

CHAPTER IV IMPLEMENTATION OF WELFARE SCHEMES

There was no central repository for tracking the number of beneficiaries and expenditure related to the various welfare schemes administered by the Board in the State. Due to the lack of a centralised data system at the State office, the Board relied on information collected from District Offices to determine fund requirements for implementing district-level schemes.

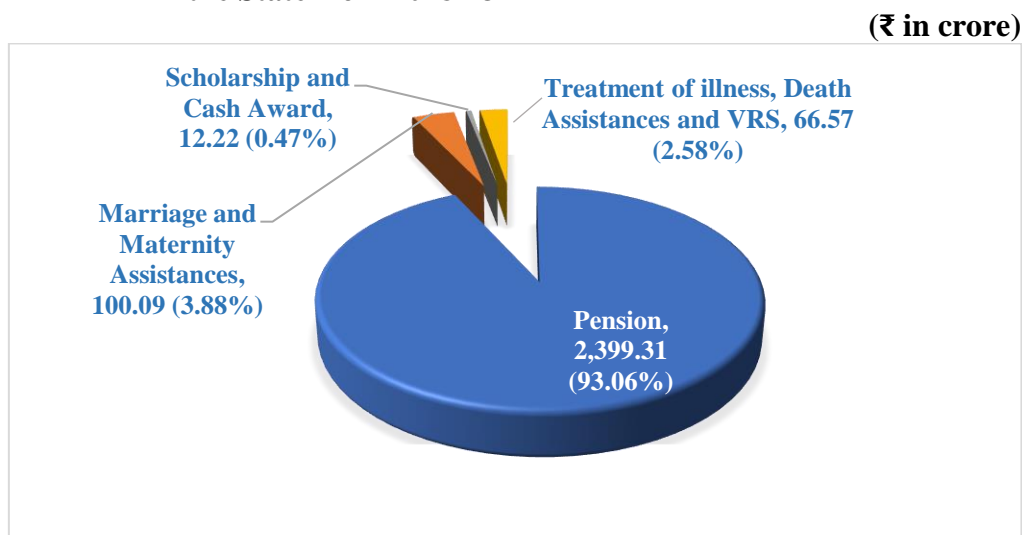
Applications for various welfare benefits including pensions, marriage assistance, support for illness and fatal diseases, maternity benefits, death benefits, scholarships and cash awards were pending due to insufficient funds. Irregularities were observed in the disbursement of COVID-19 benefits because of unreliable beneficiary data.

Limited awareness among construction workers led to under-registration to the scheme, with registration often based on Trade Union certificates. Migrant workers in the State were not registered under the Act, depriving them of its benefits. Furthermore, the Labour Department has failed to enforce safety regulations at worksites, even after accidents or incidents.

4.1. Welfare Schemes implemented by the Board

Section 11 of the BOCW(RECS) Act stipulates that every building worker registered as a beneficiary under the Act shall be entitled to the benefits provided by the Board from its Fund. The Board implements 20 welfare schemes out of which 10 schemes such as a) Pension, b) Marriage Assistance, c) Scholarship and Cash Awards, d) Assistance to illness and fatal disease, e) Death and Disability Assistance, f) Maternity Allowance, g) Voluntary Retirement Scheme, h) Minor deposit scheme, i) Tool Advance and j) House Building Advance were taken up for audit scrutiny. The pension and other welfare benefits sanctioned by the Board are transferred to the respective bank accounts of the beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer.

Expenditure incurred by the Board on the aforementioned welfare schemes in the entire State and the amount pending to be disbursed during the audit period is depicted in **Charts 4.1 and 4.2.**

Chart 4.1: Expenditure incurred by the Board on major welfare schemes in the State from 2018-23

(Source: Data obtained from the Board)

Audit analysed the demand and expenditure pattern against the major welfare schemes which are as under:

Table 4.1: Demand and Expenditure pattern of major welfare schemes for the period 2018-23

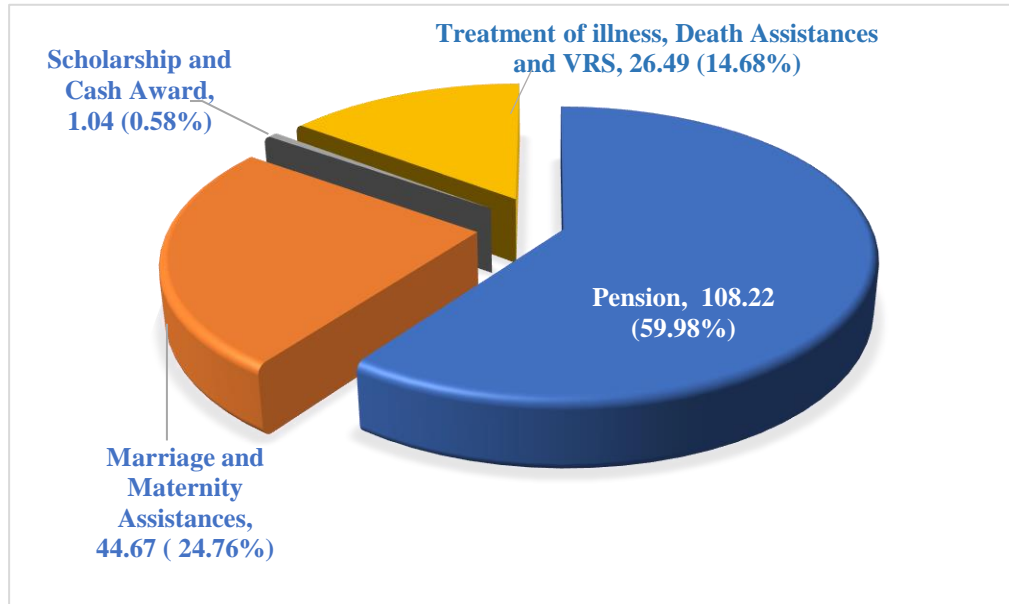
(₹ in crore)

Major Welfare Schemes	Demand	Expenditure	Pending payments
Pension and Voluntary Retirement Scheme	2508.20	2399.82	108.38
Marriage Assistance	134.51	91.98	42.53
Maternity Assistance	10.25	8.11	2.14
Scholarship and Cash Award	13.26	12.22	1.04
Assistance for fatal diseases	26.68	24.39	2.29
Death Assistance	65.71	41.67	24.04
Total	2758.61	2578.19	180.42

(Source: Data obtained from the Board)

It is evident from the table above that the demand raised against the major welfare schemes was ₹2758.61 crore, whereas the actual expenditure was ₹2578.19 crore (93.45 per cent). It is also necessary to mention here that despite having a budget provision of ₹742.60 crore in 2022-23, the actual allocation of ₹582.07 crore was far below the estimates (78.38 per cent), which is indicative of paucity of funds for implementation of the welfare schemes.

Chart 4.2: Payment pending by the Board under various welfare schemes
(₹ in crore)



(Source: Data obtained from the Board)

There was no central repository of data regarding the number of beneficiaries availing benefits and expenditure incurred under the various welfare schemes operated by the Board in the State. In the absence of a centralised data source at the State office of the Board, the possibility of benefits not reaching the eligible beneficiaries could not be ruled out, besides failure to effectively monitor the implementation of welfare measures. It was observed that the Board collected details from the District Offices to finalise the fund requirements for implementing various schemes in the districts. Thus, the Board had to depend largely on the District Offices rather than having its own monitoring mechanism to oversee the effective implementation of the welfare schemes.

Scrutiny of records at offices of the Board in test-checked districts revealed that despite various welfare schemes being implemented by the Board, the benefits of these schemes did not effectively accrue to the beneficiaries, as envisaged. Audit observations in this regard are listed below:

4.1.1. Pension Schemes

According to Rule 289 of the Kerala Rules, a worker is entitled to monthly pension from the first day of the month succeeding the month in which he completes 60 years of age.

4.1.1.1. Non-disbursal of monthly pension

Monthly pensions provide a reliable and consistent source of income to cover the essential expenses at regular intervals during the post-retirement years. Audit noticed that though pension benefits were being paid to the registered workers, the payment was being made on quarterly basis and not on monthly basis.

It was observed that 1,35,977 pensioners did not receive pension amounting to ₹108.22 crore in the entire State (31 March 2023). In the selected districts, pension arrears¹⁹ amounting ₹12.03 crore was pending disbursement to 10,024 pensioners (March 2023), as shown in **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2: Year-wise pendency in disbursement of pension

District	Year	No. of pensioners to whom payment was pending	Amount (₹ in crore)
Kozhikode	2022	505	0.44
	2023 (upto March 2023)		
Ernakulam	2021	785	1.06
	2022	2,660	2.06
	2023 (upto March 2023)	603	0.70
Malappuram	2021	2,212	4.26
	2022	2,717	2.94
	2023 (upto March 2023)	542	0.57
Total		10,024	12.03

(Source: Data obtained from the Board)

The pendency in payment of pension was attributable to shortage of funds as already mentioned in paragraph 4.1. Further, the Board was not resorting proactively to measures to realise cess from unassessed sources, as detailed in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 of this Report. The Government did not furnish any reply till date.

4.1.1.2. Pension paid to ineligible beneficiaries

According to Rule 283 of the Kerala Rules, a worker who is a member of any other welfare fund established under any law for the time being in force is not eligible to be a member of the Board which in turn implies that a person who receives pension from the Board is not eligible to draw pension from any other Board.

GoK ordered (July 2013) that Aadhaar identification record was to be mandatorily produced for obtaining all social welfare pensions. The Board issued directions on 09 May 2018 permitting the pensioners for submission of life certificate in which Aadhaar number was recorded, within 20 May 2018. The new pensioners were to produce copy of Aadhaar along with the application for pension. It was also directed by the Board not to disburse pension to those beneficiaries whose names did not figure in the Sevana Pension software²⁰.

Linkage of Aadhaar number enabled identification of pensioners receiving multiple pensions in the selected districts in 2017-18, as detailed in **Table 4.3**.

¹⁹ The arrears comprise the pension amount due from the date from which one becomes eligible till actual payment of regular pension or due from delay in submission of yearly life certificate by the pensioner to the Board.

²⁰ A web-based application developed and supported by Information Kerala Mission for distribution of social security pensions to the beneficiaries in Kerala.

Table 4.3: Cases of pensioners receiving multiple pensions in the selected districts

District	No. of cases	Excess pension paid (₹ in lakh)
Kozhikode	718	91.96
Ernakulam	10	0.56
Malappuram	288	46.06
Total	1,016	138.58

(Source: Details obtained from District offices of the Board)

The GoK replied (December 2022) that steps would be taken to recover the pension amount paid in excess to the beneficiaries.

4.1.1.3. Denial of pension to the beneficiaries from the month due

According to Rule 289 of the Kerala Rules, 1998, a worker is entitled to monthly pension from the first day of the month succeeding the month in which he completes 60 years of age. Audit observed that GoK issued orders in April 2022 directing the pension to be disbursed from the date on which the officer concerned digitally signed the order sanctioning pension. Though the above order, which was not in line with Rule 289 of Kerala Rules was suspended by GoK in January 2023, it resulted in denial of disbursement of pension amounting to ₹2.28 crore to 3489 pensioners during the intervening period from May 2022 to December 2022 in the selected districts, as shown in **Table 4.4**.

Table 4.4: Denial of eligible pension from the month due in selected districts

Sl. No.	District	No. of pensioners	Total amount of pension denied (₹ in lakh)
1.	Ernakulam	1,644	107.46
2.	Kozhikode	1,753	115.58
3.	Malappuram	92	6.11
	Total	3489	229.15

(Source: Details obtained from District offices of the Board)

It was further observed that the information furnished by the Board did not contain details of the dates of submission of application for pension by the beneficiaries, in the absence of which the actual time taken for settlement of pension cases could not be ascertained by Audit. However, it was observed from the available information that the actual time taken between the pensioner attaining the age of 60 and date of disbursement of pension ranged from one month to 34 months. Audit noticed that though the instruction which was violative of the Rule was suspended by GoK with effect from January 2023, the short-disbursed pension was still pending payment to these beneficiaries (May 2024). Government reply was silent on this aspect.

4.1.2. Marriage Assistance

According to Rule 300 of the Kerala Rules, the workers having continuous membership for three years shall be eligible to get financial assistance for the marriage of two children. A female member of the Board is also eligible for this

assistance for her own marriage. The amount of assistance was fixed at ₹10,000 each for two children per beneficiary. The pendency in this connection in respect of selected districts as on 31 March 2023 is shown in **Table 4.5**.

Table 4.5: Pendency in disbursement of Marriage Assistance in selected districts

District	No. of applications pending	Amount pending disbursal (₹ in lakh)
Kozhikode	4,934	493.40
Malappuram	7,327	732.70
Ernakulam	1,912	191.20
Total	14,173	1,417.30

(Source: Data obtained from District offices of the Board)

It was also seen that 42,535 applications amounting to ₹42.54 crore were pending in the entire State. The Board cited paucity of funds as the reason for non-payment of the assistance. The reply of the Board is not acceptable as at the end of 2022-23, Board had an unspent cash balance of ₹135.16 crore (paragraph 5.1), which could have been utilised for payment of assistance. The Government did not furnish any reply till date.

4.1.3. Scholarship and cash award

In accordance with Rule 299 of the Kerala Rules, amount ranging from ₹1,000 to ₹3,000 was being provided as educational assistance for higher education of children of the members of the Board. In addition, an amount of ₹1,000 as educational allowance for SSLC²¹ and cash award of ₹3,000 for excellence in SSLC examination was also being provided to eligible children of the members. The pendency in this regard as on 31 March 2023 related to 4,587 applications worth ₹55.89 lakh in respect of selected districts, as given in **Table 4.6**.

Table 4.6: Pendency in disbursement of scholarship and cash awards in selected districts

District	No. of applications pending	Amount pending disbursal (₹ in lakh)
Kozhikode	1,194	15.74
Malappuram	2,947	33.32
Ernakulam	446	6.83
Total	4,587	55.89

(Source: Data obtained from District offices of the Board)

Audit observed that there were 8,208 pending applications amounting to ₹1.04 crore in the State. The Board cited paucity of funds for non-payment of the assistance. The reply of the Board is not acceptable for reasons mentioned in paragraph 5.1. The Government did not furnish any reply till date.

4.1.4. Assistance for treatment of illness/ fatal disease

According to Rule 298 of the Kerala Rules, the Board may sanction financial assistance to the beneficiaries who are hospitalised for five or more days due to

²¹ State School Leaving Certificate

accident or any disease. The assistance currently provided to victims of accidents ranged from ₹800 to ₹5,000 and an amount upto a maximum of ₹50,000 was being provided for fatal diseases. The pendency as on 31 March 2023 in respect of selected districts was as given in **Table 4.7**.

Table 4.7: Pendency in disbursement of assistance for treatment for illness/ fatal disease in selected districts

District	No. of applications pending	Amount of assistance involved (₹ in lakh)
Kozhikode	416	23.78
Malappuram	177	21.03
Ernakulam	103	29.12
Total	696	73.93

(Source: Data obtained from District offices of the Board)

In the entire State, 1,647 applications for assistance amounting to ₹2.29 crore were pending to be disbursed. The Board cited paucity of funds for non-payment of the assistance. The reply of the Board is not acceptable for reasons mentioned in paragraph 5.1. The Government did not furnish any reply till date.

4.1.5. Death benefit

According to Rule 295 of the Kerala Rules, an amount of ₹25,000 was to be paid to the nominee/ dependent of the active member towards death benefit in case of death and an amount of ₹three lakh was to be provided to the nominee/ dependent of the member towards death benefit in the event of death in an accident during the course of employment.

Audit observed that the pendency of cases in this regard in the entire State related to 2,234 cases amounted to ₹2.40 crore. The pendency in respect of the selected districts as on 31 March 2023 is as given in **Table 4.8**.

Table 4.8: Pendency in disbursement of Death benefit

District	No. of applications pending	Amount of assistance involved (₹ in lakh)
Kozhikode	258	128.50
Malappuram	298	160.99
Ernakulam	161	290.80
Total	717	580.29

(Source: Data obtained from District offices of the Board)

The Board cited paucity of funds for non-payment of the assistance. The reply of the Board is not acceptable for reasons mentioned in paragraph 5.1. The Government did not furnish any reply till date.

4.1.6. Maternity assistance

According to Rule 288 of the Kerala Rules, the women employees who are beneficiaries of the fund shall be given maternity benefit amounting ₹15,000 during the period of maternity, provided that this benefit shall not be allowed

more than twice. The pendency in payment in respect of selected districts as on 31 March 2023 was as given in **Table 4.9** below.

Table 4.9: Pendency in disbursement of maternity assistance in selected districts

District	No. of applications pending	Amount of assistance involved (₹ in lakh)
Kozhikode	21	3.15
Malappuram	424	63.60
Ernakulam	2	0.30
Total	447	67.05

(Source: Data obtained from District offices of the Board)

The pendency of applications in the State stood at 14,268 worth ₹2.14 crore as on 31 March 2023.

Audit also observed that GoK had not re-imbursed the amount disbursed by the Board as maternity benefit as detailed below:

The scheme “Maternity benefit scheme for women labourers in unorganised sector 2012” with the Labour Commissioner as the Administrator, was introduced by GoK in March 2012. The Guidelines of the scheme enabled the women workers to be provided with a maternity benefit of ₹15,000, of which the Board would contribute ₹3,000 and GoK would pay the remaining amount. As per the guidelines of the scheme, the Board was to incur the expenses initially and subsequently seek re-imburement on a monthly basis from the Labour Commissioner. However, the Board claimed for re-imburement on a yearly basis only and GoK had not re-imbursed ₹6.81 crore as on 31 March 2023, details of which are given in **Table 4.10**.

Table 4.10: Details of maternity benefit pending reimbursement from GoK

Year	No. of beneficiaries to whom maternity benefit was disbursed	Amount (₹ in lakh)	Amount reimbursed by GoK (₹ in lakh)	Balance to be reimbursed including that of previous years (₹ in lakh)
2018-19	1,947	233.64	36.00	644.22
2019-20	1,016	121.92	48.00	718.14
2020-21	538	64.56	0.00	782.70
2021-22	721	86.52	0.00	869.22
2022-23	32	3.84	192.00	681.06

(Source: Details provided by the Board)

The Government stated (December 2022) that the process of transferring this amount to the Board, was in progress.

4.2. Irregularities in disbursement of COVID-19 benefits

In order to tide over the difficulties faced by the beneficiaries of the Board consequent to the COVID-19 lockdown, the Board decided to provide financial

assistance to the beneficiaries. The Board sanctioned²² ₹1,000 each for the years 2020 and 2021 to the beneficiaries, the disbursement of which was to be subject to fulfilment of certain²³ conditions. Further, the Board also sanctioned ₹2,000 each to all the COVID positive beneficiaries, from January 2021.

Audit noticed that the Board did not have a comprehensive database consisting of date of enrolment as beneficiary, details of renewal of membership, other family members who are beneficiaries, etc. In the absence of relevant details of beneficiaries, the Board could neither verify the extent of adherence of beneficiaries to any of the prescribed conditions, nor claim that an appropriate system was in place to identify the beneficiaries eligible to be disbursed with COVID benefits. Consequently, the benefits were disbursed to all beneficiaries, disregarding the conditions of eligibility.

Audit further observed that Government instructed (July 2020) all Welfare Boards to refund undisbursed COVID assistance as on 15 August 2020 to Government. With reference to the above instruction, the Board instructed (08 August 2020) all District Executive Officers to stop payment of special assistance on 15 August 2020 and to refund balance amount retained in their bank accounts after 15 August 2020. Accordingly, the District officer Malappuram returned ₹1.55 crore to the Main office being the unspent balance as on 15 August 2020, despite having pending applications worth ₹38.06 lakh for assistance on that date.

Similarly, District Officer Kozhikode returned ₹3.39 crore to the Main office as unspent balance, when request for ₹1.89 crore of COVID assistance was pending disbursement. These applicants were thus denied the eligible financial assistance sanctioned in the wake of the pandemic.

It was the responsibility of the District Officers to ensure that the details of beneficiaries including the bank details were available. Due to non-availability of a proper database of beneficiaries with their bank account numbers and IFSC details, the applicants could not be granted assistance.

Further, analysis of the payment data in Ernakulam district revealed that in 182 cases, assistance to two different beneficiaries was credited to the same bank account, thereby leading to an irregular payment of ₹1.82 lakh. The Government did not furnish any reply till September 2024.

Recommendation 6: The Government should ensure that the Board maintains a database of beneficiaries with complete details of benefits availed, complete banking details, etc. thereby facilitating adherence to eligibility criteria for financial assistance.

²² Board order No. E4-4099/20 dated 01 April 2020, Board Circular No. 14/2021 dated 18 May 2021

²³ The beneficiary should have atleast two years of service, should have renewed his membership as on 2018, only one beneficiary from each family to receive assistance, beneficiaries due to retire from March to June 2020 and those who applied for assistance for fatal diseases amounting ₹2,000 were not eligible

4.3. Irregular refund of beneficiary contribution on retirement

According to Rule 303 of the Kerala Rules, the amount of contribution standing to the credit of the beneficiary shall be disbursed to his nominee in case of death of the beneficiary.

However, in violation of the aforementioned rule, beneficiary contribution of ₹15.53 crore (including interest) was seen refunded to the beneficiaries on retirement in the selected districts. The amount refunded so by the Board to the pensioners in the selected districts is as shown in **Table 4.11**.

Table 4.11: Details of irregular refund of contribution to beneficiaries who had attained the age of 60 years in the selected districts

District	Number of beneficiaries	Contribution (₹ in crore)	Interest (₹ in crore)	Total (₹ in crore)
Kozhikode	10304	4.12	0.32	4.44
Ernakulam	11169	5.08	0.30	5.37
Malappuram	9805	5.36	0.36	5.72
Total	31278	14.56	0.98	15.53

(Source: Details obtained from the respective District Executive Offices)

GoK replied (December 2022) that this was done in accordance with the decision of the Board (November 2005) taken with the intention to uphold the welfare of the workers. The reply is not acceptable as according to Rule 309, the fund shall not, without prior approval of the Government, be expended for any purpose other than those mentioned in the Act and Rules. Since refund of contribution to the members at the time of retirement is not covered under the said Act/ Rules, prior approval of the Government was essential before the refund, which was also not seen obtained.

4.4. Mission Mode Project

In July 2020, GoI launched Mission Mode Project (MMP) so that all the construction workers are registered as beneficiaries to avail the entitled benefits without any hassles. The MMP envisaged to achieve the objectives by State Welfare Boards within three months' time-period. MMP comprised of three components, viz., (i) Registration of left-out construction workers, (ii) Renewal and Portability and (iii) Universalisation of Social Security.

Audit observed that no project/initiatives to cover the registration of left out construction workers were seen launched in the State. The inter-state migrant workers were totally excluded from the ambit of the Act as the Board did not permit registration of such workers. As regards renewal, portability and universalisation of social security, the Secretary of the Board informed that there was no system existing in the Board relating to the provision for liaison or data sharing with other State Construction Workers' Welfare Boards.

Thus, Audit observed that the Board did not achieve the objectives of MMP in full and lacked ongoing initiatives to implement all components of MMP.

4.5. Registration of workers

The BOCW (RECS) Act²⁴ stipulates that every building worker who has completed 18 years of age but not turned 60, and who has been engaged in any building or other construction work for not less than 90 days during the preceding 12 months shall be eligible for registration as a beneficiary. Once registered as a beneficiary, the building worker shall contribute to the Building and other Construction Workers' Welfare Fund (Fund) at rates per month, as specified by the State Government. He will also be eligible for availing the benefits of welfare schemes from the Fund managed by the Board. The current monthly rate of contribution is ₹50²⁵.

Though registration of workers was the pre-requisite for availing financial assistance under various welfare schemes, Audit observed that impediments as discussed below, marred the efficacy in registration process of workers.

4.5.1. Lack of awareness about welfare schemes among construction workers

The Guidelines of Model Welfare Scheme for Building and other Construction Workers and Action Plan for strengthening Implementation Machinery issued (September 2018) by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, GoI, lay down that spreading of awareness of the welfare schemes for building and other construction workers should be done by way of grass roots level awareness programmes, rather than by advertisements in newspapers or TV channels. The Guidelines also stipulate that the State Labour Department/Welfare Board may issue directions to workers' registration authorities (Board), to hold regular camps or create facilitation centres at prominent labour *chowks/addas* for enabling registration of workers. Videos broadcast on smart phones, regular SMS to inform and update registered/potential workers, painting awareness messages in rural areas, involving Urban Local Bodies/Grama Panchayats/Grama Sabhas in conducting awareness camps, etc., may also contribute to strengthening awareness regarding welfare activities.

Audit surveyed 210 beneficiaries²⁶ registered with the Board, of which 195 beneficiaries (92.86 *per cent*) stated that they did not attend any awareness campaigns conducted by the Board. Of these, 134 beneficiaries (63.81 *per cent*) stated that they were not aware of the welfare schemes provided by the Board. During the course of the survey of building and other construction workers who were not registered with the Board as beneficiaries, Audit noticed that none of the 45 unregistered construction workers was aware of the various welfare schemes offered by the Board.

Joint site verification of 26 establishments conducted (September 2023) by Audit in the selected districts revealed that, out of a total of 1,306 workers

²⁴ Section 12 of the BOCW (RECS) Act, 1996

²⁵ As per the decision of the Board taken during the meeting held on 19 December 2017. This decision is yet to be ratified by GoK

²⁶ 70 beneficiaries each from the three selected districts

engaged in work, only 27 workers (2.07 per cent) were registered with the Board.

Though the registration was to be done by a worker voluntarily, lack of awareness of the welfare schemes of the Board could be the reason for the shortfall in registration. The Board replied (August 2023) that it had taken steps for conducting campaigns, distribution of pamphlets, etc., among the workers. However, interaction with the workers during joint verification of the work sites along with officials of the Board/ the Labour Department revealed that, none of the 45 unregistered workers was aware of the Board and its welfare schemes, which was indicative of the fact that the campaigns conducted till date were not effective enough to enhance the level of awareness among the workers.

Government assured in reply (August 2024) that the Board would take necessary steps to conduct campaigning through various modes so as to ensure that the members are aware of the benefits eligible to them.

4.5.2. Deprivation of benefits under BOCW(RECS) Act to migrant workers

According to the information furnished by the Board, the number of registered workers in the State was 20.67 lakh as on 31 March 2023. Audit observed that this figure did not include the migrant workers engaged in construction activities in the State. These workers could register under another scheme constituting the Migrant Workers' Welfare Fund, as mentioned in paragraph 5.4 of this report. Government contributed ₹10 crore as corpus fund under the above scheme, for meeting expenses of migrant workers in the State. Despite the BOCW(RECS) Act not contemplating any form of discrimination among the workers, Government, through constitution of a separate fund, had sidelined the migrant labourers from being registered under the Act, thereby denying them the whole gamut of welfare benefits covered under the Act.

On this being pointed out, the Government replied that provisions regarding registration of migrant workers were not included under the ambit of the Act. The reply is not acceptable as the Act does not distinguish between an inland and migrant worker and all those who satisfy the conditions mentioned under Section 12 are eligible to be members under the Act. As such, it was irregular on the part of Government to offer differential treatment to the migrant workers and not permit them to register under the BOCW(RECS) Act.

4.5.3. Shortcomings in the process of registration as a member under the BOCW(RECS) Act

Rule 283 of the Kerala Rules provides for conditions of eligibility to be a member of the Board. Accordingly, certificate in proof of age and the fact that the applicant was a bonafide construction worker, obtained from the employer or contractor was to be submitted to the Board in Form No. XXVI. In the absence of such a certificate, the certificate issued by the registered Construction

Workers' Trade Union/ Assistant Labour Officer of the area/ Executive Officer of the Panchayat could be considered.

In the Expert Committee meeting of the Board held in July 2023, it was opined that a large number of bogus members were seen claiming membership on the basis of certificates obtained from Trade Unions declaring them as construction workers. During a test-check of applications for registration, Audit confirmed that in almost 100 *per cent* of instances, membership was given on the basis of the certificate from registered Construction Workers' Unions as shown in **Table 4.12** below.

Table 4.12: Details of number of registrations made with the certificates provided by the Trade Unions

District	No. of members registered during 2018-2023	No. of records test - checked by Audit	Number of registrations made based on the certificates provided by the Trade Unions	Percentage of registrations made based on the certificates issued by the Trade Unions
Kozhikode	8,885	489	489	100.00
Ernakulam	4,281	225	223	99.11
Malappuram	7,238	354	354	100.00
Total	20,404	1,068	1,066	99.81

(Source: Data obtained from District Executive Offices)

Audit observed that, during 2023, 532 applications for membership (Form XXVI) enclosing certificates from the registered Construction Workers' Unions were rejected, following an enquiry conducted by the District Executive Officers (DEOs) on the genuineness of these certificates. The enquiry revealed that these applicants were not Building and other Construction Workers. This confirms that the Trade Unions were issuing fake certificates without ascertaining the job status of the applicant.

Government stated (August 2024) that on receipt of the application for registration, if the DEO, after scrutiny of the same, feels satisfied that the documents furnished are in proper order, grants registration to the workers. It was also stated that defective applications would be summarily rejected and that district-wise squads verify the genuineness of the members.

However, instances as cited in the paragraph raise concerns regarding the efficacy of the current registration process and underscore the need for a more rigorous verification mechanism to ensure that only genuine Building and other Construction Workers obtain membership in the Board.

Recommendation 7: The Government should ensure that the Board incorporates multiple verification levels to ensure genuineness of membership forms issued by Trade Unions so as to safeguard the transparency of registration process.

Recommendation 8: The Government should ensure that the Board conducts adequate campaigns and advertisements to increase awareness amongst workers about procedures of registration, and its benefits in the form of various welfare schemes.

4.6. Conclusion

In the absence of a centralized data system at its State office, the Board relied on information collected from District Offices to determine fund requirements for implementing district-level welfare schemes. Applications for various welfare benefits including pensions, marriage assistance, support for illness and fatal diseases, maternity benefits, death benefits, scholarships and cash awards were pending due to paucity of funds. Limited awareness among construction workers led to short registration under the scheme. Migrant workers in the State were not registered under the BOCW (RECS) Act, depriving them of its benefits.