2007 and RUSA guidelines

As per RUSA guidelines (September 2013), State Government was required to set up an State Higher Education Council (SHEC) by an Act of the State Legislature within two years. The SHEC is the supreme policy body for higher education, to develop comprehensive, long-term and inclusive State Higher Education Plan (SHEP), by aggregating Institutional Development Plans (IDPs) of institutions.

In Kerala, the Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC) was in existence since 2007, as per provisions of the Kerala Higher Education Act of 2007 (Act). Paragraph 5.2 of RUSA guidelines lays down the term of council members and the manner in which the States with existing councils were to reconstitute the councils. Though GoK joined RUSA on 30 October 2013 by committing to bring reforms in the Higher Education sector in the State and attended the first Project Approval Board (PAB) meeting held by MHRD on 06 November 2013, the State amended the Act in July 2018 only, after a gap of five years. Furthermore, there were provisions in the Act which did not synchronize with clauses outlined in the guidelines of RUSA as detailed below:

According to RUSA guidelines, the Chairman of the Council shall be an eminent academic/public intellectual with proven leadership qualities and one nominee of Government of India shall also be included as a member. The Chairman, who was to hold one non-extendable term of five years was to be selected by a committee consisting of Chief Minister of the State, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and the Leader of Opposition, based on the recommendation of shortlisted candidates made by a search-cum-selection committee of eminent academic/public intellectuals with proven record and integrity. Similarly, the Vice Chairman and Member Secretary who were to serve for one non-extendable term of five years were to be selected by a three member search committee consisting of Chairman of the Council and two other members, one nominated by the State Council and the other by the Government.

Audit noticed that the provisions in the amended Act did not synchronize with the above requirements in the guidelines. For instance, disregarding the selection process prescribed by RUSA, the amended Act provided for the State Minister for Higher Education to be the Chairman of the Council and Vice Chairman and Member Secretary to be appointed by the Government.

There were eight variations noticed between provisions in RUSA guidelines and the provisions in the amended Act of 2018 are shown in **Appendix 3.3**.

Government stated (April 2024) that the KSHEC Act was amended in 2018, incorporating majority of the provisions as envisaged in the RUSA guidelines keeping in mind the specific considerations of the State. The amendments are in essence and not in conflict with the RUSA guidelines or detrimental to the broad objectives of RUSA. However, the aforesaid deviations establish that the amendments made to the Act of 2007 in 2018, were not in consonance with the provisions relating to RUSA.

3.1.4. Delay in preparation of State Higher Education Plan and non-conduct of Baseline Survey

As per RUSA guidelines, a Perspective Plan for Higher Education called State Higher Education Plan (SHEP) had to be drawn up by the SHEC for submission to the MHRD, Government of India. SHEP was the guiding document which was to serve as the benchmark against which the performance of a State and its institutions were graded. The SHEP was to have two components, Institutional component and State component. The Institutional component necessitated preparation of Institutional Development Plan (IDP) at institutional level, based on the inputs and discussions with multiple stakeholders within the institution's jurisdiction. The IDPs were to be aggregated at the State level as SHEP. The State component was to address issues related to excellence, spatial and geographical gaps, access, governance, etc. Unserved and under-served areas were to be identified and special provisions made for new institutions in these areas.

Under RUSA 1.0, SHEP was required to be submitted to MHRD by 31 January 2014. The final SHEP was submitted to MHRD by GoK in February 2015, which was considered by PAB in March 2015. Audit observed that out of nine institutions under RUSA 1.0 selected for detailed audit, none had submitted IDPs to SHEC for preparation of SHEP.

The SHEP for RUSA 2.0 was prepared and submitted by SHEC in May 2018. Audit observed that none of the selected institutions under RUSA 2.0 had furnished (May 2018) their IDPs to KSHEC for preparation of SHEP. This indicates that SHEPs for RUSA 1.0 and 2.0 were prepared by KSHEC without aggregating the IDPs. As RUSA envisages a bottom up approach, wherein IDP would depict the resource requirements at institutional level as well as at its sub units for programme implementation in terms of infrastructure, human resources, procurement, scheme execution, etc., non-submission of IDPs would result in SHEP being prepared without factoring in the requirements of the institutions.

Further, Audit observed that prior to the formulation of SHEP, the State had also not undertaken a baseline survey to analyse critical needs in terms of access, equity and excellence in higher education as envisaged in the scheme guidelines. In the absence of a baseline survey, Audit could not draw assurance regarding issues relating to unserved and under-served areas having been identified and special provisions for new institutions made in the SHEP to benefit these areas.

Government stated (April 2024) that SHEP was prepared by KSHEC taking into consideration the resource requirements of every higher educational institution in the State, based on the data collected from those institutions with special consideration given to unserved and under-served areas and special provisions for new institutions made in the SHEP to benefit these areas. The above reply is not factually correct, as the selected institutions had not submitted IDPs to SHEC, in the absence of which the resource requirements of institutions could

not be known. Further, the data claimed to have been collected from institutions by SHEC has not been furnished to Audit (June 2024).

3.1.5. Delay in submission of DPRs by institutions

The Project Approval Board (PAB) was to examine, appraise and approve SHEPs submitted by the States, assess the performance of States and institutions and approve release of funds⁷³. On receiving approval of PAB, MHRD releases first instalment of 50 *per cent* of the Central share to the State in respect of institutions included under the scheme. Such institutions were required to furnish a Detailed Project Report (DPR) containing details of the works, estimates, etc., to SPD within the dates communicated to the respective institutions by SPD. The funds to the institutions were released by SPD on approval of DPRs.

Audit noticed that out of nine selected institutions under RUSA 1.0, there was delay of 15 months in the submission of DPR by Kannur University. Yet another institution, Government College, Tripunithura, had not finalised the DPR even as on September 2023. Consequently, Central and State share of funds allotted to the State Nodal Account of SPD as Infrastructure Grant could not be utilised by the institution for want of finalisation of DPR.

Under RUSA 2.0, all the institutions were required to upload (May 2018) data in the portal for receiving the RUSA assistance. SPD of RUSA directed (13 June 2018) 95 shortlisted institutions in the State to submit DPRs to SPD on or before 19 June 2018. Audit test checked the records of eight institutions and found that there was delay ranging from 347 days to 4 ½ years in the submission of final DPRs by seven institutions, as shown in **Table 3.1** below:

Table 3.1: Details of delay in submission of DPRs under RUSA 2.0

Sl. No.	Name of institution	Date of submission of final DPR	Delay in days
1.	Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara	June 2019	347
2.	Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura	June 2022	713
3.	TM Jacob Memorial Government College, Manimalakkunnu	August 2020	774
4.	NSS Training College, Ottappalam	October 2019	469
5.	Government Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram	June 2019	347
6.	HHMSPBNSS College for Women, Neeramankara	July 2019	377
7.	Cochin University of Science and Technology	March 2023	1716

(Source: Data obtained from institutions)

⁷³ For selection under RUSA 2.0, institutions were required to upload institutional data directly to Challenge Level Funding Portal (Portal) of MHRD and the TSG at the Centre examines and appraises the proposals received from institutions, based on which PAB accords approval for inclusion of institution under the scheme.

The delay in submission of final DPRs by institutions resulted in delayed releasing of fund by SPD to the institutions.

Government stated (April 2024) that in all the seven cases DPR was submitted in time. However, due to non-compliance of RUSA guidelines, discrepancies in the estimates or documents furnished, lack of statutory clearances etc., SPD had advised the institutions to rectify and resubmit the DPR. The reply is not acceptable, as the DPRs had to consider the inherent and potential external risks involved in implementation. Had the DPRs been prepared at the initial stage itself by giving due regard to the above aspects, re-submission and associated delays in completion of projects could have been avoided.

3.1.6. Exclusion of Government Aided institutions from coverage under RUSA 1.0

All State Universities and Colleges (both compliant as well as non-compliant with Section 12B and 2(f) of UGC, Act 1956⁷⁴) across the country were eligible to be covered under RUSA to improve the learning outcomes and employability of graduates and to scale-up research, development and innovations. While Government colleges and universities would be eligible for all the components, Government aided institutions could also be considered eligible for permitted activities⁷⁵ based on certain norms and parameters.

Audit noticed that, as part of implementation of RUSA 1.0, GoK decided (July 2014) to consider the IDPs of Government Higher Educational Institutions only. Consequently, SHEC proposed six Universities and 63 Government colleges in the SHEP submitted (February 2015) to MHRD under the components Infrastructure Grants to Universities and Infrastructure Grants to Colleges, respectively. Audit noticed that out of the 63 Government colleges, 28 colleges were accredited with various grades of National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and the remaining 35 colleges did not possess NAAC accreditation. However, only four universities and 15 colleges having NAAC A or B grades/NBA accreditation were approved (March 2015), for inclusion under RUSA 1.0, by PAB. Further, two universities and 11 colleges were added under RUSA 1.0 in subsequent⁷⁶ PABs.

On scrutiny of SHEP submitted in February 2015, Audit observed that there were 166 Government aided colleges which possessed valid NAAC accreditation during 2014-15. However, these colleges were not included in the proposal for the infrastructure grants to colleges based on the Government direction.

Government replied (April 2024) that as per the RUSA 1.0 guidelines, it was not mandatory to provide assistance to Government aided colleges. The above contention is not acceptable as RUSA 1.0 Guidelines explicitly state that

⁷⁴ The University Grants Commission (UGC) provides financial assistance to eligible colleges which are included under Section 2(f) and declared fit to receive central assistance (UGC grant) under Section 12 (B) of UGC Act, 1956 as per approved pattern of assistance under various schemes.

⁷⁵ Infrastructure and quality improvement

⁷⁶ During the period 2017-19

funding will be available to Government aided institutions also, subject to their meeting certain pre-conditions. The decision of GoK to restrict the scope of the scheme to Government institutions prevented the 166 Government aided colleges having NAAC A or B grades from being considered for RUSA 1.0.

3.1.7. Financial Management

3.1.7.1. Funding

The RUSA scheme was implemented with a fund sharing pattern of 60:40 between the Central and State Governments. On approval of State Higher Education Plan (SHEP) submitted by the State, MHRD was to release Central Government funds to the State Government.

The Ministry of Finance directed (March 2021) every State Government to designate a single nodal agency (SNA) for release of funds under Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS). The SNA was to open a single nodal account for each CSS with effect from 01 July 2021. The implementing institutions were required to open zero balance subsidiary accounts for transferring funds as decided by the SNA. Accordingly, GoK designated (July 2021) SPD as the SNA and SPD directed (August 2021) all the institutions funded by RUSA to open zero balance subsidiary accounts. SPD also directed (August 2021) the RUSA funded institutions to close and transfer the balance funds of RUSA in the SB accounts of institutions as on 31 August 2021, to the SNA account.

The State Government transfers the Central funds along with the State share to the SHEC/SPD⁷⁷ and from SHEC/SPD to the institutions for implementation. Out of the total release of ₹433.28 crore (Central and State) to 157 institutions/SPD⁷⁸ in the State from 2013-14 towards RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0, the utilisation as on 31 March 2023 was ₹310.54 crore (71.67 per cent) and ₹122.74 crore was remaining in the single nodal account of SPD. Scheme-wise details of fund flow as on 31 March 2023 under RUSA 1.0 and 2.0 were as shown in **Table 3.2**:

Table 3.2: Scheme-wise details of fund flow under RUSA 1.0 and 2.0

(₹ in crore)

Scheme	Approved	Released	Pending release from GoI/State
RUSA 1.0	199.57	189.03	10.54
RUSA 2.0	366.00	244.25	121.75
Total	565.57	433.28	132.29

(Source: Details furnished by SPD)

Component-wise details are furnished in **Appendix 3.4**. Though RUSA 1.0 was to be implemented during 2013-17⁷⁹, all the projects undertaken in test checked institutions under RUSA 1.0 were not completed and were in various stages of execution during the audit period. Funds relating to RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0,

⁷⁷ From July 2015 onwards, the funds were managed by SPD at State level

⁷⁸ Preparatory Grant, Management, Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (MMER), Equity Initiatives

⁷⁹ Thirteen institutions were subsequently brought under RUSA 1.0 during 2017-19.

amounting to ₹10.54 crore and ₹121.75 crore respectively were yet to be released for completing these projects for reasons such as delay in conducting physical inspection, non-commencement of project, etc.

Government stated (April 2024) that a proposal for an amount of ₹112.80 crore⁸⁰ was submitted (December 2023) to the Ministry of Education, GoI and the entire project will be completed, and amount utilised expeditiously as and when funds were received.

3.1.7.2. Status of fund release and utilisation

The RUSA scheme was implemented with a fund sharing pattern of 60:40 between the Central and State Governments. Status of year-wise release of funds and utilisation by SPD/Institutions during the audit period 2018-19 to 2022-23 were as shown in **Table 3.3** below:

Table 3.3: Details of release and utilisation of funds in the State

Year	Amount released (₹ in crore)	Amount Utilised (₹ in crore)	Percentage of utilisation
2018-19	137.25	120.86	88.10
2019-20	24.00	18.44	76.80
2020-21*	0	0	0
2021-22	15.84	12.02	75.90
2022-23	112.34	17.36	15.50

* During 2020-21 there was no allotment from MHRD in the COVID scenario
(Source: Details furnished by SPD)

Though SPD furnished the consolidated utilisation of funds released against the year of allotment of fund, Audit scrutiny revealed that the actual utilisation of funds was spread over multiple years, as there was delay in transfer of State share of funds to SPD and from SPD to institutions and lags in execution of projects by institutions.

Government stated that though the funds are released in various financial years, RUSA funds are reckoned in a project-wise manner rather than as against each financial year. Hence, the release order in a financial year is inclusive of several instalments of funds to various projects included in each phase of RUSA.

Despite institutions not adhering to conditions specified in the Guidelines of RUSA, funds were released to these institutions, as mentioned in paragraphs 3.1.5 and 3.1.8.4.

Significant deviations from the fund management mechanism laid down in the guidelines of the scheme were observed, as detailed below:

3.1.7.3. Exclusion of KSHEC from fund management

As per RUSA guidelines, at the State level, SHEC was to channelise funds from Centre as well as the State and undertake planning and evaluation activities in addition to monitoring and capacity building functions. SHEC was to open a separate dedicated joint bank account and funds (both Central and State share)

⁸⁰ Central share ₹67.68 crore

were to be disbursed to the institutions from this account. Accordingly, Higher Education Department of GoK accorded sanction (January 2014) to open joint account of Member Secretary, KSHEC and Additional Secretary, Higher Education Department, GoK for dealing with funds of RUSA. However, GoK, citing delay in transfer of funds due to non-availability of joint signatories, accorded sanction (August 2016) to convert this account to a single account in the designation of Joint Secretary, Higher Education Department, GoK, thereby curtailing the role of KSHEC in fund management.

Government replied (April 2024) that KSHEC was not excluded from fund management and only a demarcation of functions with regard to fund disbursement was attempted. The reply is not acceptable as, being Joint signatories to the releases to the institutions is indicative of a shared accountability between KSHEC, which was the plan formulating authority and SPD, the project implementing authority. Vesting all the fund releasing powers with one party amounted to a dilution of responsibility and authority and a violation of the scheme guidelines.

3.1.7.4. Transfer of funds

Delay in allotment of State share to SPD and release to institutions

As per RUSA 1.0 and 2.0 guidelines, the States were to contribute their share along with Central share to the dedicated RUSA savings account of SHEC within 15 days of receipt of the Central share. The funds received by SHEC were in turn to be transferred to the dedicated RUSA account of institutions within 15 days of receipt of the combined pool of funds from State Government. Non-adherence to the above conditions would necessitate payment of interest at 1.50 per cent per annum by GoK to Centre.

Audit observed that the delay in allotment of State share to SPD ranged from 19 to 359 days, which resulted in interest liability to the tune of ₹1.26 crore, as evident from **Table 3.4** below.

Table 3.4: Details of delay in allotment of state share leading to interest liability

Sl. No.	Central share allotment date	Amount (₹)	State share allotment date to SPD	Amount (₹)	Delay in allotment beyond 15 days	Interest payable at 1.50 per cent per annum (₹)
1	31.03.2014	26260000	18.02.2015	14000000	309	333466.03
2	18.06.2015	77187500	06.10.2015	41562500	95	301348.46
3	01.02.2016	30000000	30.03.2016	20000000	43	53013.70
4	15.06.2016	437250000	17.10.2016	291500000	109	1958640.41
5	17.11.2016	27664000	21.03.2017	18442667	109	123919.56
6	28.03.2017	138000000	29.07.2017	92000000	108	612493.15
7	22.02.2018	134830500	30.04.2018	89887000	52	288130.93
8	27.06.2018	595500000	18.01.2019	447000000	190	4649794.52
9	28.08.2018	75000000	18.01.2019		128	394520.55
10	18.12.2018	153000000	11.10.2019	102000000	282	1773123.29

Sl. No.	Central share allotment date	Amount (₹)	State share allotment date to SPD	Amount (₹)	Delay in allotment beyond 15 days	Interest payable at 1.50 per cent per annum (₹)
11	11.04.2019	114000000	04.10.2019	76000000	161	754273.97
12	30.09.2019	30000000	08.10.2020	20000000	359	442602.74
13	28.06.2021	81458757	30.10.2021	54305837	109	389712.33
14	29.12.2022	674035000	01.02.2023	449357000	19	526301.30
					Total	12601340.94

(Source: Fund release orders of MHRD and State)

Prolonged delay in release of funds is not justifiable, as it in turn leads to delay in release of funds from SPD to institutions.

Verification of records relating to release of first instalment to 16 selected institutions revealed that in 10 institutions the delay ranged from 82 to 682 days as detailed in **Table 3.5** below.

Table 3.5: Details of delay in transfer of funds from SPD to selected institutions

Sl. No.	Institution	Date of receipt of fund in SPD	Date of transfer to institution	Delay in days
1	Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC)	30.03.2016	01.02.2017	293
2	Government College, Tripunithura	08.10.2020	13.01.2021	82
3	Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery	18.01.2019	14.06.2019	132
4	NSS Training College, Ottapalam	11.10.2019	20.11.2020	391
5	Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara	18.01.2019	20.11.2020	657
6	PKM College of Education, Madampam, Kannur	11.10.2019	20.11.2020	391
7	HHMSPBNSS College for Women, Neeramankara	18.01.2019	11.12.2020	678
8	Government Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram	18.01.2019	20.11.2020	657
9	TM Jacob Memorial Government College Manimalakkunnu	08.10.2020	23.01.2021	92
10	Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura	18.01.2019	15.12.2020	682

(Source: Fund release orders of SPD)

In the reply furnished by Government (April 2024), it was stated that delay in allotment of State share occurred in cases which required approval of Finance Department, GoK due to procedural formalities and that no interest was being charged for the delay mentioned. Funds were transferred to the individual institutions only after their DPRs were found to be in compliance with the RUSA guidelines which might have caused some delay.

Government may initiate action to check the delay in transfer of funds, as the delay in allotment of funds to the institutions would impede the timely achievement of targets and completion of projects. Further, the institutions should be directed to submit their Detailed Project Reports and get them approved in time, as pointed out in paragraph 3.1.5.

3.1.7.5. Utilisation of funds

Audit noticed shortfalls in utilisation of funds at State and institutional level as seen in following paragraphs:

Delay in release of funds due to delay in conducting physical inspection

The Guiding Principles of the scheme stipulated that funding was norm based and future grants were released on the basis of level of past achievements and status of utilisation of funds submitted to MHRD. MHRD releases the grants to the State in three instalments in the ratio 50:25:25. MHRD insisted upon utilisation of more than 75 *per cent* of funds received, in order to consider institutions for further release of funds. The final instalment of 25 *per cent* of Central share would be released, only when the State submitted physical inspection report (PIR) conducted by the Technical Support Group (TSG)⁸¹ to PAB.

In accordance with the decision of PAB, ₹565.57 crore was sanctioned during 2013-23 to the State towards implementation of RUSA 1.0 and 2.0. As of March 2023, SPD received ₹433.28 crore (Central and State share) and ₹77.75 crore was yet to be received for want of PIRs to be submitted/ utilisation of funds above 75 *per cent* by the State, as instructed in the policy. Of the sum receivable, ₹ six crore pertained to the implementation of projects in nine institutions under RUSA 1.0 and ₹71.75 crore was related to 120 institutions under RUSA 2.0.

Audit observed that out of these 129 institutions, 78 had utilised more than 75 *per cent* of funds received and were eligible for conduct of physical inspection by TSG, as of July 2023. However, physical inspection was conducted by TSG only in 10 out of these 78 institutions. Further, the remaining 51 institutions were yet to achieve utilisation of funds above 75 *per cent*.

Government replied (April 2024) that by the end of 2023, physical inspections were conducted in 78 institutions, based on which proposals for funds were submitted to GoI on 30 December 2023. However, delay in submission of PIRs/ utilisation of funds above 75 *per cent* resulted in non-receipt of final instalment of State and Central shares to the institutions till date (March 2023).

Expenditure on higher education vis-à-vis GSDP

One of the pre-requisites of RUSA 1.0 was that the State Government must gradually increase the spending on higher education sector to two *per cent* of GSDP⁸² during the course of implementation. Under RUSA 2.0, State Governments were to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Higher Education (MHRD), GoI to be eligible for funding.

As GoK had received funds under RUSA 1.0, it was liable to increase its spending on higher education. Further, in the MoU entered into (May 2018) between the State Head of Higher Education Department and RUSA National Mission Director, it was assured that the spending on higher education would be increased to at least two *per cent* of GSDP by March 2020.

⁸¹ The State council (SPD in the State) appoints and decides the composition of TSG.

⁸² Gross State Domestic Product is a measure in monetary terms, of the sum total volume of all finished goods and services produced during a given period of time, usually a year, within the geographical boundaries of the State

However, Audit observed that the actual spending on higher education during 2018-23 ranged from 0.44 *per cent* to 0.51 *per cent* of the GSDP, as detailed in the **Table 3.6**.

Table 3.6: Total State expenditure on Higher Education during 2018-23

Year	GSDP of the State (₹ in crore)	Two <i>per cent</i> of GSDP (₹ in crore)	Actual expenditure on Higher Education (₹ in crore)	Expenditure in Percentage
2018-19	554228.32	11084.57	2691.67	0.48
2019-20	559194.17	11183.89	2462.40	0.44
2020-21	518205.90	10364.12	2433.28	0.46
2021-22	584410.34	11688.21	3017.64	0.51
2022-23	622397.72	12447.96	3088.11	0.49

(Source: Details collected from Economics and Statistics Department, GoK and VLC figures)

GoK thus did not enhance spending on Higher Education sector, as envisaged under the scheme.

Government stated (April 2024) that with the available resources, allocating two *per cent* of GSDP would be a challenging task and that the matter would be brought to the notice of Department of Finance, GoK.

3.1.8. Shortfalls in execution of projects under the scheme

Audit observed deficiencies in release and utilisation of funds by test checked institutions as detailed below:

3.1.8.1. Non-finalising of projects resulting in non-utilisation of funds

Government College, Tripunithura submitted (January 2021) DPR comprising three works⁸³ to SPD, for obtaining infrastructure grant amounting to ₹ two crore. Of this, ₹ one crore was released (January 2021) for the construction of canteen building in the new campus, where an academic block was being constructed by Kerala Industrial and Technical Consultancy Organisation (KITCO) utilising KIIFB⁸⁴ funds. The Director of Collegiate Education (DCE), who was the State Project Coordinator of RUSA, also suggested modifications to the plan and the college submitted the modified plan to SPD in August 2021.

Meanwhile, as per Government instructions issued in March 2021⁸⁵, ₹ one crore allotted for construction was credited back to the account of the SPD in October 2021. Audit observed that even as the approval of the plan for canteen was pending with SPD, the college submitted (January 2022) a revised plan for constructing class rooms on the third floor of the academic block, for which permission was accorded by SPD in March 2022. However, the implementing

⁸³ Construction Component – ₹ one crore for construction of College Canteen in the upcoming campus, Purchase Component – ₹80 lakh, Campus Beautification and Maintenance Component – Installation of Water Treatment Plant ₹20 lakh

⁸⁴ Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board

⁸⁵ In line with revised guidelines of GoI wrt. Centrally Sponsored schemes, SPD instructed (August 2021) the institutions to close the existing bank accounts and transfer funds lying in the accounts to the Single Nodal Account of SPD

agency KITCO was not willing to execute the work due to insufficiency of funds provided. Subsequently, the college sought permission (May 2022) for yet another project, viz., construction of a Ladies' hostel, which was also withdrawn (June 2023), stating that the marshy terrain would necessitate extra cost for construction of the hostel building.

Audit noticed that even after three years of approval of original DPR, the college was not able to decide upon the project to be executed and multiple options were being explored. In the absence of effective planning and feasibility studies to identify the actual requirement of the institution, various unviable proposals were mooted and the allotted fund remained unutilised. Besides, the components relating to purchase, beautification of campus and maintenance and installation of water treatment plant were also not undertaken.

Government replied (April 2024) that getting clearances from statutory bodies for construction activities, high cost of construction, etc., delayed the project. It was also informed that SPD accorded (December 2023) administrative sanction for ₹ two crore for a new proposal submitted (October 2023) by the college for construction of classrooms, renovation works and purchase of equipment and that the project would start at the earliest. The reply confirms the audit observation on inability of the college in finalising the project to be executed as the college continues to moot new proposals.

3.1.8.2. Infertuous expenditure out of preparatory grants

Government of Kerala received (February 2014 to March 2017) ₹ eight crore as preparatory grants under RUSA 1.0 to undertake activities for creating and supporting institutional structures such as SHEC, SPD and TSG, for better implementation of RUSA in the State. MHRD directed (January 2016) the States to utilise the preparatory grants and to submit the Utilisation Certificates (UC) by 31 March 2016.

As per GoK's directions (February 2016) to utilise the grants in a timely manner, the SPD invited proposal for implementing Video Conferencing (VC) facility⁸⁶ from Kerala State Electronics Development Corporation (KELTRON). KELTRON submitted (February 2016) detailed project proposal to SPD for implementing the facility in 30 selected Government Arts and Science Colleges all over Kerala and Directorate of Collegiate Education, at a cost of ₹1.24 crore. The delivery and installation of VC facility was to be completed within six to seven weeks and the warranty of equipment was fixed as three years. SPD issued (February 2016) work order to KELTRON and KELTRON submitted invoice (March 2016) for ₹1.24 crore. SPD paid the amount in two instalments in March 2016 itself and furnished UC to MHRD in the same month.

KELTRON supplied (March 2017) the hardware and equipment at 31 locations, only after a delay of one year. However, simultaneous video conferencing at all 31 locations did not materialise. Moreover, due to non-availability of dedicated

⁸⁶ Included six items such as end point with camera and remote, speaker, channel mixer with mic, display etc.

bandwidth (i.e 40-50 mbps), the Master Control Unit (MCU)⁸⁷ could not be installed at the Directorate and had to be relocated (March 2019) to State Data Centre at Thiruvananthapuram after two years.

Audit observed that the Director of Collegiate Education (DCE) had informed (June 2019) SPD about the inability to undertake new programmes due to the issue of VC connectivity and requested KELTRON to make the system functional. However, KELTRON was able to connect 22 locations only. In six locations, the devices were faulty and the remaining three locations had reported Internet Protocol issues. Even in the case of 22 locations claimed to have been connected by KELTRON, DCE pointed out that (September 2022) only one way connectivity could be established.

In December 2022, DCE requested KELTRON to suggest the date for testing 31 VC locations through MCU. However, KELTRON expressed inability to conduct the test due to poor condition of functional equipment and inability to replace damaged equipment from their own fund. Audit noticed that in response to the request made by SPD to re-organise the VC facility already installed, KELTRON informed (July 2023) that all hardware components deployed as part of the project have turned obsolete and out of warranty, due to which no further assistance could be provided. As per the status report furnished (January 2024) by SPD to Audit, in 19 out of 22 locations where the system was installed, at least one component of the system had turned faulty and required replacement.

Thus, KELTRON, despite being entrusted with the responsibility of completing the work within seven weeks for which full payment was received, could not complete the project and achieve integration of all 31 locations at a time, even after seven years. Due to non-integration of all locations, meetings, training programmes and Online Resources Initiatives of Collegiate Education Programmes could not be conducted online as envisaged. The SPD, without ensuring the completion of integration of VC facility at 31 locations, had effected full payment to KELTRON which resulted in infructuous expenditure of ₹1.24 crore. Despite funds released remaining parked with KELTRON, Government furnished UCs to GoI, showing the funds as spent.

Government stated (April 2024) that KELTRON being a PSU under Industries Department, the Department was requested to direct KELTRON to complete the integration of VC facility at the 31 locations without further delay, failing which disciplinary action would be finalised against erring officials.

3.1.8.3. Non-establishment of the New Model Degree College at Wayanad

Under component five of RUSA 2.0, the project for setting up of a New Model Degree College (NMDC) in Wayanad District was approved (July 2018) by PAB. MHRD directed (July 2018) GoK to complete the processes of handing over of land for construction, submission of complete DPR and the tendering

⁸⁷ MCU is a video transcoding device that helps in conducting group video conferences between multiple video conferencing systems. It works by mixing media points received from different endpoints of a video conference call in real time.

process on priority basis. GoK accorded (January 2019) permissive sanction to allot 10 acres of land owned by Health and Family Welfare Department in Periya village of Mananthavady Taluk in Wayanad district and the land was handed over (July 2020) to Higher Education Department for constructing the college.

SPD entrusted (April 2019) the task of preparation of DPR of NMDC to Kerala State Information Technology Infrastructure Ltd (KSITIL). On verifying records made available to audit, it was noticed that KSITIL furnished (May 2019) the DPR to SPD without ensuring the suitability of the land. SPD forwarded (May 2019) the DPR to MHRD. In the wake of frequent occurrence of landslides in the vicinity of the site, it was decided⁸⁸ (September 2019) to entrust National Institute of Technology (NIT), Calicut to ascertain suitability of the proposed land for construction. NIT reported (October 2019) that the site being steep and characterised by silty clay, was not fit for building works. The above fact was informed by the District Collector to the SPD in November 2019. Audit observed that consultancy fee of ₹14.51 lakh was paid (March 2023) to KSITIL for preparation of DPR.

As KSITIL did not ensure suitability of the land while preparing the DPR, ₹14.51 lakh expended from RUSA fund towards consultancy fee has turned wasteful. Despite funds amounting to ₹ six crore being credited (February 2023) to the SNA, no alternative site was identified and fresh DPR prepared. As a result, the project of construction of NMDC Wayanad is yet to be undertaken (February 2024).

Government replied (April 2024) that an alternative land in possession of Department of Technical Education has been identified and the construction of NMDC was expected to start at the earliest. Government may fix responsibility and initiate action against KSITIL for not ensuring the suitability of selected land, as the land identified was located in an area prone to landslides.

3.1.8.4. Deviation from Detailed Project Report

On submission of Technical sanction accorded by TSG to the works proposed by institutions, SPD issues final authorisation to the institutions to commence the works for which sanction was accorded. As per the general directions issued by SPD while issuing Technical Sanction/final work order to the institutions, works included in the DPR were to be executed in the site proposed as per specifications contained in the DPR. Audit observed that the institutions took up projects which were not included originally in the DPR and not accorded Technical sanction, for execution as seen in the following cases:

- The DPR of Kannur University approved by SPD (October 2017) under RUSA 1.0, included three construction works⁸⁹ worth ₹ seven crore

⁸⁸ In a joint physical verification of the site conducted by authorities of Panchayat, Revenue Department and RUSA.

⁸⁹ Seminar Complex at Kannur Campus – ₹5.90 crore, University Scientific Instrumentation Centre at Swami Anandatheertha Campus, Payyanur – ₹ one crore, Construction of open well at Staff Quarters, Dharmasala – ₹0.10 crore.

under the infrastructure component. During verification of records of these works, it was noticed that two works, viz., construction of a car shed roof with rest room for drivers costing ₹55.04 lakh and construction of Compound Wall in Nileswaram Campus for ₹44.80 lakh which were not included in the DPR, were undertaken by the University utilising RUSA fund.

- Maintenance of Ladies' Hostel at an estimated amount of ₹19.25 lakh was one of the works included in the DPR of Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara under RUSA 2.0. The technical sanction for the work was accorded by the TSG in February 2020. As per the agreement executed (February 2020) between the College and Habitat Technology Group (Habitat), the work was to be completed by February 2021. The work was not taken up based on the instructions of College in the wake of COVID in 2020. Subsequently, the Board of Governors of the College decided (July 2021) to undertake maintenance work of Ladies' Hostel with funds provided by the Management of the institution, and to utilize the allotted RUSA funds for renovating History Museum by constructing the first floor to the existing building. Audit observed that the work of History museum was also entrusted to Habitat without executing any fresh agreement. During the joint site inspection conducted by Audit with the college authorities in April 2023, it was observed that though the first floor was constructed, electrical and plumbing works were not executed.

The Government replied (April 2024) that the deviation in respect of two works viz., car shed and compound wall as well as the work-related to history museum did not have approval from SPD, and the cases were being examined in consultation with the Finance Department. The deviations in projects undertaken, which did not have approval from SPD are a procedural violation and are to be viewed seriously.

3.1.8.5. Failure in completing construction works

Seminar Complex

Kannur University proposed (July 2017) construction of ground floor of building for Seminar Complex at Thavakkara Campus of Kannur University for ₹5.90 crore under RUSA 1.0. The work was entrusted to the contractor, Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS). As per the agreement (March 2018) executed between the University and ULCCS, ULCCS was to be paid ₹4.70 crore and the work was to be completed within 15 months, by June 2019.

The Syndicate initially decided to grant (March 2018) mobilisation advance of 20 *per cent* amounting to ₹93.96 lakh to ULCCS but resolved (August 2018) to grant excess funds (additional 30 *per cent*) to the agency, thereby enhancing the total amount of advance granted to ₹2.34 crore.



Figure 3.1: Photographs of construction site of Seminar Complex at Thavakkara campus, Kannur University taken by Audit party on 12 July 2023

Audit noticed that the University handed over the site to ULCCS in July 2018 only, after felling and clearing off the trees in the site. In July 2019, ULCCS wrote to the Registrar of the University that delayed clarifications and approval of drawings of pile cap, column rods and grid beam have greatly hampered the progress of work. Citing the above, ULCCS requested an extension of period of one year to complete the work, which was also granted by the Syndicate. While the work was in progress, ULCCS submitted (November 2020) a revised estimate for ₹6.04 crore, which was approved (February 2021) by the Board of Governors (BoG) of RUSA. Though the agreement was executed in March 2018, ULCCS requested multiple extensions of time⁹⁰ for completion of work to the University, citing reasons such as delay in handing over of site, difficulties experienced in pile boring beyond a certain strata, and non-availability of men and material due to COVID restrictions and lock down. The requests for time extension were accepted and a supplementary agreement executed (April 2022) for extra items in the revised estimate.

Joint verification of the site with University authorities (July 2023) revealed that the ground floor of the building has not been completed and electrical and plumbing works were yet to be undertaken. By then, an expenditure of ₹5.13 crore had been incurred on the work.

Thus, the Syndicate of the University, disregarding the guidelines of the scheme, extended undue favour to the contractor by sanctioning excess mobilisation advance as well as granting unjustified extension of one year. Despite executing supplementary agreement in April 2022 with extra items, the contractor has not completed the work even after a lapse of nearly five years from June 2019. After incurring an expenditure of ₹5.13 crore from RUSA

⁹⁰ First extension – 01 July 2019 to 30 July 2020, Second extension – upto June 2021, Third extension – upto October 2021

funds, the intended benefit of Seminar Complex to the University is yet to be achieved.

Scientific Instrumentation Centre

Kannur University proposed (July 2017) construction of a Scientific Instrumentation Centre (Centre) for ₹ one crore and purchase of instruments worth ₹3.07 crore under the components of construction and purchase of RUSA 1.0 respectively. The facility and equipment were to help the faculty, research scholars and students to carry out globally competitive Research and Development in basic and applied sciences. The sophisticated instrumentation facility aimed at strengthening technological infrastructure to carry out advanced research in various science disciplines under one roof and make their services available to academic schools and departments. University accorded (August 2018) Technical Sanction to the estimate for ₹1.90 crore of which ₹ one crore was sourced from RUSA funds and balance ₹0.90 crore from State Plan fund. The work was entrusted to ULCCS, an accredited agency.

As per the agreement executed by the University (September 2018) with ULCCS, the construction of the centre including electrification and plumbing works⁹¹ were to be completed within nine months from the date of agreement, which was extended⁹² subsequently through multiple orders till June 2021. The University stated that the completion of work got extended due to non-release of money from Plan fund and delay in obtaining approval from Public Works Department, GoK for electrical and plumbing works.

The University revised (August 2022-May 2023) the estimate to ₹3.30 crore (₹2.30 crore from Plan fund) by including three additional rooms, car porch and staircase in the cellar and allied electrical and plumbing works. Audit conducted (July 2023) a joint inspection of the site along with the authorities of the University and observed that the building alone was completed and works relating to flooring, electrification, plumbing, etc., were yet to be undertaken.



Figure 3.2: Photograph of building for Scientific Instrumentation centre at Payyanur campus, Kannur University, taken by Audit party on 13 July 2023

⁹¹ Costing ₹1.52 crore

⁹² First extension from 02 June 2019 to 11 April 2020, second extension upto 30 November 2020 and third extension upto 30 June 2021

Thus, though the University undertook construction of the building based on an approved design, it opted to revise the plan with additional features, necessitating extra expenses. Consequently, the Centre was not made functional even after five years and the four instruments⁹³ purchased for ₹2.20 crore for installation in the centre had to be kept at the disposal of the Heads of the Departments in various campuses of the University. Thus, the objective of enabling technological infrastructure to carry out advanced research in various science disciplines under one roof to benefit academic schools and departments, remains to be realised.

Government replied (April 2024) that for the financial year 2024-25, the University has proposed to allocate ₹201.60 lakh from the State plan fund as a matching grant for the completion of both the works. It was also informed that corrective measures will be taken to complete the projects at the earliest.

However, due to delay in completion of the projects, the students of the University were deprived of the benefits of the Seminar Complex and Scientific Instrumentation Centre.

Audit further observed that Kannur University had violated GoK instructions (July 2014 and June 2018) whereby the advance payment to an accredited agency undertaking the work directly, should be restricted to 20 *per cent* of the estimated cost of works in the agreement executed between the institution and accredited agency. Kannur University entrusted the new construction works undertaken under RUSA 1.0 to the contractor, ULCCS. In August 2018, ULCCS requested to release 50 *per cent* of the contract price as mobilisation advance towards all works for which agreement was executed by them with Kannur University, citing increase in price of materials, reduction of credit period by vendors post implementation of GST and need for bulk purchase of materials for the work. Accordingly, the Syndicate of the University resolved (August 2018) to grant 50 *per cent* of the contract price of works as mobilisation advance for all construction works undertaken by ULCCS. Thus, Kannur University paid ₹5.61 crore as advance payment to ULCCS for various works under RUSA, in violation of extant orders, as shown in **Appendix 3.5**.

Government replied that Kannur University has violated the guidelines of Government on undertaking public works issued by the Finance Department and released excess mobilisation advances to the contractors without obtaining prior approval of Government. It was also stated that appropriate action would be taken against the University in consultation with Finance Department.

Auditorium at SSUS Kalady

As per the approved DPR, the Vice-Chancellor of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit (SSUS), Kalady sanctioned (March 2017) the construction of an auditorium in the University campus and entrusted the Engineering Department of the University to prepare a detailed estimate. Subsequently, the SSUS, Kalady handed over (February 2018) this work to a

⁹³ Micro Raman Spectrometer, Spectro Fluorometer, X-ray Diffraction Instrument, Solar Simulator

consultant, Kerala State Nirmiti Kendra (KESNIK), which prepared a detailed estimate for ₹ four crore. The University released (February 2018) ₹ three crore as mobilisation advance to KESNIK, which was 55 *per cent* in excess of the permissible 20 *per cent* of the total cost. KESNIK tendered the work and awarded it to another agency⁹⁴, with September 2019 as time of completion. KESNIK also prepared an additional detailed estimate of ₹3.75 crore for electrification, air conditioning, acoustics, false ceiling, compound wall, firefighting system, etc., from the plan fund of the institution, which was sanctioned (November 2020) by SSUS, Kalady. The total payment made by SSUS, Kalady till 19 March 2022 was ₹3.35 crore, which was utilised from RUSA fund amounting to ₹ four crore. Audit conducted joint inspection (April 2023) of the site and found that the construction of auditorium was not completed and works related to flooring, electrification and plumbing were yet to be undertaken. Further, no work was being currently undertaken at the site. Thus, the construction was left incomplete even after a lapse of five years from the release of fund.



Figure 3.3: Photograph of Auditorium at SSUS, Kalady taken by Audit party on 27 April 2023

Government accepted the audit findings and stated (April 2024) that SSUS, Kalady has violated the guidelines of Government on undertaking public works issued by the Finance Department and released excess mobilisation advances to the contractor without obtaining prior approval of Government. It was also stated that appropriate action would be taken against the University in consultation with Finance Department and that the delay in the construction of auditorium will be reviewed and corrective measures will be taken to complete the project at the earliest.

3.1.8.6. Infrastructure Facilities for Differently abled Persons

RUSA aimed at ensuring that issues of access, equity and quality are addressed in an equitable manner. By addressing equity issues such as converting existing buildings into fully disabled friendly and barrier free environments by providing ramps/lifts for easy access to classrooms, tactile path, display boards and sign posts, special facilities / equipment for the disabled, etc., significant impact was

⁹⁴ M/s. K. A. Johnson

expected in the enrolment of students from deprived and marginalised sections. Further, the Manuals for institutional accreditation of Universities and Colleges under NAAC also prescribed the availability of disabled friendly physical facilities in an institution as a requisite for grading purpose.

Audit observed low priority being assigned to installation of disabled friendly features in institutions while selecting components under RUSA. Out of the 16 test checked institutions, only four institutions had included proposals for providing disabled friendly facilities like special toilets, elevators, ramps, etc., for ₹239 lakh.

Though existing institutions could have utilised RUSA funds to erect disabled friendly structures, Audit observed (August 2023) that out of 358 buildings in selected institutions, functional ramp was available in 151 buildings (42.18 *per cent*) only. Further, out of 244 multi-storied buildings, wheelchair access to upper floors was available in 30 buildings (12.30 *per cent*) only, the details of which are given in **Appendix 3.6**.

Government replied (April 2024) that every effort will be made to incorporate disabled friendly features in institutions in future. Efforts to utilize the second and third instalments of the component equity initiatives for providing facilities/making purchases that help disabled students at various institutions were also underway.

3.1.9. Monitoring

3.1.9.1. Non-constitution of Board of Governors and Project Monitoring Unit in selected institutions

As per RUSA 1.0 Guidelines, the Board of Governors (BoG) was to monitor the progress of institutional projects on a regular basis and provide guidance for improving the performance of the institutions in project implementation. The BoG could be a 10-15 member body comprising eminent individuals from the institution itself, State government, society, industry as well as the academia. It was the responsibility of BoG to take all policy decisions with regard to smooth, cost effective and timely implementation of the institutional projects, ensure overall faculty development, ensure compliance with the agreed procedures for procurement of goods, works and services, financial management, etc.

RUSA guidelines further envisage that each institution will have to form a Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) with appropriate representation from academic officials of the institution, faculty, senior administrative officers, technical and non-technical support staff and students. The PMU was responsible for monitoring of the project at the institutional level and was assigned with roles including procurement of goods, works and services, financial management, performance audit, implementation of faculty/staff development and periodical updation of Management Information System.

Audit observed that one test checked institution, Government College, Tripunithura had not constituted BoG or PMU (May 2023). Audit also observed

that seven out of the 16 selected institutions did not convene any meetings of the BoG and/or PMU meetings in the years specified, as detailed in **Table 3.7**, which was reflective of the low priority assigned to timely review and decision making with regard to implementation of institutional projects.

Table 3.7: Details of convening BoG and PMU meetings

Name of Institution	Years in which no meetings were held	
	BoG	PMU
SSUS Kalady	2020-21, 2021-22, 2022-23	Meetings held
Government Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram	Meetings held	2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2022-23
Rajagiri College, Kalamassery	2018-19, 2022-23	2018-19, 2022-23
Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara	Meetings held	2018-19
Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura	2018-19, 2019-20, 2021-22 and 2022-23	2018-19
SNGS Pattambi	2020-21	2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23
Government Brennen College, Thalassery	2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2022-23	Meetings held

(Source: Data obtained from institutions)

Government informed (April 2024) that Government College, Tripunithura has constituted both BoG and PMU in November 2023. It was assured that regular monitoring and evaluation of BoG and PMU of each institution would be undertaken by RUSA SPD.

3.1.9.2. Shortfall in geo-tagging of works and non-functioning of Management Information System

Ministry of Human Resource Development had provided (November 2015) ISRO's location-based application 'Bhuvan RUSA' to the States to monitor the progress in activities undertaken by funded institutions. The funded institutions were required to geo-tag the works/purchases by uploading physical and financial information in the application. Audit analysis of the Geographic Information System in the RUSA website in January 2024 revealed that only 19 out of the 157 funded institutions had geo-tagged their information on the status of project implementation. Reasons for not geo-tagging works/purchases were not furnished to audit. The above instances point to the fact that the prospects of web-based monitoring system have not been harnessed effectively in the State.

RUSA aimed to implement a new web-based Management Information System (MIS) for monitoring the progress of project implementation in funded institutions and to collect IDPs and historical data of all universities and colleges in the State. For the purpose, MHRD launched (October 2018) National Higher Education Resource Center (NHERC)-MIS portal for collecting the details of institutions and the portal link was communicated (April 2019) to the institutions. Audit observed that the portal was not functional and MIS was not operationalised as envisaged.

Government replied (April 2024) that action will be taken to monitor and ensure that all RUSA beneficiaries are geo-tagged.

3.1.9.3. Shortfall in regular teaching staff

One of the pre-requisites for funding under RUSA 1.0 was that of filling up of faculty vacancies. The RUSA 1.0 guidelines stipulated that the States having more than 15 *per cent* faculty positions remaining vacant by the end of the first year of RUSA, may lose the entitlement for any further grants. The Guidelines of RUSA 2.0 envisaged that colleges and universities with faculty position above 85 *per cent* filled in regular mode and student teacher ratio above 10:1-20:1 were to be given top priority for selection under infrastructure grants. GoK entered (May 2018) into an MoU with MHRD and agreed on filling up faculty vacancies and ensuring that there is no ban on recruitment and that the faculty positions in Universities would not be less than 85 *per cent* of sanctioned faculty strength. However, Audit noticed deviations from the above in filling up of vacancies by test checked institutions as elaborated below:

- Audit observed that in 15 selected institutions (including Universities), the sanctioned faculty strength was 1776 as on 31 March 2023, against which the actual faculty position was 1249 (70 *per cent*), leaving 527 vacant faculty positions as shown in **Table 3.8**. The details of sanctioned strength and faculty positions in individual institutions are given in **Appendix 3.7**.

Table 3.8: Details of sanctioned posts and faculty position of 15 selected institutions during the period 2018-19 to 2022-23

Year	Total Sanctioned Teaching Post	Actual Teaching Faculty (excluding Contract/ Guest Faculty)	Difference/ Vacant Position
2018-19	1727	1160*	568
2019-20	1737	1179	558
2020-21	1738	1255	483
2021-22	1739	1253	486
2022-23	1776	1249	527

* In one college, there was one faculty in excess of the sanctioned strength
(Source: Data obtained from selected institutions)

Audit took note of the fact that as the requisite benchmark of 85 *per cent* of faculty strength was not maintained by SSUS Kalady, the project submitted by the institution under RUSA 2.0 was discarded (July 2018) by MHRD. In 2018-19, against the sanctioned strength of 220, 46 faculty positions remained vacant in the institution.

- Out of the 15 selected institutions, eight institutions, which had proposed works under construction, renovation and purchase, did not maintain the student teacher ratio as stipulated in the guidelines (**Appendix 3.8**).
- As per the UGC Regulation on Minimum Qualifications for appointment of Teachers and other Academic staff in Universities and colleges and measures for the maintenance of standards in Higher Education 2010, teachers should be appointed on contract basis, only when it is absolutely necessary and when the student teacher ratio does not satisfy the laid

down norms. In any case, the number of appointments was not to exceed 10 *per cent* of the total faculty position of the College / University.

Contrary to the above, it was observed that during the audit period 2018-19 to 2022-23, the number of Guest / Contract Faculty appointed in the 15 selected institutions ranged from 42 to 47 *per cent*, as against the 10 *per cent* criteria specified in UGC norms, as detailed in **Table 3.9**.

Table 3.9: Details of Guest/Contract staff appointed in selected institutions

Period	Sanctioned Regular Teaching Posts	Actual Regular Teaching Posts	UGC Criteria (10 <i>per cent</i> of total posts)	Guest / Contract Faculty appointed	Percentage of Guest/ Contract faculty
2018-19	1727	1160	173	760	44
2019-20	1737	1179	174	789	45
2020-21	1738	1255	174	746	42
2021-22	1739	1253	174	807	46
2022-23	1776	1249	178	838	47

(Source: Replies collected from 15 selected institutions under RUSA 1.0 and 2.0)

Government assured in reply (April 2024) that institutions which have a student teacher ratio exceeding 15 *per cent* and guest faculty exceeding 10 *per cent* will be reminded to undertake corrective measures to adhere to the RUSA/UGC guidelines.

3.1.9.4. *Non-compliance to pre-requisites of RUSA scheme*

As per the pre-requisites of RUSA 1.0, it was the responsibility of the States to carry out Accreditation reforms. States were to ensure that all the institutions adopt accreditation of NAAC and National Board of Accreditation (NBA)⁹⁵ as mandatory quality assurance framework. This was a pre-condition for sanction of funds under RUSA. Further, targets of RUSA 2.0 required all the State institutions to be NAAC accredited⁹⁶ by the end of March 2020. MHRD directed (January 2016) the States to create a State level Quality Assurance Cell (SLQAC) for facilitating timely mandatory NAAC accreditation to Higher Education institutions under RUSA 1.0. SLQAC was to take up various awareness as well as preparatory activities reaching out to the geographically scattered Higher Education institutions across the State, so as to achieve national and international standards.

Though GoK created (March 2016) SLQAC and utilised ₹1.42 crore of RUSA fund towards its establishment expenditure (March 2023), Audit observed that out of the 266 Government/Aided Arts and Science institutions⁹⁷, 81 did not have NAAC accreditation of any grade at the beginning of the audit period in 2018-19. The status after five years in 2022-23 indicated that the number of unaccredited institutions increased to 114 as detailed in **Table 3.10**.

⁹⁵ Accreditation agency for Technical Educational institutions

⁹⁶ Accreditation given by NAAC is usually valid for a period of five years. However, institutions which have secured highest grade consecutively in previous two cycles of accreditation and continue to do so in the 3rd cycle will be eligible for extension of validity from five to seven years.

⁹⁷ Government and Aided Arts and Science colleges

Table 3.10: Status of NAAC accreditation of Arts and Science Colleges in the State during 2018-23

Year	Total number of Higher Education institutions	Number of institutions without accreditation
2018-19	266	81
2019-20	266	88
2020-21	266	94
2021-22	267	103
2022-23	267	114

(Source: Data furnished by the Directorate of Collegiate Education)

The decreasing trend in obtaining accreditation raises concerns regarding the extent of handholding of institutions by SLQAC towards attaining the pre-requisites of RUSA.

Government stated (April 2024) that as per the NAAC website (August 2023), a total of 234 institutions in the State were accredited. In addition, it was stated that several factors posed limitation to accreditation process like frequent changes in the criteria of assessment by NAAC, shutting down of Higher Education Institutions during COVID 19 lockdown and floods in 2018 and 2019.

The above contention is not tenable as the targets of RUSA 2.0 required all the State institutions to be NAAC accredited by the end of March 2020 and Audit observed that 58 number of colleges did not possess NAAC accreditation of any grade throughout the period 2018-23.

3.1.10. Conclusion

GoK received funding for implementation of RUSA from March 2014. Total grants of ₹433.28 crore were received till March 2023, out of which the Government managed to spend only ₹310.54 crore, leaving an unspent balance of ₹122.74 crore. Despite institutions not adhering to conditions specified in the Guidelines of RUSA, funds were released to these institutions, which defeated the very purpose of the scheme. Though RUSA 1.0 was to be implemented during 2013-17, several projects undertaken in test checked institutions under RUSA 1.0 were not completed by 2017 and were in various stages of execution during the audit period. Funds relating to RUSA 1.0 and RUSA 2.0, amounting to ₹10.54 crore and ₹121.75 crore respectively were yet to be released for completing these projects for reasons such as delay in conducting physical inspection, non-commencement of project etc.

Audit scrutiny revealed several shortcomings, delays and deviations from adherence to provisions in the Guidelines on implementation of the scheme. The State excluded KSHEC from the roles of strategy and planning, monitoring and evaluation, etc. Even though SHEPs were endorsed by KSHEC, the activities in connection with their preparation were not performed by the Council. SHEPs were not prepared by aggregating the IDPs. Baseline survey was not conducted for the preparation of DPRs by institutions. There was undue delay on the part

of SPD, in releasing funds to institutions, which contributed to delay in implementation of components undertaken as per the DPR.

Government spending on higher education for the period 2018-23 ranged between 0.44 and 0.51 *per cent* of GSDP against the agreed two *per cent* as per the MoU with Government of India. Infrastructure projects remained incomplete due to deviation from approved DPR and consequent lack of funds for their completion. Out of 16 test checked institutions, only four institutions had included proposals for providing disabled friendly facilities like special toilets, elevators, ramps, etc.

Monitoring of the scheme at institutional as well as State level was inadequate. In the absence of annual perspective plan, the institutions were not having any timeline for progress to be achieved in the implementation. Geo-tagging of projects was not undertaken by the institutions as required under RUSA Guidelines.

3.1.11. Recommendations

Government may ensure that:

- All works undertaken are geo-tagged for effective implementation of web-based monitoring system.
- The spending on higher education is increased to two *per cent* of the GSDP as per the Memorandum of Understanding with Government of India.
- Recruitment of staff for faculty positions is carried out as per the norms for smooth functioning of the Institutes.
- Projects under RUSA should be completed in a time bound manner to achieve the targeted benefits and the option of taking action against officials responsible for severely delayed cases is explored.

COMPLIANCE AUDIT PARAGRAPHS

CHAPTER IV COMPLIANCE AUDIT PARAGRAPHS

Misappropriation

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND FARMERS' WELFARE DEPARTMENT

4.1. Misappropriation of Government money in Coconut Nursery, Valiyathura, Thiruvananthapuram

Non-adherence to codal provisions and absence of supervisory controls resulted in misappropriation of ₹1.28 lakh in Coconut Nursery, Valiyathura, Thiruvananthapuram.

Rule 92 (a) (ii) to (iv) of the Kerala Treasury Code (KTC) requires Government officers who handle cash to enter all monetary transactions in the cash book as soon as they occur and get these attested by the Head of Office in token of check. The Head of 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 them as correct. Article 7 (2) of Kerala Financial Code Vol.I (KFC) stipulates that the daily collection of each officer should be remitted to the Treasury, on the next working day, or if not possible to do so, at least once in a week.

Article 297 of KFC stipulates that if the Head of Office suspects defalcation or loss of public moneys which involved his office, he should immediately send a preliminary report to the Accountant General, and to the Head of Office and report the case to the Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau. The Head of Office should investigate the matter fully without delay and take further action, including fixing and enforcing responsibility for losses.

The Coconut Nursery, Valiyathura, headed by the Assistant Director of Agriculture (ADA), supplies coconut seedlings to Krishibhavans, farmers and through sales counter at World Market, Thiruvananthapuram. The sale proceeds paid in cash or Demand draft by the beneficiaries were seen credited to the Special Treasury Savings Bank (STSB)⁹⁸ Account of the nursery and the account of District Panchayat (DP)⁹⁹/ head of account¹⁰⁰ of Agriculture Department.

Audit of Coconut Nursery, Valiyathura was conducted from 17 June 2019 to 20 June 2019 covering the period 2017-18 to 2018-19. During the course of audit, cash book, treasury receipts related to the sale of coconut seedlings and details of remittance into STSB and to accounts of District Panchayat/ Scheme, were subject to detailed scrutiny, which revealed the following circumventions of codal provisions.

⁹⁸ Treasury Savings Bank account maintained at Principal Sub Treasury East Fort, Thiruvananthapuram

⁹⁹ Till 22 April 2018, as directed by Local Self Government Department on 27 February 2003.

¹⁰⁰ '0401-00-119-99 Receipts from Horticulture and Vegetable crops'

- Two ADsA and one Agricultural Officer (AO) held charge of the office during the period 23 December 2017 to 13 August 2018. During this period the officials single-handedly collected the sale proceedings, recorded entries in the cash book and certified the cash, which was against the provisions laid down in KTC. A responsible subordinate officer other than the writer of the cash book had not ensured the correctness of the entries/cash balance.
- During the period 23 December 2017 to 13 August 2018 (203 days), remittances were made only on six days¹⁰¹. The daily cash collection was not seen remitted to District Panchayat or head of account of Agriculture Department but retained in hand. Of the six remittances made during the period only three remittances were made to the District Panchayat and the remaining were remitted to the Special Treasury Savings Bank (STSB) Account¹⁰² in violation of Government orders. The recordings made during the above period were marked by over-writings (four instances), striking off entries (two instances), non-accounting of remittances to treasury (two instances) and non-entry/delayed entry of receipts (five instances).
- The AO assumed charge from his predecessor on 26 July 2018 and the second ADA took over charge on 13 August 2018. The opening cash balance on 26 July 2018 when the AO assumed charge, was ₹7,48,673 as per cash book. However, the physical cash balance was not jointly verified and the cash balance recorded in the cash book was not certified by the incoming and outgoing officers.

Noticing non-adherence to laid down procedures in the day to day management of funds by the auditee unit, Audit undertook (February 2021) a thorough check of entries in the cash book for the period 01 April 2016 to 31 December 2020. Scrutiny revealed that only part of receipts towards sale of coconut seedlings during the period 23 December 2017 to 13 August 2018 had been remitted into STSB/DP account as shown in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1: Details of remittance of receipts during the period 23 December 2017 to 13 August 2018

(in ₹)

Total amount collected as cash	Total amount remitted to STSB/DP/Agriculture account	Cash in hand as on 13.08.2018	Short remittance
1	2	3	4 (1-2-3)
9,26,655	7,37,009	61,510	1,28,136

(Source: Records of the Coconut Nursery)

Audit noticed that when the second ADA assumed charge on 13 August 2018, the cash balance recorded in the cash book was ₹8,20,466 when the

¹⁰¹ 09 January 2018, 16 February 2018, 02 June 2018, 13 July 2018, 18 July 2018 and 02 August 2018

¹⁰² Treasury Savings Bank Account No.701021400000024 maintained at Principal Sub-Treasury East Fort

actual cash balance as per receipts should have been ₹1,89,646¹⁰³. The incoming ADA, despite detecting mismatch of physical cash balance with the recording in cash book, neither informed the Head of the Department/Accountant General nor initiated any action to further investigate the matter, as spelt out in Article 297 of KFC.

On Audit pointing out (July 2019, May 2021¹⁰⁴) the short remittance, the AO replied (February 2023) that all receipts pertaining to the period have been remitted to the DP/head of account in two bulk credits of ₹1,69,760¹⁰⁵ and ₹9,02,516¹⁰⁶ on 02 August 2019 and 31 August 2019 respectively.

The above two credits were made out of the balance amount in the STSB account, instead of recovering the short amount from responsible officers. This also established irregular parking of funds in STSB, without crediting the amount to the appropriate heads of accounts of DP/Government for over a year and a half, which was a violation of codal provisions.

Government replied¹⁰⁷ (December 2023) that Internal audit of the institution conducted in pursuance of audit observation has revealed that the delay to record the amounts transferred to the STSB account in the cash book on time led to the audit finding as misappropriation of Government funds and that, all amounts due to the Government have been settled correctly later.

The contention of Government was untenable as Audit cross-verified (January 2024) each credit made to the STSB account with the TR 5 receipts of the Coconut nursery and found that no single credit could be linked to the receipts relating to the short-remitted amount. The authorities, instead of recovering the misappropriated amount from the responsible official/s, had made good the loss by utilising Government money flowing from various sources into STSB, which was a blatant violation of rules.

Government replied (March 2024) that an inquiry was conducted by the Directorate which established unauthorised retention of ₹1.28 lakh without remitting to Government account, which resulted in grave misappropriation as observed by Audit. It was also informed that action will be initiated against the ADA to recover the short remittance of money and that explanation will be called for from the Internal Audit wing of the PAO for having wrongly interpreted audit findings.

Systemic deficiencies with regard to recording of entries in cash book and prompt remittances to appropriate heads of account and serious lapse in verification and attestation of entries in cash book being performed by a single official, has led to embezzlement of money in the Coconut Nursery.

¹⁰³ ₹61,510 (Cash in hand) + ₹1,28,136

¹⁰⁴ Respective dates of issuing Inspection Report and Statement of Facts to Government

¹⁰⁵ Receipts relating to the period 05 February 2018 to 10 April 2018

¹⁰⁶ Receipts relating to the period 23 April 2018 to 27 June 2019

¹⁰⁷ Reply to the Statement of Facts

Furthermore, the misappropriated amount was replaced with Government money by authorities concerned, signifying weak internal controls. Inquiry needs to be conducted on the matter, responsibility fixed on the officials who held charge during the period and the misappropriated amount recovered from errant persons.

Recommendation:

Government should ensure that codal provisions regarding day to day handling of monetary transactions, as laid down in Kerala Treasury Code and Kerala Financial Code, are strictly ensured by Heads of Offices. Weak internal controls should be addressed on priority to prevent misappropriation of funds.

Unfruitful expenditure

HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

4.2. Unfruitful expenditure on two buildings and consequent idling of equipment

Lack of coordination in executing works and absence of effective monitoring by Kerala State Science and Technology Museum resulted in infructuous expenditure of ₹15.03 crore on two buildings and idle investment of ₹5.05 crore on equipment.

Based on the proposals of the Director, Kerala State Science and Technology Museum (KSSTM), Government of Kerala (GoK) accorded administrative sanction¹⁰⁸ for setting up two infrastructure projects, viz., (i) Space Theatre as part of the Kerala Science City (KSC), Kottayam¹⁰⁹ and (ii) Planetarium at Regional Science Centre (RSC), Chalakudy at ₹28 crore. Audit observed that due to lack of expertise, effective planning and oversight on the part of KSSTM, neither the Space Theatre nor the RSC could be made functional, resulting in idle investment of ₹20.08 crore as discussed below:

4.2.1. Space Theatre at Kerala Science City, Kottayam

The Director, KSSTM executed (September 2014) agreement with Habitat Technology Group (HTG), which was to be the Architectural and Structural consultant to the work of Space Theatre¹¹⁰. HTG prepared designs of each element of the project, tender drawings, specifications, detailed estimate of the work and submitted to KSSTM in April 2015. The Director, KSSTM entrusted (November 2014) proof checking of the design of space theatre building prepared by HTG to Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Chennai. The Project Management Consultancy (PMC) of the work was entrusted (February 2015) to

¹⁰⁸ On 12 December 2013 for KSC, Kottayam and 13 July 2015 for RSC, Chalakudy

¹⁰⁹ The components of KSC included Science Centre, planetarium, full dome digital theatre, Edutainment components, cafeteria, etc.

¹¹⁰ Comprising planetarium and space gallery

M/s Hindustan Life care Ltd. (HLL). The site was handed over to HLL in July 2015 and work was scheduled to be completed by October 2016.

The structure of the building could not be completed due to inability to execute micro-concreting¹¹¹ on the cap brim¹¹² of the ornamental structure surrounding the Space Theatre despite repeated extension upto August 2018, and it remains incomplete (September 2024). Initially the design was sent for vetting to IIT Chennai, wherein reservation was conveyed on use of micro-concreting for finishing of the cap brim. The mock micro-concreting (January 2017) conducted in the presence of the Technical Committee members failed. Realising the hurdles in execution of micro-concreting of the structure, HTG proposed (February 2017) an alternate material, which also did not get the approval of the Director.

Subsequently, the technical expertise of a retired professor of IIT Chennai was sought by KSSTM (October 2017) for studying the issues related to micro-concreting and to get feasible alternate designs. The Technical expert appointed by KSSTM had opined that the possibility of rusting of steel trusses supporting the heavy cantilever¹¹³ cap brims could not be ruled out. The trusses entrapped in the void space between the top and bottom skins of the cap brims being inaccessible, ascertaining their structural stability and maintenance would be extremely difficult.

Scrutiny of records and joint physical verification (October 2019) by audit revealed that no progress in work was recorded during the period 2018 to 2019, while the structure of micro-concreting was seen stacked in open, leading to its rusting. As per directions of the new Technical Committee, which took over in November 2019, the work of erection and fixing of main frame and sub frames of the micro-concreting structure was undertaken in February 2020 and completed in later part of 2020. However, KSSTM stated to audit (June 2022) that the contractor¹¹⁴ to whom work was entrusted by HTG in September 2015 did not have sufficient experience in micro-concreting work. The PMC and HTG could not give proper guidance to the contractor for executing the work.

During the latest joint physical verification with the engineers of KSSTM in February 2023, Audit noticed that even after incurring an expenditure of ₹13.16 crore, the construction of Space theatre building was incomplete due to technical issues regarding the micro-concreting work. The erection of the cantilever frames using steel pipes was seen executed over which the proposed micro-concreting was to be done. Additional works such as erection of dome, interior works, finishing works, installation of planetarium equipment including projectors etc., were also pending completion.

¹¹¹ Micro-concrete is a cement based coating applied to tiles, wood, etc. to provide the look and feel of concrete at a fraction of the weight and cost of real concrete.

¹¹² Cap brim of the structure protects the exposed portion of the building from sun, rain, etc. It serves as a cladding/finishing material over the covered decking plate

¹¹³ A rigid structural element that extends horizontally and is unsupported at one end

¹¹⁴ M/s Karuthedathu Constructions



Figure 4.1: Architectural design of Space Theatre with cap brims fixed with micro concrete, prepared by Habitat Technology Group



Figure 4.2: Incomplete structure of Space Theatre, Kottayam. Photo taken by Audit party on 24 February 2023

The Director KSSTM stated that the envisaged profile in architectural design could not be achieved by micro-concreting the profile formed after erecting the framework. Additionally, it was also noted that despite the construction of Space Theatre coming to a standstill, KSSTM proceeded with the acquisition of an elaborate and delicate projection dome costing ₹1.87 crore from M/s Carl Zeiss in February 2019. Thus, the building work for the Space Theatre remains to be completed due to the inability of KSSTM, HLL and HTG to decide upon a course of action for the micro-concreting work on the cap brim.

4.2.2. Planetarium Building in Regional Science Centre, Chalakudy

The Director KSSTM executed (March 2017) an agreement with HTG for the work of Construction of planetarium building at RSC, Chalakudy at Thrissur with completion time of 13 months. The site was handed over to HTG in May 2017. Audit observed that the date of completion of the planetarium building was extended multiple times due to change in design, modifications in structure of dome from horizontal to tilted, delay in approval from KSSTM for revised design, etc.

Initially the construction was planned to accommodate 15m diameter horizontal dome. When the construction reached roof level, the horizontal dome was changed into tilted one. Hence the dome originally planned to a height of 10m, was raised to 11.5m and concreting done without modifying the structural design. As per the original schedule of work and estimate, the dome structure after concreting was to be plastered with cement mortar over the concrete, after which water proofing was to be done. However, the water proofing works were seen done¹¹⁵ before plastering of the dome structure.

During the monsoon in June 2019, there was considerable water seepage through the construction joints of the dome. The then Assistant Executive Engineer of KSSTM had suggested (June 2019) that the under deck acoustic works were to be taken up only after executing plastering and water proofing,

¹¹⁵ October 2019

as the exact location of water seepage would not be visible once underside is covered. However, the then Director of KSSTM, disregarding the technical advice, decided to proceed with the acoustic panelling. Audit observed that though acoustic panelling was an item included in the main work awarded to HTG, the Director, without attributing reasons, entrusted (February 2020) the work to another agency¹¹⁶, incurring an extra expenditure of ₹5.24 lakh¹¹⁷. Plastering of dome over concrete surface was carried out by HTG only in October 2020 and the construction of the building was reported as completed in January 2021, expending ₹1.87 crore. However severe leakage occurred from the dome during the rain in July-August 2021 and the building could not be made functional.

Joint physical verification conducted (February 2023) by Audit along with Assistant Director KSSTM revealed that the building could not be handed over to KSSTM yet, due to persistent leakage and dampness in the dome. The cement plastering covering the outer surface of the dome had cracked and was damaged. The sound proof materials fitted inside the planetarium were seen damaged from contact with seeping water. The costly equipment including tilted dome imported from USA (₹78.32 lakh), projector from France (₹2.40 crore), seatings to be setup in the planetarium, etc., were seen stacked in the planetarium building, gallery building and cafeteria building.

As could be seen from the two afore-cited instances, lack of coordination in executing works, lack of ensuring synergy among agencies involved and absence of stage-wise monitoring on the part of KSSTM resulted in the buildings constructed not being put to intended use. KSSTM was to oversee the progress in work and ensure that it was to be completed in a timely manner so as to achieve the intended benefits. The unwanted haste in purchase of equipment despite the buildings not being made functional resulted in highly expensive imported equipment left idling for over five years. Government should fix responsibility for the negligence and inaction on the part of the officials concerned and initiate action to operationalise the projects.

The Director KSSTM in his reply (July 2024) stated that after continuous interactions the PMC has submitted estimate for tensile fabric roofing instead of micro-concreting to complete the balance works of construction of Space Theatre. Once revised Administrative sanction is obtained from Government, the tender formalities to award the work will be started. As regards Planetarium building, it was replied that HTG had assured that all works related to leakage will be completed within ten days, once the solution suggested by the contractor is approved by Chief Technical Examiner and Technical Committee. It was also informed that after the satisfactory completion of leak proof work in the planetarium building, KSSTM will intimate the supplier to take immediate steps to install the dome.

¹¹⁶ M/s Artisans Development Co-operative Limited (ARTCO) Alappuzha

¹¹⁷ KSSTM spent an amount of ₹7.86 lakh for acoustic paneling of the Dome through ARTCO, whereas if approved schedule of quantity was followed, the expenditure on the item would have been ₹2.62 lakh

The reply confirms the audit finding that despite passage of nine years and spending of ₹20.08 crore, construction of both structures remains incomplete and they were unable to be opened to public.

The Draft paragraph was issued to Government (July 2024). Despite issuing reminders on 02 September 2024 and 26 September 2024, reply has not been received.

AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND FARMERS' WELFARE DEPARTMENT

4.3. Idle investment on an agricultural market complex

An agricultural market complex at Vattavada set up at a cost of ₹2.45 crore in an unsuitable site without motorable approach road, is idling since its inauguration, for the last four years.

State Horticulture Mission (SHM)¹¹⁸, proposed (December 2014) the construction of an agricultural market complex at Vattavada in Idukki district under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)¹¹⁹ during 2014-15. An amount of ₹260 lakh was allocated for the project. The market complex was to function as a procurement and auction centre for vegetables produced by local farmers. The construction was to be undertaken by the District Nirmithi Kendra (DNK) Idukki and the technical supervision including preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) was entrusted (March 2015) to NABCONS¹²⁰. The Principal Agricultural Officer (PAO) was entrusted with the monitoring of the construction activity.

Vattavada Grama Panchayat (GP) identified (May 2015) 47 cents of land at Edamon for construction of the market complex. The DPR prepared (June 2015) by NABCONS certified that the selected site was a fairly settled land suitable for setting up agricultural marketing infrastructure and that the project was technically feasible and economically viable. Agreement was executed between PAO and DNK in October 2015, with completion in June 2016 and ₹259.65 lakh was sanctioned for the market complex. However, the newly elected Panchayat Committee decided (December 2015) against constructing the market complex in the originally identified site, citing that the area had been allotted as playground to Government Higher Secondary School, Vattavada long back. Audit observed that ₹2.47 lakh had already been spent by then, for preparing the site for construction.

¹¹⁸ The State Horticulture Mission is a registered society set up under the Travancore Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act, 1955 to implement the National Horticulture Mission program a centrally sponsored scheme, introduced during the financial year 2005-06.

¹¹⁹ RKVY was a 100 per cent GoI sponsored scheme launched in 2007 as an umbrella scheme for ensuring holistic development of agriculture and allied sectors by allowing states to choose their own agriculture and allied sector development activities as per the district/state agriculture plan.

¹²⁰ NABARD (National Agricultural Bank for Rural Development) Consultancy Services Private Ltd.

Thereafter, Vattavada GP identified (February 2016) another site at Oorkad for construction of the market complex. A revised estimate for ₹260 lakh was prepared (March 2016) by DNK as per which construction works at the new site commenced (June 2016), with date of completion as 31 May 2017. Audit observed that the site was located in an elevated area with no motorable approach road. Though it was incumbent on SHM to arrange a feasibility study afresh to assess the suitability of the new site to the proposed activity, no such action was initiated.

On completion of construction, the market complex building was inaugurated in September 2019. An amount of ₹2.45 crore was paid to DNK for construction of the building. The building was transferred to HortiCorp¹²¹ in August 2020 for the procurement of cool season vegetables. But the steep nature of the place where the market complex is located and lack of a motorable road posed hindrance to the functioning of the market complex. Ever since its inauguration, the market complex has not been used for the envisaged purpose for the last four years.



*Figure 4.3: Idling agricultural market complex at Vattavada
Photo taken by field audit party on 12 October 2022*

Audit observed that the steep ascending path to the building could not be traversed up and down by loaded vehicles like vans/lorries. This prevented farmers from bringing their produce directly to the market complex for sale. The Mission Director SHM replied (August 2023) that due to difficulty in bringing vegetables in lorries to the market complex, the vegetables were directly lifted from the field by HortiCorp. Though the revised estimate for agricultural market complex at the new site included the cost of construction of a motorable approach road, DNK stated (October 2023) that the road work could not be executed, owing to public protest against converting the existing common pathway to an exclusive road for the market complex.

Audit observed that SHM did not ensure a feasibility study on the appropriateness of the new site, which would have exposed the nature of terrain and lack of free access to the site. Instead, SHM went ahead with the

¹²¹ Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation Ltd.

construction of market complex building without addressing the inadequacies of the newly chosen site. The PAO, as part of effective monitoring, was to ensure that the building constructed was put to use for the purpose envisaged.

Government stated (December 2023) that the steep nature of the place and lack of proper road to access the site had posed difficulties in functioning of the market complex. It was further stated that to facilitate construction of a motorable road, a land transfer application was submitted (August 2022) to the District Collector, Idukki and survey of land executed (July 2023).

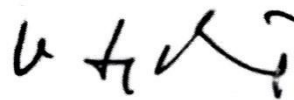
However, the inability of SHM in assessing the suitability of site for the market complex resulted in construction of a building in an inappropriate site. This has resulted in the non-functioning of the market complex and consequent idle investment of ₹2.45 crore for the last four years.



(PREETHI ABRAHAM)
Accountant General
(Audit I), Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram,
The 06 June 2025

Countersigned



(K. SANJAY MURTHY)
Comptroller and Auditor General of India

New Delhi,
The 11 June 2025

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1

Department-wise details of outstanding Inspection Reports and paragraphs as on 30 September 2023

(Reference: Paragraph 1.6.1; page 3)

Sl. No.	Name of Department	Number of outstanding	
		Inspection Reports	Paragraphs
1.	Agriculture Development and Farmers' Welfare	149	793
2.	Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development	23	86
3.	AYUSH	169	778
4.	Backward Communities Development	18	65
5.	Coastal Shipping and Inland Navigation	11	46
6.	Cooperation	35	194
7.	Election	6	18
8.	Fisheries and Ports	82	357
9.	Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs	52	202
10.	General Administration	22	80
11.	General Education	310	1469
12.	Health and Family Welfare	716	4509
13.	Higher Education	320	2069
14.	Home	304	1633
15.	Housing	6	30
16.	Information and Public Relations	14	57
17.	Labour and Skills	93	435
18.	Law	46	132
19.	Local Self-Government	1853	7075
20.	Minority Welfare Development	7	19
21.	Non-Resident Keralite Affairs	7	16
22.	Parliamentary Affairs	0	0
23.	Personnel and Administrative Reforms	4	21
24.	Revenue and Disaster Management	581	3838
25.	Sainik Welfare	16	34
26.	Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development	376	1725
27.	Social Justice	87	424
28.	Sports and Youth Affairs	20	119
29.	Vigilance	8	36
30.	Water Resources	176	740
31.	Women and Child Development	39	156
Total		5550	27156

Appendix 1.2

Details of Action Taken Notes pending as of September 2023

(Reference: Paragraph 1.6.3; page 4)

Sl. No.	Department	Standalone Audit Report on Preparedness and response to floods in Kerala	2021	Total
1.	Health and Family Welfare	-	1	1
2.	Revenue and Disaster Management	12	-	12
Total		12	1	13

Appendix 1.3

Statement showing the details of paragraphs pending discussion by the Public Accounts Committee as of September 2023

(Reference: Paragraph 1.6.4; page 4)

Sl. No.	Department	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	Standalone Audit Report on Preparedness and response to floods in Kerala	2021	Standalone Audit Report on Functioning of the University of Kerala	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
1.	Health and Family Welfare	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
2.	Higher Education	-	-	-	-	1	41	42
3.	Housing	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
4.	Revenue and Disaster Management	-	-	-	15	-	-	15
5.	Water Resources	1	1	-	10	-	-	12
Total		1	2	-	25	2	41	71

*None of the paragraphs included in the Reports in columns (6) (7) and (8) were discussed by Public Accounts Committee.

Appendix 2.1

List of 12 sub schemes under innovative projects funded by State Government

(Reference: Paragraph 2.1.1; page 5)

1. Kaval
2. Kaval Plus
3. Saranabalyam
4. Mobile App-Kunjaapp
5. Parenting Clinic
6. Juvenile Justice Fund-Balanidhi
7. Foster Care
8. Kinship Foster Care
9. Group Foster Care
10. Vacation Foster Care
11. Vijnanadeepthi
12. COVID-19 Financial assistance to children who lost their parents to COVID (from 2021-22)

Appendix 2.2

List of institutions covered in audit

(Reference: Paragraph 2.1.4; page 6)

1. Government Children's Home for Boys, Thiruvananthapuram
2. Government Special Home, Thiruvananthapuram
3. Government Observation Home, Thiruvananthapuram
4. Open shelter at Thiruvananthapuram
5. Specialised Adoption Agency at Thiruvananthapuram
6. Government Children's Home for Boys, Nooranad, Alappuzha
7. Government Children's Home for Girls, Mayithara, Alappuzha
8. Government Observation Home, Mayithara, Alappuzha
9. Specialised Adoption Agency at Alappuzha
10. Government Children's Home for Girls, Ernakulam
11. Government Observation Home, Ernakulam
12. Specialised Adoption Agency at Ernakulam
13. Government Children's Home for Boys, Wayanad
14. Specialised Adoption Agency at Wayanad
15. Government Children's Home for Boys, Kannur
16. Government Children's Home for Girls, Kannur
17. Specialised Adoption Agency at Kannur

Appendix 2.3

Delay in preparation of Social Investigation Reports

(Reference: Paragraph 2.1.7.1; page 12)

a) by JJBs during the period 2018-23

Name of District	Number of cases verified	Number of SIR prepared in Form 6	Number of SIRs submitted with delay	Period of delay (in days)	
				Minimum delay	Maximum delay
Thiruvananthapuram	20	20	11	4	268
Alappuzha	20	20	15	1	290
Ernakulam	25	25	11	2	148
Kannur	15	14	8	35	197
Wayanad	20	20	16	6	364
Total	100	99	61	-	-

b) by CWCs during the period 2018-23

Name of District	Number of cases verified	Number of SIR prepared in Form 22	Number of SIRs submitted with delay	Period of delay (in days)	
				Minimum delay	Maximum delay
Thiruvananthapuram	20	9	20	29	447
Alappuzha	20	2	16	5	187
Ernakulam	20	13	18	1	57
Kannur	20	11	15	1	365
Wayanad	20	20	18	3	65
Total	100	55	87	-	-

Appendix 2.4

List of facilities available in JJBs/CWCs in selected districts

(Reference: Paragraph 2.1.7.3; page 14)

Required facility	Thiruvananthapuram		Alappuzha		Ernakulam		Wayanad		Kannur	
	JJB	CWC	JJB	CWC	JJB	CWC	JJB	CWC	JJB	CWC
Sufficient space/adequate infrastructure	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Furniture	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Child friendly room	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Waiting room	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Indoor recreation	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Drinking water	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Appendix 2.5

Status of post-adoption follow up visits conducted in selected districts during 2018-19 to 2022-23

(Reference: Paragraph 2.1.7.10; page 25)

Sl. No.	Particulars		Thiruvananthapuram	Alappuzha	Ernakulam	Kannur	Wayanad	Total
1.	Number of adopted children		204	5	40	74	16	339
2.	First post-adoption follow up	Due as on 31.01.2024	204	5	40	74	16	339
		Completed (in numbers)	33	5	38	72	16	164
		Not completed	171	Nil	2	2	Nil	175
		Delay in completion (in days)	0-1642	12-240	0-1460	0-286	76-470	
3.	Second post-adoption follow up	Due as on 31.01.2024	195	5	39	71	13	323
		Completed (in numbers)	8	1	33	59	13	114
		Not completed	187	4	6	12	Nil	209
		Delay in completion (in days)	0-665	30-150	0-1642	0-209	0-301	
4.	Third post-adoption follow up	Due as on 31.01.2024	178	Nil	31	58	9	276
		Completed (in numbers)	Nil	Nil	20	56	9	85
		Not completed	178	Nil	11	4	Nil	193
		Delay in completion (in days)	NA	NA	0-1460	0-409	0-492	
5.	Fourth post-adoption follow up	Due as on 31.01.2024	151	Nil	28	55	8	242
		Completed (in numbers)	1	Nil	15	46	7	69
		Not completed	150	Nil	13	9	1	173
		Delay in completion (in days)	NA	NA	21-1277	0-348	46-770	

Appendix 2.6

Details of allotment and expenditure of funds

(Reference: Paragraphs 2.1.7.13, 2.1.8.3; Pages 29, 32)

a) Allotment of funds for central sponsorship program in the State and expenditure in the selected districts*

(in ₹)

State/ selected district	Year	GoI share	State share	Total	Allotted amount to districts	Expenditure	Balance
State	2020-21	84,00,000	56,00,000	1,40,00,000	1,40,00,000	1,33,34,316	6,65,684
	2021-22	84,00,000	56,00,000	1,40,00,000	1,40,00,000	1,36,66,831	3,33,169
	2022-23	2,44,72,800	1,63,15,200	4,07,88,000	3,02,90,600	2,99,48,600	3,42,000
Thiruvananthapuram	2020-21	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	0
	2021-22	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	0
	2022-23	Not available	Not available	Not available	21,96,000	21,96,000	0
Alappuzha	2020-21	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	0
	2021-22	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	9,97,000	3,000
	2022-23	Not available	Not available	Not available	22,24,000	22,24,000	0
Ernakulam	2020-21	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	9,54,000	46,000
	2021-22	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	0
	2022-23	Not available	Not available	Not available	23,36,000	23,36,000	0
Wayanad	2020-21	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	5,90,000	4,10,000
	2021-22	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	9,60,000	40,000
	2022-23	Not available	Not available	Not available	20,08,000	20,08,000	0
Kannur	2020-21	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	0
	2021-22	6,00,000	4,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	10,00,000	0
	2022-23	Not available	Not available	Not available	21,12,000	21,04,000	8000

*Figures for the years 2018-19 and 2019-20 were not furnished.

b) Allotment of funds for State sponsorship programme in the State and expenditure in the selected districts

(in ₹)

State/ selected district	Year	Allotment	Expenditure	Balance
State	2019-20	1,98,72,000	1,74,97,235	23,74,765
	2020-21	1,95,14,000	1,83,04,000	12,10,000
	2021-22	1,79,52,000	1,75,28,461	4,23,539
	2022-23	1,84,92,000	1,66,09,082	18,82,918
Thiruvananthapuram	2019-20	12,00,000	7,24,000	4,76,000
	2020-21	16,62,000	16,62,000	0
	2021-22	11,12,000	11,12,000	0
	2022-23	30,00,000	30,00,000	0
Alappuzha	2019-20	15,36,000	12,04,000	3,32,000
	2020-21	8,40,000	8,40,000	0
	2021-22	8,64,000	8,54,000	10,000
	2022-23	13,20,000	12,50,000	70,000
Ernakulam	2019-20	8,64,000	8,64,000	0
	2020-21	6,32,000	5,20,000	1,12,000
	2021-22	12,36,000	12,02,000	34,000
	2022-23	11,40,000	7,40,000	4,00,000
Wayanad	2019-20	15,60,000	15,60,000	0
	2020-21	12,40,000	11,90,000	50,000
	2021-22	8,36,000	8,06,000	30,000
	2022-23	8,52,000	8,48,000	4000
Kannur	2019-20	17,28,000	14,76,000	2,52,000
	2020-21	17,80,000	16,98,000	82,000
	2021-22	15,84,000	15,84,000	0
	2022-23	8,64,000	8,44,000	20,000

*Figures for the year 2018-19 were not furnished.

Appendix 2.7

Details of excess sponsorship amount paid to persons above 18 years of age

(Reference: Paragraphs 2.1.7.13, 2.1.8.3; pages 29, 32)

Sl. No.	Name	Date of attaining 18 years	Excess			Total Excess (in ₹)
			From	To	Months	
Central Sponsorship						
1	Child 1	03/01/2018	02/2018	03/2018	2	4000
2	Child 2	28/11/2021	12/2021	02/2023	15	30000
3	Child 3	10/06/2022	07/2022	02/2023	8	16000
Total						50,000
State Sponsorship						
4	Child 4	20/12/2019	01/2020	02/2020	2	4000
5	Child 5	19/04/2019	05/2019	02/2020	10	20000
6	Child 6	05/08/2019	09/2019	02/2020	6	12000
7	Child 7	05/10/2019	11/2019	02/2020	4	8000
8	Child 8	16/06/2020	07/2021	08/2021	2	4000
9	Child 9	18/07/2022	08/2022	10/2022	3	6000
Total						54,000

Appendix 2.8

Details of inspections conducted by the District Inspection Committee in the selected districts

(Reference: Paragraph 2.1.9.1; page 35)

District		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Thiruvananthapuram	No. of CCIs in the district	93	93	93	88	84
	No. of inspections due	372	372	372	352	336
	Number of inspections conducted	9	0	1	12	4
	Percentage conducted	2.41	0	0.27	3.41	1.19
	No. of selected CCIs	5	5	5	5	5
	No. of inspections in selected CCIs	2	0	2	0	2
Alappuzha	No. of CCIs in the district	22	22	22	22	23
	No. of inspections due	88	88	88	88	92
	Number of inspections conducted	32	28	23	20	23
	Percentage conducted	36	32	26	23	21
	No. of selected CCIs	4	4	4	4	4
	No. of inspections in selected CCIs	0	0	1	1	1
Ernakulam	No. of CCIs in the district	72	72	72	72	72
	No. of inspections due	288	288	288	288	288
	Number of inspections conducted	2	3	1	1	0
	Percentage conducted	0.69	1.04	0.35	0.35	0
	No. of selected CCIs	3	3	3	3	3
	No. of inspections in selected CCIs	9	9	5	5	7
Wayanad	No. of CCIs in the district	25	25	25	25	12
	No. of inspections due	100	100	100	100	48
	Number of inspections conducted	7	0	2	3	2
	Percentage conducted	7	0	2	3	4.17
	No. of selected CCIs	2	2	2	2	2
	No. of inspections in selected CCIs	0	0	0	0	0
Kannur	No. of CCIs in the district	35	34	22	21	21
	No. of inspections due	140	136	88	84	84
	Number of inspections conducted	0	0	Not reconstituted	Not reconstituted	Not reconstituted
	Percentage conducted	0	0	0	0	0
	No. of selected CCIs	3	3	3	3	3
	No. of inspections in selected CCIs	0	0	0	0	0

* Figures as furnished by the DCPOs and selected CCIs

Appendix 3.1

Components of RUSA

(Reference: Paragraph 3.1.1.1; page 41)

- a) Components of RUSA 1.0 and 2.0 (components undertaken for implementation in Kerala shown in Bold)

Components under RUSA 1.0	Components under RUSA 2.0
1. New Universities	Component 1: Creation of Universities by upgradation of existing autonomous college
2. Upgradation of existing autonomous colleges to Universities	Component 2: Creation of Universities by conversion of colleges in a cluster
3. Conversion of colleges to Cluster Universities	Component 3: Infrastructure grants to Universities
4. Infrastructure grants to Universities (₹20 crore each)	Component 4: Quality and excellence in select State Universities (new)
5. New Model Colleges (General)	Component 5: New Model Degree Colleges
6. Upgradation of existing Degree Colleges to Model Degree Colleges (₹ four crore each)	Component 6: Upgradation of existing degree colleges to model degree colleges
7. New Colleges (Professional)	Component 7: New colleges (professional)
8. Infrastructure grants to colleges (₹ two crore each)	Component 8: Enhancing quality and excellence in select autonomous colleges
9. Research, innovation and quality improvement	Component 9: Infrastructure grants to colleges
10. Equity initiatives	Component 10: Research, innovation and quality improvement
11. Faculty Recruitment Support	Component 11: Equity initiatives
12. Faculty improvements (₹ one crore)	Component 12: Faculty recruitment support
13. Research Universities	Component 13: Faculty improvement
14. Vocationalisation of Higher Education	Component 14: Institutional restructuring, capacity building and reforms
15. Leadership Development of Educational Administrators	
16. Institutional restructuring and reforms	
17. Capacity building and preparation, Data collection and planning	
18. Management Information System	

- b) Details of Components implemented in the State

RUSA 1.0			RUSA 2.0		
Component	Implementing Institution	Amount allocated	Component	Implementing Institution	Amount allocated
Infrastructure Grants to Universities	Six Universities	₹20 crore each	Excellence and Quality Improvement in Selected Autonomous Colleges	Five Colleges	₹ five crore each
Upgradation of existing Degree Colleges to Model Degree Colleges	One College	₹ four crore	Research Innovation and Quality Improvement	Two Universities	₹50 crore each
Infrastructure Grants to College	28 Colleges	₹ two crore each	New Model Degree Colleges	One College	₹12 crore
Faculty Improvements	HRDC, Kerala University	₹ one crore	Infrastructure Grants to Colleges	114 Colleges	₹ two crore each
Equity Initiatives	State Project Directorate	₹ five crore			

Appendix 3.2

List of selected districts and institutions

(Reference: Paragraph 3.1.2; page 43)

Selected districts	Colleges Selected		University Selected
	Fund not released (10 per cent selection)	Fund released (20 per cent selection)	
Ernakulam	Mar Athanasius College of Engineering, Kothamangalam	Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura	1. Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit 2. Cochin University of Science and Technology
	M.E.S College Aluva, Ernakulam	Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery	
		Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara	
		Government College, Tripunithura	
		TM Jacob Memorial Government College, Manimalakkunnu	
Thiruvananthapuram	St. Xavier's College, Thumba, Thiruvananthapuram	HHMSPBNSS College for Women, Neeramankara	University of Kerala
	Co-operative Academy of Professional Education (CAPE)	Government Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram	
	KNM Government Arts and Science College, Kanjiramkulam, Thiruvananthapuram	HRDC Kerala	
Kannur	Government College Thalassery, Chokli, Olavilam P.O, Kannur	Government Brennen College, Thalassery	Kannur University
	Keyi Sahib Training College, Karimbam, Karimbam P.O, Taliparamba, Kannur	PKM College of Education, Madampam	
Palakkad	Government Arts & Science College Pathirippala, Kongad, Palakkad	NSS Training College, Ottappalam	
	Government Engineering College, Sreekrishnapuram	SNGS College, Pattambi	

Appendix 3.3

Comparison statement of RUSA guidelines and Kerala State Higher Education Council Act, 2018

(Reference: Paragraph 3.1.3; page 44)

Para No. in the Guideline	Provision in the Guideline	Section No. of the Act	Provision in the Act
5.2.1(i)	<p>Composition of the Council:</p> <p>The State Higher Education Council should consist of 15 to 25 members; each with a term of six years, of whom one-third will retire every two years</p>	11	<p>Composition of the Council</p> <p>1. The Council shall comprise of the following bodies namely:-</p> <p>a) The Advisory Council</p> <p>b) The Governing Council</p> <p>c) The Executive Council</p> <p>2. The bodies of the council shall be reconstituted simultaneously every four years from the date of constitution.</p> <p>Provided that in the event of delay in the constitution of the Bodies they shall continue to hold the office till their reconstitution.</p>
5.2.1(i) 1	Chairman, preferably an eminent Academic/Public intellectual with proven leadership qualities	7 (1)	The Minister in charge of Higher Education of the state shall, by virtue of his office, be the Chairman of the Council
5.2.1(i) 2	Vice Chairman must be an eminent academic administrator with proven record (rank of a Professor) – in case the chair is a non-academic person. In other cases it could be a professional from industry etc., with sufficient experience in the sector.	8 (1)	The Vice Chairman: An eminent educationalist, preferably a former Vice-Chancellor shall be appointed by the Government as the Vice-Chairman of the Council
5.2.1(i) 3	Member Secretary, an eminent academic of the rank of Professor-Chief Executive.	9 (1)	The Member Secretary: An academician, preferably with administrative experience, shall be appointed by the Government as Member Secretary of the Council
5.2.1(ii)	Chairman will be selected by a committee	7 (1)	The Minister in charge of Higher Education of the State shall, by

Para No. in the Guideline	Provision in the Guideline	Section No. of the Act	Provision in the Act
	<p>consisting of Chief Minister of the State, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Leader of Opposition on the basis of a recommendation of shortlisted candidates made by a Search-cum-selection committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Search-cum-selection committee will be a three member committee of very eminent academic/public intellectual with proven record and integrity. The State Council will nominate two members while the state will nominate one and the state nominee will be the chair. The Chairman will have one non-extendable term of five years. The removal of the Chief Executive will be through a vote of non-confidence expressed by at least 2/3rd numbers present and voting with a quorum of 3/4th members 		virtue of his office, be the Chairman of the Council
5.2.1 (ii)	<p>A search committee of three members will appoint the Vice Chairman.</p> <p>The committee will consist of the Chairman of the council (as a chair) and two other members one nominated by the</p>	8 (1)	The Vice Chairman: An eminent educationalist, preferably a former Vice-Chancellor shall be appointed by the Government as the Vice-Chairman of the Council

Para No. in the Guideline	Provision in the Guideline	Section No. of the Act	Provision in the Act
	<p>State council and one by the Government.</p> <p>The Vice Chairman will have one non-extendable term of five years. The Vice-Chairman may be removed by the Chairman on the recommendation of the Council.</p>	20 (1)	<p><i>Terms and Conditions of Vice-Chairman, Member Secretary and Members</i></p> <p>The Vice Chairman, Member Secretary and Members other than the Member of the Executive Council nominated under clause (c) of Section 16, unless removed from the office in accordance with the provisions of this Act, shall hold office for an entire term of the Body of Council to which they are appointed or nominated or elected as the case may be:</p> <p>Provided that they shall continue to hold office of Vice Chairman, Member Secretary and Members respectively for a further period of six months or till further appointment or nomination or election is made to the respective offices,</p> <p>Provided further that Vice Chairman, Member Secretary and members shall be eligible for re-appointment or re-nomination or re-election for a further term of four years, as the case may be.</p>
5.2.1(ii)	<p>A search committee of three members will appoint the Member Secretary. The committee will consist of the Chairman of the council (as a chair) and two other members one nominated by the State council and one by the government. The Member Secretary will</p>	9 (1)	<p>The Member Secretary: An academician, preferably with administrative experience, shall be appointed by the Government as Member Secretary of the Council</p> <p>(Also Section 20 (1) mentioned above)</p>

Para No. in the Guideline	Provision in the Guideline	Section No. of the Act	Provision in the Act
	have one non-extendable term of five years. Member Secretary may be removed by the Chairman on the recommendation of the Council.		
5.2.1(ii)	<p>State will appoint a five-member selection committee to select seven new members and members from existing Council. Selection committee must consist of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two eminent scientists/ social scientists • one former VC of a State University • one former Director of an Institute of national repute within or outside the state • one former VC of a Central University <p>When the Council is constituted, initially, one-third of the Council members (i.e. three members) should be given one non-renewable term of six-years. Another one-third should be given a four-year term and the remaining one-third should be drawn from existing members, who would be given a term of two years.</p>		Not included in the Act

Appendix 3.4

Scheme-wise details of fund flow under RUSA 1.0 and 2.0

(Reference: Paragraph 3.1.7.1; page 48)

(₹ in crore)

Scheme	Name of Component	Total fund approved	Total fund released	Pending release from GoI/State
RUSA 1.0	Infrastructure grants to Universities	120	120	0
	Infrastructure grants to Colleges	56	50	6
	Faculty Improvement	1	1	0
	Upgradation to MDC	4	2	2
	Equity Initiatives	5	3.75	1.25
	Preparatory Grant	8	8	0
	MMER*	5.57	4.28	1.29
Total		199.57	189.03	10.54
RUSA 2.0	Infrastructure grant to Colleges	226	160.5	65.5
	Enhancing quality and excellence in select Autonomous colleges	25	18.75	6.25
	Research, Innovation and Quality improvement	100	57.5	42.5
	New MDC	12	6	6
	Preparatory Grant	3	1.5	1.5
Total		366	244.25	121.75
Grand total (RUSA 1.0 and 2.0)		565.57	433.28	132.29

(*Pertaining to RUSA 1.0 and 2.0)

Appendix 3.5
Details of advance payment by Kannur University
(Reference: Paragraph 3.1.8.5; page 60)

(in ₹)

Type of Work	Name of Work	RUSA Fund	Agreement Amount (Date)	Mobilisation Advance due to Contractor (20 per cent of Agreed Amount)	Mobilisation Advance released to Contractor (50 per cent approx.) (Date of Release)	Excess	Status of work
1	2	3	4	5	6	7 (6-5)	8
New Construction Work	Construction of Seminar Complex	6,10,00,000	*Original Estimate – 4,69,82,232 (21.03.2018) Revised Estimate – 6,04,69,034	93,96,446.40	2,34,90,446 (16.08.2018)	1,40,94,000.60	Ongoing
	Construction of car shed roof with Driver's Rest Room	42,20,000	40,41,221 (14.09.2018)	8,08,244.20	20,20,000 (15.09.2018)	12,11,756	Completed
	Construction of Scientific Instrumentation Centre, Payyanur Campus	1,90,00,000	1,51,84,801 (03.09.2018)	30,36,960.20	75,92,400 (07.09.2018)	45,55,440	Ongoing 80 per cent completed
Upgradation work	Renovation of Laboratories	84,00,000	48,05,604 (12.09.2018)	9,61,120.80	24,00,000 (13.09.2018)	14,38,880	Completed
	Beautification of Thalassery and Thavakkara Campus	90,00,000	85,58,315 (29.08.2018)	17,11,663	42,79,000 (06.09.2018)	25,67,337	Completed
	Beautification of Nileswaram Campus	86,34,377	86,34,377 (18.08.2018)	17,26,875	43,17,000 (30.08.2018)	25,90,125	Completed
	Renovation of Administrative Block and Guest House at Mangattuparamba Campus	65,00,000	54,29,594 (12.09.2018)	10,85,919	27,14,797 (13.09.2018)	16,28,878	Completed
	Renovation of Ladies and Gents Hostel at Mangattuparamba Campus	80,17,351	15,91,367 (28.07.2018)	3,18,273	7,96,000 (29.08.2018)	4,77,727	Completed
	Providing elevators at various campuses	1,69,36,084	1,69,36,084 (04.03.2018)	33,87,217	84,68,000 20% - (16.08.2018) 30% - (06.09.2018)	50,80,783	Completed
TOTAL				2,24,32,718	5,60,77,643	3,36,44,925	

Appendix 3.6

Details of availability of facilities in the selected institutions for persons with disabilities

(Reference: Paragraph 3.1.8.6; page 62)

Name of the selected institution	No. of buildings in the institution	No. of buildings in which functional ramps are provided	No. of buildings having wheelchair access to upper floors
Sree Neelakanta Government Sanskrit College, Pattambi	8	6	1
Government Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram	5	5	Nil
Government Brennen College, Thalasserry	31	7	1
Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura	5	2	Nil
HHMSPBNSS College for Women, Neeramankara	3	2	Nil
NSS Training College, Ottappalam	3	3	Nil
PKM College of Education, Madampam, Kannur	2	2	2
Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery	5	5	5
Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara	2	2	1
TM Jacob Memorial Government College, Manimalakkunnu	7	1	Nil
Government College, Tripunithura	1	1	Nil
Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC), University of Kerala	1	1	Nil
University of Kerala	90	44	Nil
Cochin University of Science and Technology	121	28	7
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady	30	16	5
Kannur University	44	26	8
Total	358	151	30

Appendix 3.7

Details of Teaching Faculty in selected 15 institutions from 2018-19 to 2022-23

(Reference: Paragraph 3.1.9.3; page 64)

Name of the selected institution	2018-19			2019-20			2020-21			2021-22			2022-23		
	Sanctioned Strength	Actual Strength (Permanent)	Difference	Sanctioned Strength	Actual Strength (Permanent)	Difference	Sanctioned Strength	Actual Strength (Permanent)	Difference	Sanctioned Strength	Actual Strength (Permanent)	Difference	Sanctioned Strength	Actual Strength (Permanent)	Difference
Sree Neelakanta Government Sanskrit College, Pattambi	86	86	0	86	86	0	86	86	0	86	82	4	86	80	6
Government Arts College, Thiruvananthapuram	53	51	2	56	51	5	56	51	5	56	51	5	56	51	5
Government Brennen College, Thalasserry	127	121	6	127	120	7	129	123	6	129	125	4	129	123	6
Government Sanskrit College, Tripunithura	27	28	0	34	32	2	34	32	2	34	31	3	34	31	3
HHMSPBNSS College for Women, Neeramankara	81	71	10	81	67	14	76	64	12	76	65	11	78	62	16
NSS Training College, Ottappalam	22	21	1	22	20	2	22	17	5	22	14	8	22	19	3
PKM College of Education, Madampam, Kannur	8	7	1	8	7	1	8	7	1	8	7	1	8	7	1
Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery	20	18	2	20	16	4	20	15	5	20	15	5	20	15	5
Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara	46	40	6	46	39	7	46	45	1	45	42	3	45	42	3
TM Jacob Memorial Government College, Manimalakkunnu	40	37	3	40	36	4	40	39	1	40	39	1	40	39	1
Government College, Tripunithura	29	29	0	29	29	0	30	30	0	30	30	0	29	29	0
University of Kerala	298	168	130	298	198	100	298	205	93	298	197	101	298	192	106
Cochin University of Science and Technology	572	252	320	572	258	314	575	298	277	577	306	271	577	315	262
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady	220	174	46	220	164	56	220	170	50	220	174	46	220	171	49
Kannur University	98	57	41	98	56	42	98	73	25	98	75	23	134	73	61
Total	1727	1160	568	1737	1179	558	1738	1255	483	1739	1253	486	1776	1249	527

Appendix 3.8

Student teacher ratio in selected institutions

(Reference: Paragraph 3.1.9.3; page 64)

Name of the selected institution	2018-19			2019-20			2020-21			2021-22			2022-23		
	Total No. of Students	Regular teaching Staff	Student Teacher Ratio	Total No. of Students	Regular teaching Staff	Student Teacher Ratio	Total No. of Students	Regular teaching Staff	Student Teacher Ratio	Total No. of Students	Regular teaching Staff	Student Teacher Ratio	Total No. of Students	Regular teaching Staff	Student Teacher Ratio
Sree Neelakanta Government Sanskrit College, Pattambi	1594	86	19:1	1619	86	19:1	1729	86	20:1	1848	82	23:1	1910	80	24:1
HHMSPBNSS College for Women, Neeramankara	1987	71	28:1	2092	67	31:1	2064	64	32:1	1933	65	30:1	1727	62	28:1
NSS Training College, Ottappalam	257	21	12:1	268	20	13:1	295	17	17:1	310	14	22:1	283	19	15:1
Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery	324	18	18:1	336	16	21:1	340	15	23:1	336	15	22:1	367	15	24:1
Sree Sankara Vidyapeetom College, Valayanchirangara	1133	40	28:1	1120	39	29:1	1091	45	24:1	1052	42	25:1	961	42	23:1
Cochin University of Science and Technology	8252	252	33:1	8370	258	32:1	8681	298	29:1	9155	306	30:1	8513	315	27:1
Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady	3664	174	21:1	3824	164	23:1	3926	170	23:1	3749	174	22:1	3765	171	22:1
Kannur University	1696	57	30:1	1703	56	30:1	1811	73	25:1	1861	75	25:1	1941	73	27:1

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