SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (SSA)
19TH JOINT REVIEW MISSION
STATE REPORT: Kerala
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1.1. Introduction

The 19th JRM state visit to Kerala was undertaken from 14th to 18th January 2014 by Mr Subir Shukla (MoHRD) and Mr Matthias Themel (EU). The districts of Kasaragod and Wayanad were covered by the visit. Briefing and de-briefing with the Education Secretary took place in Trivandrum. The JRM team is very grateful to stakeholders at all levels for the excellent preparation, support and the numerous courtesies extended. The district teams in particular spared no effort to accommodate the needs of the JRM team, and to make this visit a fruitful and useful exercise.

1.2. Overview and Key Issues

SSA-Kerala's attainments as reflected in the Results Framework are impressive. The near total achievement of many objectives raises a few key issues in terms of the way forward. These are:

1. *What does the next level of reform mean in the context of Kerala?* As SSA progresses in the coming years, continuing to work on the same goals and objectives is unlikely to add value. Therefore, what should be the next level to be aimed for? The Mission report includes the emerging areas towards this.
2. *How to ensure learning improvement, especially in higher classes?* Data and field observations reveal that learning achievement declines progressively in higher classes, making this a critical issue to be worked on.
3. *How to sustain the vibrancy and enthusiasm that helped attain this level?* While the many SSA implementers are visibly hard working, it is acknowledged by most stakeholders that a degree of 'routinization' has set in. Given that it is difficult to maintain 'mission mode' for over a decade, this presents a challenge to be addressed.

2. Progress toward achievement of Goals

2.1. Goals 1 & 3: Universal Access, Enrolment, Retention, Completion

Achievements
The state of Kerala has achieved impressive results in terms of access, enrolment, retention and completion.

Out of School children (OOSC)
The net enrolment rate in the state is nearly 100%. There remains a residual number of out of school children. Kerala has recently initiated a survey on OOSC in all districts; preliminary results indicate that there are 2225 OOSC in the state, with a majority being migrants, and the highest number of OOSC being in the age group of 12 to 13 years. Another survey is ongoing for urban deprived children. However, the results of both surveys are not final, and other

estimates by the SPO (briefing of 14th Jan 2014) put the figure of OOSC at 5600. Considering that upwards of 35 lakh migrants from other states are currently estimated to reside in Kerala, even the figure of 5600 OOSC seems low. *The Mission suggests that data issue of residual OOSC be addressed through comprehensive surveys, included a documentation of the usual duration migrant children spend in the state so that appropriate measures may be taken.*

Enrolment

According to the SPO (source: briefing of 14th Jan 2014), absolute enrolment during 2012-13 was 41,04,921, of which 24,79,276 in classes I-V, and 16,25,645 in classes VI-VIII. Total of population age 5 to 14 years is 53,40,868 (same source). These figures imply a large gap in enrolment.

In an explanatory note on enrolment, dated February 2012, the total school age population was projected to stand at 52.63 lakh, based on 2011 census data (source: D.O.No. 207/SPD/SSA/2012, dated 06/02/2012). The note goes on to illustrate how the enrolment gap can be explained by taking into account unaided/unrecognised schools, private schools, students in AIE centres, students leaving Kerala as out-migrants, and 8.7   in-migrant children.

Based on their analysis, the state of Kerala maintains that there is no gap in enrolment and reported following enrolment rates for 2012-13 (source: SPO briefing of 14th Jan 2014):

	Boys	**Girls**
GER	102.0	102.0
NER	100	100

As illustrated above, there are issues with the data pertaining to total school age population vs. absolute enrolment figures, as well as gross and net enrolment rates (e.g. different figures being given by state and by DISE). The state claims that enrolment figures provided are accurate and that DISE figures do not take into account the true situation on the ground. The state of Kerala also plans to use UID/Aadhar verification for enrolment, which will provide even more accurate data, and will allow ruling out any false enrolments.

Such issues should be addressed with some urgency and rigour. For example, the method of calculation of the school age population by the state of Kerala should be done in consistent, sound and transparent way, with due and routinely provided explanation of any discrepancies vis-à-vis the DISE calculations.

Shift from government to private schools

Enrolment in government schools is declining across Kerala while that in private schools is increasing. No specific data is available to show that there is a migration to private schools, though there is a fair amount of anecdotal information in this regard. It is reported that the lack of transport facility in government schools, the presence of pre-schooling facilities and English medium teaching, along with CBSE certification are the key incentives behind this phenomenon, rather than the poor functioning of government schools. Misconceptions about the quality of education in government schools (e.g. that the shift from rote memorization does not help children) may also be contributing to this.

In higher classes, though, there appear to a greater proportion of children in government schools, with the trend overwhelmingly skewed in favour of government schools at secondary levels.

The Mission recommends that SSA Kerala study the phenomenon closely and take a view on it so that appropriate strategies may be adopted if needed.

School infrastructure

The ratio of primary to upper primary schools stands at 1:1.8 for 2012-13 (DISE).

Children with Special Needs (CWSN)

Overall, the mission was very impressed by the achievements in IECD in Kerala. The resource teachers encountered were highly dedicated, despite having a high caseload and operating in an environment where state welfare organisations are only marginally involved in the provision of services to CWSN.

Expenditure on IEDC was reported to be only at 45.86% of outlay for 2013/14, as per 31/12/2013.

1,78,201 CWSN were identified, of which 100% are enrolled or receive alternative services (HBE: 3560 CWSN according to SPO briefing). The mission was witness to the presence of many CWSN in the classrooms visited, and had a positive impression regarding the classroom interactions involving CWSN.

Identification of CWSN is done through surveys in each municipality, based on data provided by primary health care providers and Anganwadi, and involves community health workers; 1208 medical camps were held.

CWSN are identified in following numbers (source: pre-JRM report; note that figures provided in the SPO briefing of 14th January 2014 differ):

Category	Abbr.	Number	%
Visual impairment	VI	78,599	44.1%
Total blindness	TB	721	0.4%
Hearing impairment	HI	13,384	7.5%
Speech impairment	SI	8,873	5.0%
Orthopaedic impairment	OI	10,622	6.0%
Cerebral palsy	CP	7,401	4.2%
Mental retardation	MR	28,451	16.0%
Learning disability	LD	19,541	11.0%
Multiple disability	MD	8,593	4.8%
Autism		2,016	1.1%
Total		**1,78,201**	**100%**

Due to the thorough process of identification of CWSN applied in Kerala, the total figure of CWSN is much higher than the figure given by the 2001 census:

Source	Child population	No. of CWSN	% CWSN
Census 2001 (cited in MHRD pre-mission briefing)		71,226	1.65
IMRB survey 2010 (cited in MHRD pre-mission briefing)		55,613	
SPO (pre-mission report and briefing of 14th Jan 2014)	53,40,868	1,78,201	3.33

The mission noted with some concern that children who require spectacles (e.g. due to short-sightedness) are being counted in the category of visual impairment, which explains the high number of children in that category. *The mission strongly feels that children who merely require spectacles are not to be counted as CWSN. Category-wise definitions need to be applied correctly and consistently.*

The state also reports that 1284 CWSN receive services in 49 Autism centres. According to the SPO, autistic children receive 3 hours of specialised tuition in the autism centre, and spend the rest of the school time inside the regular classroom. This approach is to be welcomed; *however it raises the question why children with other disability (e.g. LD) should not get a similar level of attention.*

One urgent need reported by RT was for sensory motor units, which would allow RT to do better work with children in the MD category.

Resource teachers (RT) received various types of training for their work with CWSN, including training in physiotherapy, Braille, sign language, and multidisciplinary training. However, in discussion with RT the mission got the impression that the training did not always meet the need of the RT, and that there is no systematic way of training the RT. In the example of Wayanad district, RT of one BRC said that the training most urgently needed was on learning disability and autism, however the RT did not have any idea whether or when it was likely that such training will be provided. At district level, there were plans to train 40 teachers in Braille, however the district only has identified 4 children who are blind. The DPO explained that the number of 40 teachers for Braille training was determined by a quota system.

The Mission recommends that a provision of resources and capacity building inputs be more closely aligned to documented needs on the ground. RT training should more strategically focus on systematic needs assessment, i.e. aligned with numbers of CWSN categories present in the district and learning needs of RTs. Management decisions regarding establishment and equipment of resource rooms and resource centres too need to be based on documented needs.

Civil works

263 primary schools, including upgradation of 242 Multi Grade Learning Centres (MGLC), and 2 upper primary schools have been sanctioned to the state. However, no new schools were opened, and no MGLC were upgraded. Upgradation of MGLC is expected to start in the near future, with priority to MGLCs that have 100 or more students.

The SPO clarified that the Kerala Education Regulation (KER) requires that for the upgradation of MGLC, four classrooms would have to be established and minimum 4 teachers assigned, which is a stricter regulation than that provided by the RTE Act. This requirement has so far prevented the state from upgrading MGLC. *The Mission urges the state to resolve the situation expeditiously as students currently in the MGLCs, who are from marginalized backgrounds, are in danger of losing educational opportunity due to discontinuation of funding for MGLCs.*

Civil works focused on repairs, ramps, toilets and drinking water facilities. Financial completion stood at 63.42% by end of 2013; physical completion could not be verified.

Generally, the mission noted the very good physical state of schools, with many child friendly elements and impressive additional resources contributed by the community to school improvement.

Indicators under Goal 3

The state of Kerala can be commended for achieving excellent results under goal 3, as summarised in below table:

Indicator according to Results framework	Achievement	Source
Transition rate from primary to upper primary	99.61%	Pre-JRM state report
Retention rate at primary level	105.88%	Pre-JRM state report
Retention rate at elementary level (I-VII)	95.7%	Pre-JRM state report
Drop-out rate class I – VIII (boys/girls)	0.02% / 0.01%	SPO briefing of 14th Jan 2014
Gross completion ratio	98.67%	Pre-JRM state report
Schools with drinking water facility	99.33%	Pre-JRM state report
Schools with common toilets	93.66%	Pre-JRM state report
Schools with separate toilets for girls	95.27%	Pre-JRM state report

In the perception of the SPO, there is no scope for further improvement beyond the levels of access and retention.

2.2. Goal 2: Inclusion

The state of Kerala can be commended for achieving excellent results under goal 2, as summarised in below table:

Indicator according to Results framework	Achievement	Source
Share of girls in primary schools	50%	Pre-JRM state report
Share of girls in upper primary schools	50%	Pre-JRM state report
Share of SC children in primary schools	9.35%	DISE 2012-13
Share of SC children in upper primary schools	9.85%	DISE 2012-13
Share of ST children in primary schools	2.04%	DISE 2012-13
Share of ST children in upper primary schools	1.74%	DISE 2012-13

Note:

Description	Value	Source/Comment
Gender parity index	959 female to 1000 male children	2011 census
Share of SC in population	9.1%	DISE 2012-13
Share of ST in population	1.5%	DISE 2012-13

There are no KGBVs in Kerala.

2.3. Goal 4: Quality & Outcomes of Learning

Teacher Availability

Kerala has been a pioneer in improving quality of education. The state has consistently focused on ensuring enabling conditions that support improved learning outcomes. This has continued post-RTE with the state having ensured teacher availability and PTR as per RTE norms. The state reports a total of 59,461 teachers in government and aided primary schools and 68,438 teachers in upper primary schools. Of these 1,27,899 teachers, 65.50 % are female teachers. DISE reports that in 2012-13, the state had a PTR of 19:1 at the primary level and 18:1 at the upper primary level. However, the state still has 5.93% primary schools with a PTR>30 and 3.22% upper primary schools with a PTR>35, though these are declining trends in keeping with the overall decline in student population in the state. There are also a number of 'excess' teachers in Kerala, reported to be around 2000. Worryingly, 4.24% primary schools and 2.24% upper primary schools are still reported to be single teacher schools. Given the 'excess' teachers, a re-deployment exercise should be able to ensure that there is no single teacher school.

An important feature and major achievement in Kerala is the high rate of teacher attendance, upwards of 95% in both primary and upper primary levels. This has been achieved through the involvement of SMCs, local self government bodies, PTAs and MTAs in close monitoring of schools and teacher (as well as student) attendance. *The Mission commends the*

state on being able to ensure this high degree of teacher (and student) attendance through community involvement.

Curriculum

In 2013-14, Kerala initiated a curriculum revision process based on the NCF-05, NCFTE-09 and the RTE. The process has been anchored by the SCERT as the competent authority, with textbooks for classes 1, 3, 5, 7 and 11 being under development, to be introduced with the new academic year in 2014. A detailed process involving experts and stakeholders at various levels has been implemented, monitored by an Expert Committee appointed by the government. The textbooks developed focus on identified learning outcomes across various domains and incorporate elements of CCE.

While the Mission was unable to view the emerging curriculum or textbooks, it was reported that there has been an effort to address confusions arising from the purported absence of 'content' in existing textbooks. There is also material to help parents teach or support their children at home. The approach includes a move away from the 'issue-based curriculum' that is being implemented at present, which is said to make for a more natural teaching learning process.

The state has also undertaken initiatives to address early literacy. These include the provision of worksheets and distribution of reading cards. Several districts reported specific programmes undertaken for the purpose. In most of the schools visited by the Mission, interaction with children indicated that in Classes 1 and 2 most had begun to read at expected levels. This is backed by the NAS Round III performance of 70.14 in Language in Class III.

Availability of TLM

The state government provides free textbooks for Class 1 and SSA supports provision of free textbooks from Classes 2-8. Textbooks were provided to 100% of the targeted 25,21,052 students within the first month of the school year commencing. An issue confronting the state is the actual cost of textbooks (Rs. 340 at primary and Rs. 577 at upper primary level) against the available support (Rs. 150 for primary and Rs. 250 for upper primary students). An examination of the books reveals that there may be scope for considerable cost reduction through better pedagogical design (e.g. incorporating multiple learning objectives in a page without creating clutter, as had been done in earlier textbooks in the state). Improved layout and appropriate page sizes would also help. *The Mission recommends that the state undertake a review of the production aspects with experienced experts, with a view to reducing production cost.*

To fulfill the need for additional material address early literacy, the state has also supplied worksheets to schools. However, though found to be useful by teachers, these were reported to have reached too late in the school year. Libraries and sports equipment have also been supplied. Visits to the schools presented an uneven picture of their use. Similarly, a high degree of availability of IT equipment was visible, though it was not clear if it was contributing to improving learning. Some of the IT-based material was more like textbook pages put on screen, which recent research elsewhere has shown is not necessarily of much help. The state is at present debating whether the focus should be on IT education or ICT-based education.

Overall, schools in Kerala displayed a material-rich environment at primary levels and to an extent in upper primary. In many of the schools visited, material had overrun available storage space. Teachers were not found using abundantly available local material such as leaves or stones, and interaction with CRC-BRC and trainer teams indicated a limited understanding of TLM in this regard. There is tendency to have one-time rather than multiple-use material, leading to inefficiencies. *The Mission recommends that on-site support visits by CRC-BRC by used for stock-taking of availability and utilization of materials.*

In-service Teacher Training

The state does not have an untrained teachers in the system, with in-service training being the main training related activity conducted. In 2013-14, the state utilized its budgeted 7 days of in-service training in the 5-day summer training and a 2-day cluster based training. The 5-day summer training focused on management related issues such as human relations, time management, communication skills, trust management, motivation and leadership. The physical target (of 1,28,936 teachers to be covered) was fully met. Sporadic feedback indicates improved confidence among teachers and better planning for classroom transaction. However, there was no clear evidence available in terms of specific outcomes of teacher performance to be attained by teachers, now was this incorporated in the monitoring following from the training. The focus on management related aspects, while of value in itself, does not find place in the long-term teacher training plan for 2010-14 and appears to have been inserted more recently, the rationale for which does not seem to have been understood by personnel in the field. Thee is also no clear follow up plan from the training on how new performance indicators emerging from the training would be incorporated in existing school practices. Trainers' modules and materials (nor teachers' modules) were also not available at the BRC level, which would have enabled local teams to devise their own follow up. Given this situation, it is difficult to assess or ensure the effectiveness of the training. An impact assessment is reported to be under planning. *The Mission recommends that an improved follow up strategy and tools be developed to enable the key stakeholders to convert the inputs from this training into impact.*

A two-day cluster based training was conducted to introduce CCE to teachers, using the handbook *Padavukal* developed by the SCERT. The SIEMAT has been active in conducting a large number of short-term training workshops for district and sub-district administrative personnel and HMs. The Mission was unable to ascertain if these were closely linked with the overall thrust of quality in the state. The SMC training has also been conducted across the state.

BRCs and CRCs

The teacher support system presents the biggest challenge to Kerala. Of the 168 sanctioned BRCs, 152 are functional. Similarly, of the 1385 CRCs sanctioned 1190 are functional. This is because the state is implementing the Sixth Pay Commission scales, resulting in these personnel being paid higher salaries than is provided by SSA norms. Consequently the state has been able to appoint fewer than the number planned, due to available resources being less than those required.

A second issue is that of a major reshuffle underway in a majority of the staff at BRCs, in particular trainers. This poses the risk of institutional knowledge and experience gained over the years being lost to the system. *The Mission recommends that academic staff transition be implemented in a phased manner rather than one go, and that incoming staff be appropriately oriented as they take their new responsibilities.*

The CRCs are handled by two different categories of personnel. The HM of the CRC school is the CRC Convenor who organizes meetings and cluster level trainings while the CRC Coordinator undertakes school visits and on-site support. The latter, in particular, are not fully in place. Recently the government has appointed 'retrenched teachers' (those from government-aided schools that have closed down) as CRC Coordinators. Most of these met displayed lack of clarity on their roles expressed the need of on-the-job training. The role clarity between the AEOs/BEOs and the BRC also remain an issue, with there being overlaps. Part of the reason for the lack of clarity at various levels is that while the *tasks* of BRCs and CRCs are listed, their *roles* and responsibilities are not. There is a need to clearly define the difference they are expected to make.

Interaction with BRC team over the districts visited and a perusal of available documents indicates that there is no common classroom and school observation format in use in the state. A few of the BRC faculty have developed their own checklist for school visits but there is no clear programme-wide list of expectations and the required observations against those. BRC-CRC members' visits to schools tend to be at irregular intervals, often involving different personnel at different times. In the absence of a clear recording of observations of the previous visits in detail, there is no continuity of inputs to schools.

A very high degree of activity is visible at the BRC level, with weekly planning and implementation of various activities. However, without a specific statement of outcomes being worked towards, the activities undertaking tend to remain discrete instead of synergizing with each other. Alongside, the DIETs too are initiating a number of school based activities without necessarily connecting with SSA interventions. A closer linkage with DIETs would enhance the academic resource available to the BRCs while also ensuring coordination with the many district level activities being implemented by the DIETs.

More reflection time is needed by BRC teams, especially on the data collected by them. For instance, randomly picked QMT data sheets indicated that the performance of boys in the concerned schools was well below that of girls – but this issue was yet to be recognized. Similarly some subjects have show lower student performance over a long period of time and need to be addressed. Information regarding teacher performance too needs to be analyzed and used to inform action.

The Mission strongly urges SSA Kerala to undertake a major capacity building exercise for these vital quality assurance component. Vision and role clarity, development of appropriate monitoring tools (against expected outcomes rather than inputs alone), analysis of data in order to take evidence based decisions and actions would contribute to the effectiveness of CRCs and BRCs.

Classroom Processes

Given Kerala's high achievement in most indicators related to provisioning, the focus naturally tends to be on the relationships, processes and outcomes that define quality. Based on observation of classrooms visited and interaction with children, teachers and other stakeholders at various levels, classroom processes in primary level (classes 1-4) appear to be working well. A warm and caring relationship is visible between teachers and children. *This is a major shift from the late 1990s when the state initiated child-friendly pedagogical reform, and the Mission commends this achievement highly.*

Pedagogy is fairly clearly worked out and implemented at the primary level, with children being presented with situations that naturally involve and engage them. Greater elements of reflection and application could now be incorporated, with periodic consolidation of emerging learning to ensure that the benefits of the process accrue in terms of learning gains. Material is also being used to a great extent, though the use of locally available material would help teachers. *Deepening the concept of activity and TLM at primary level would be the next logical step.*

In comparison, the pedagogy in pract in classes 5-8 appears to be relatively more conventional. A positive aspect is that of a great deal of *conversation* between students and teachers, which is known to be helpful. However, the relationship tends to be more formal, with less use of materials, hands on activities and cooperative group work being in evidence. (There are notable exceptions to this, though, such as in schools where effective use of children's newspaper is being made.) There was also a tendency for boys to be less involved in classroom processes in higher classes (both as observed in school visits or through reports from teachers). This is also reflected in records of student achievement, e.g. in QMT data.

Teachers at all levels are strongly concerned about there being 'too many activities to be completed'. In higher classes, pedagogy is clearly an issue with there being confusions and debates regarding 'content'. Teachers (and parents_ are not convinced about the present 'lack of content' in textbooks, which include questions and activities but do not present answers. Parents too feel that they are unable to help children at home since the textbooks do not provide sufficient clues for them. Some stakeholders also mentioned this as a reason for the attraction towards CBSE schools.

Overall teachers feel that they work hard but the results are not commensurate with their efforts (this was also the feeling echoed by most others involved in SSA vis-à-vis their own efforts). *The Mission recommends that in view of the ongoing curriculum and textbook changes, the state 're-vision' pedagogy and communicate this clearly to implementers as well as stakeholders such as parents and community groups. Further, the expected changes and performance standards / outcomes to be attained too need to be clearly articulated and communicated to ensure synergistic efforts aligned to attaining them.*

Student Learning Assessment

CCE has been introduced in the state in 2013-14 through a detailed process and set of materials, including the development of an approach paper, the requisite tools, a handbook (*Padavugal*) and subject-based source books. A two-day cluster based training was conduced

for all teachers to introduce CCE. The new textbooks under development also incorporate CCE elements. During school visits, the portfolio bags were prominently and accessibly displayed on the walls. However, it was not clear if the students' learning record emerging from CCE was being *used* to analyze the data in order to take informed pedagogical decisions, especially in the planning process.

A clear issue before SSA Kerala is the progressive decline in learning achievement in higher classes. The Round II of NAS shows the following:

	Class III	Class V	Class VIII
Language	70.14	67.34	54.40
Mathematics	61.43	42.33	38.11

Apart from this, the performance in mathematics appears to be of concern. Overall, the performance of boys tends to be poorer than that of girls, as reflected in the raw QMT data seen in the BRCs visited. *The Mission recommends that the state undertake a close analysis and reflection on students' learning data from various sources such as CCE, QMT, NAS and the planned SLAS (which is under process and likely to be concluded in the coming months. Clear implications for the required shift in strategies and practices need to be drawn from this analysis.*

Accountability to the Community

The state has constituted SMCs as part of RTE requirement and oriented then on a number of pertinent issues. Through all the field visits, the Mission witnessed a very high degree of support from the Local Self Government/PRIs, SMCs, PTAs and MTAs, be it in monitoring the school, supporting activities such as organization of functions or sports meets, or the running of the MDM or construction of school boundary. Reports from the Monitoring Institute indicated a high attendance of 70-90% by the SMC members in meetings, which are regularly held and minuted. The next level of community involvement could perhaps be as knowledge partners in the schools, i.e. serving as the source of 'local knowledge' emphasized in NCF-05.

School Development Plans have been made along with community participation in all the schools during 2013-14. An examination of a sample of these, however, indicates that the plans tend to be focused on provisioning and discrete activities rather than changes / improvements to be brought about in terms of processes and learning outcomes. *The Mission recommends that the state re-examine the SDP format and strengthen it in this regard.*

3.   Programme Management

3.1.   Staffing issues
As in the case of BRCs and CRCs, the Mission noted reports of SSA staff turn-over at various levels, with the accompanying risk of losing institutional knowledge and experience. *The Mission urges SSA to undertake this transition in a phased manner.*

3.2.   Attendance rate of ST children
The issue of poor attendance of children of tribal communities has emerged as an area of concern. Apart from seasonal poor attendance, it is also reported that their attendance tends to

be very irregular and poor especially in schools where tribal and non-tribal children are together, whereas in schools that have only tribal children it tends to be close to the state average. This indicates that tribal children possibly face discriminatory environments and points to the need to initiate renewed and innovative remedial efforts in this regard.

3.3. Management of IE
The mission found that expenditure against outlay in the area of IE was very low at around 46% per 31/12/2013. No specific reason was given by the SPO.

Considering impressive achievements made in this component of SSA, it would be necessary to give more attention to needs based and predictable training for RT. None of the RT is specialised in physiotherapy/occupational therapy. Although limited training is provided in physiotherapy/occupational therapy as well, this is a highly specialised field which would require RT to receive in-depth specialisation training and additional (expensive) equipment.

Considering large numbers of CWSN in other categories such as LD, SI, MR, etc., the approach of giving specific attention to 1284 autistic children through 49 dedicated autism centres needs to be justified.

3.4. Contextual decision-making and decentralization
The Mission encountered dedicated staff working hard but unwilling to take decisions on their own, in keeping with contextual requirements. For instance, science teachers in upper primary classes feel they would benefit from holding two consecutive periods for science but refrain from doing so because there is no order empowering them to. However, the concerned order only mentions the number of periods per week and leaves such decisions to schools. Teacher training programmes too continue to be uniform though different districts clearly have different requirements. *The Mission urges SSA Kerala to initiate de-centralization or contextualization of inputs in order to ensure greater ownership as well as local specificity.*

3.5. Focus on outcomes and synergy needed
As mentioned, there is a general feeling that despite all the hard work being put in, the outcomes are not commensurate with the effort. This is now manifesting in the onus being laid on children or parents ("Children are from poor backgrounds, they don't get support from their parents" is a commonly heard statement. Another is about branding a large number of them 'slow learners'.). Similarly, teachers too are being held responsible, while teachers themselves tend to feel that despite the hard work put in by them they are unsure why they are being criticised. *The Mission opines that SSA Kerala's earlier overtly stated trust in teachers needs to be re-asserted. Similarly, it is crucial that the system also assert that its thrust is on being child-centred and serving the needs of children rather than putting the onus on them.*

A connected need is to shift the focus from provisioning and inputs to outcomes. Work-plans and implementation have tended to focus on what may be provided rather than specific improvements that may be brought about in terms of processes, relationships and higher-order learning outcomes.

4. Financial Management
The state reported that as per 31/12/2013, 71.59% of funds available and 67.35% of approved outlay were spent. A number of commitments (still to be paid) are not included in these

figures, i.e. the real achievement is higher than these figures suggest. Overall, the state is making good progress with budget implementation.

No specific problems or concerns were presented to the mission by the state.

5.   Key recommendations

The overall thrust of the several recommendations included in this Aide Memoire may be expressed in the following key recommendations. These are made keeping in mind that having achieved a large number of indicators, Kerala's key challenges are in terms of attaining the next level of reform:

1. *A clear visioning, a re-assertion of key beliefs and assumptions about students and teachers, a statement of pedagogical model/s advocated, backed by specific expectations and performance standards required, would improve effectiveness of implementation and help overcome 'routinization'.*

2. *Ensuring outcome-oriented implementation will help synergize the various activities under way, while also align the inputs needed at various echelons.*

3. *A major overhaul of the BRC-CRC in terms of capacity building. In particular:*
    a. *Monitoring tools (around clear expectations), recording and ensuring that schools get holistic support in a continuum.*
    b. *Improved use of data at implementation level, at BRC-CRC as well as classroom.*