



RAA finds gaps in SDGs' preparedness

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The government needs to give clear policy directive if the country is to realise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Besides this, the Royal Audit Authority (RAA) in its performance audit on preparedness for implementation of SDGs found numerous gaps and recommended five measures.

The RAA observed significant initiatives and accomplishments in the implementation of SDGs such as the agenda being accorded high priority for deliberation in the Parliament; the country was identified as an early mover country or SDG priority country in the Asia Pacific region.

The country also undertook the voluntary national review and the report was tabled during the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2018. The country has also secured USD 40 million fund to permanently protect its 5-million-acre network of protected areas through the Bhutan For Life fund.

However, the government, RAA's report states, needs to ensure coordination and collaboration among various entities and effective engagement of all stakeholders involved in the SDG implementation.

The SDG targets and indicators have to be clearly mapped with the five-year plans, policies and strategies.

Since SDGs is an international commitment founded on the principles of national ownerships, it requires Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) to extend and integrate SDG activities into the country's development plan.

GNHC considers 12th Plan as the first national strategy or action plan towards SDG implementation. However, it was observed that there is no separate action plan or roadmap to pursue SDGs.

“There is no definite timeframe identified to achieve each goal, no lead agency identified to anchor the responsibilities of implementing each goal as well as unclear contributors and collaborators in the implementations of SDGs.”

However, lead implementing agencies were identified for national key result areas and sector key result areas; though various committees and task forces were constituted, it does not have a

separate dedicated division or unit staffed with adequate human resources to spearhead the SDGs initiatives.

The RAA observed that the coordination mechanism to harmonise the activities initiated were generally lacking and there was no formal terms of references for various committees and task forces constituted by the GNHC.

While the Plan, guided by GNH, finds a close resonance to the principles of SDGs, there may be a need for a separate mapping exercise to identify the gaps and complementing strengths.

“Therefore, the extent of integration of SDGs targets and indicators into national programs at outcome, output and activity levels were not clear.”

RAA recommended developing an action plan as a road map to strategically guide the implementation of SDGs by identifying responsible agencies to implement each goal and establishing proper institutional arrangements. It also proposed developing a strategy for stakeholders’ engagement to coordinate, consolidate and report on the whole of SDGs.

“The GNHC should institute a mechanism to monitor, follow-up and review the progress of SDGs,” the RAA report stated.

The audit covered only activities related to preparedness and did not cover the actual implementation of SDGs activities.

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