

Chapter-II: Adapting the 2030 Agenda

2.1 Introduction

The 2030 Agenda allows each Government to define national targets based on national priorities and determine how global targets would be incorporated into national planning processes, policies and strategies. India has been pursuing development initiatives that mirror most of the SDGs and hence adapting existing development programmes and initiatives to the SDGs would be key to their successful implementation. Thus, a key objective of this audit was to assess the extent to which the Government has adapted the 2030 Agenda into national context. The areas covered and audit findings are given in the succeeding paragraphs.

2.2 Institutional Arrangements for adapting the 2030 Agenda into Government Planning Processes, Policies and Strategies

Governments require institutional arrangements for leading and coordinating preparedness and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Audit examined if such arrangements existed both at the Central and State levels and were effective.

2.2.1 Institutional Arrangements at Central Level

NITI Aayog has been identified as the nodal institution for coordination and overseeing the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and was entrusted with the tasks of identifying national targets, assigning the same to Ministries/Departments and communicating the commitments undertaken by India under the 2030 Agenda, to the State Governments for seeking their participation. NITI Aayog informed (May 2019) that it has followed a strategy of involving States/UTs “in improving SDGs by using the framework of competitive as well as cooperative federalism”.

NITI Aayog has undertaken several multi-disciplinary stakeholder consultations and issued advisories to various stakeholders. It also conducted periodic reviews with States and UTs of mainstreaming activities such as preparation of Vision/Strategy documents; creation of nodal structures; mapping of targets; capacity building for implementing, monitoring and evaluation; formulation of State-specific Indicators and orienting budgets with SDGs. A roadmap with defined milestones aligned with SDG targets to be achieved in the year 2020, 2025 and 2030, is however, yet to be prepared.

NITI Aayog had mapped⁶ Schemes/Programmes with Goals/Targets. In the mapping document prepared in August 2017, the NITI Aayog identified nodal Ministries with respect to all the SDGs along with Ministries/Departments associated with specific Targets under each Goal. However, the specific role of the nodal and associated Ministries was not defined. As a result, it was observed in some cases that Central Ministries were unaware of their role with respect to specific Targets. In a revised mapping document issued by the NITI Aayog in August 2018, the designation of a particular Ministry as nodal for specific SDGs has been removed. As per this mapping document, coordination and monitoring of achievement of SDGs would be done by NITI Aayog while individual Ministries would be responsible for specific SDG targets.

Apart from directly reviewing the work on SDGs in States and Central Ministries, NITI Aayog had constituted (August 2017) a multi-disciplinary Task Force to analyse and review implementation of SDGs. The Task Force which was required to meet at least once in each quarter however, held only two meetings since its constitution.

2.2.2 Institutional Arrangements at State Level

The NITI Aayog reported (June 2018) that all the States have identified their Planning Department or its equivalent as the nodal department for action on SDGs. Audit noted that for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, nodal departments have been identified in all the seven selected States. Further, support institutions have also been identified in five out of the seven States *viz.* **Assam, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh.** **Assam** was unable to furnish details of nodal officers/departments appointed for specific SDGs. In **Haryana**, a SDG Coordination Centre (SDGCC) has been set up to coordinate the preparedness and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In **Maharashtra** and **Uttar Pradesh**, nodal officers for different SDGs/group of SDGs have been identified but roles and responsibilities of these officers were yet to be defined. In **West Bengal**, SDGs have been divided into eight Sectoral groups, but these groups are yet to function.

Thus, while all the selected States had initiated action for creating institutional arrangements, further steps are required to strengthen these arrangements by identifying support departments and defining roles and responsibilities of officers.

2.3 Reviewing Plans and Adapting SDGs

In the national strategy outlined by NITI Aayog for implementing SDGs, two of the key initiatives highlighted are ‘dovetailing’ the National Development Agenda with SDGs and mapping of the Ministries and Schemes/Programmes with SDGs. These initiatives are linked to two specific tasks entrusted to the NITI Aayog *viz.*, preparation of 15 Year

⁶ Mapping documents was prepared by NITI Aayog in December 2015 and further revised in April 2016, June 2016, August 2017 and August 2018.

Vision, Seven Year Strategy and Three Year Action Agenda documents, *inter-alia*, taking into account SDGs (May 2016) and identification and allocation of Goals and Targets to Ministries/Departments (September 2015).

Central Level

2.3.1 Preparation of Vision, Strategy and Action Agenda Documents

For the preparation of Vision, Strategy and Action Agenda documents for the country, NITI Aayog had asked Central Ministries (May 2016) to provide inputs so that the document adequately reflects the priorities and concerns of various sectors and regions. In this regard, information on inputs provided was sought by audit from 20 Central Ministries of which 19 Ministries responded and confirmed providing inputs to NITI Aayog⁷.

Out of the three mandated documents, NITI Aayog released (August 2017) the “Three Year Action Agenda” covering the period 2017-20 and in December 2018 released a Strategy document titled “Strategy for New India @75” covering the period upto 2022-23. The third mandated document *i.e.*, the “15 Year Vision Document” was yet to be released even though this was supposed to be the basis for the Strategy and Action Agenda documents. With respect to the Action Agenda, NITI Aayog had explained (November 2018) that this was taken up on priority as the 12th Five Year Plan was ending in 2017. The sequencing of the documents was however, not in accordance with the extant directions. NITI Aayog stated (May 2019) that the Vision document will be finalised by March 2020.

The NITI Aayog was specifically required to formulate these planning documents keeping in view the SDGs. It was, however, observed that while the areas and actions covered in the Three Year Action Agenda broadly encompass all the dimensions of the 2030 Agenda⁸, the document does not specifically refer to SDGs. The Strategy document notes that each chapter has been mapped to relevant Goals/Targets so as to align the “Strategy for New India @75” with India’s commitment to the UN SDGs. Aspects of the Strategy document related to the Health sector (Goal 3) were examined to assess relevance of the same to various targets under Goal 3 and for consistency of approach with the Three Year Action Agenda. It was found that there was broad congruence between the Three Year Action Agenda and the Strategy Document on Health sector related subjects. However, specific actions envisaged in the Three Year Action Agenda had not been clearly mapped with various strategy elements. In addition, while the association of various aspects of the Strategy Document with

⁷ Ministry of Home Affairs stated (March 2019) that the Vision document is being finalised.

⁸ Agriculture, Trade, Industry, Services, Transport, Energy, Education, Health, Environment and Forests, Water Resources, Urban Development, Rural Transformation, Social Justice and Governance.

different SDGs have been depicted, their specific impact on these SDGs has not been detailed.

2.3.2 Mapping of Goals and Targets

India has been pursuing a comprehensive development agenda which has encompassed the economic, social and environmental dimensions and cuts across sectors and levels of Government. As noted in India's Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report, India's national development agenda is mirrored in the SDGs. Thus, identification of national targets and indicators and mapping of existing development schemes, programmes, interventions and Ministries/Departments with SDG targets were important for adapting SDGs into the national context.

Assigning of Goals and Targets

As part of the task of assigning Goals and Targets to the Ministries, NITI Aayog undertook an exercise of mapping SDGs and their related targets with Ministries/ Departments, Centrally Sponsored Schemes and other Government initiatives. It has released various versions of the mapping document.

Audit examined the mapping document released by NITI Aayog in August 2017 and the revised version of the document released in August 2018. The mapping document of August 2017 identified Nodal Ministries, associated Ministries, Central Schemes and major Government initiatives for different SDGs and Targets.

In the revised mapping document, specific Targets have been linked to Schemes and interventions; list of linked Ministries and Schemes have been updated and a mention has been made of linkage between SDGs⁹. The SDG India Index: Baseline Report brought out by the NITI Aayog (December 2018) has further elaborated the inter-linkages of SDGs to bring out synergy with other SDGs.

State Level

2.3.3 Adapting SDGs in selected States

In a National Conference of the Chief Secretaries and Planning Secretaries of the States (July 2016), NITI Aayog asked each State to have its own Vision, Strategy and Action Plan. Prior to this (April 2016), NITI Aayog had advised the State Governments to undertake a mapping exercise similar to the one carried by it, to facilitate fast track achievement of the SDGs and related Targets.

⁹ e.g. Goal-1 was mentioned to have linkages with Goal- 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,13.

According to the SDG India Index Baseline Report, 19 States/UTs (including **Assam, Haryana, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh** and **West Bengal** selected for this audit) have prepared their Vision document and 22 States/UTs have completed their mapping exercise.

Status of preparation of Vision, Strategy and Action Agenda documents and mapping of Goals/Targets in the seven selected States as examined by audit is given in **Table 2.1**:

Table 2.1: Adapting SDGs in selected States				
State	Vision	Strategy	Action Agenda	Mapping
Assam	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chhattisgarh	✓	✗	✗	✓
Haryana	✓	✗	✗	✓
Kerala	✗	✗	✗	✓
Maharashtra	✓	✗	✗	✓
Uttar Pradesh	✗	✗	✗	✓
West Bengal	✗	✗	✗	✗

Audit noted that the work of Vision/Strategy/Action Agenda documents in **Uttar Pradesh** and **West Bengal** was at a preparatory stage. **Kerala** had prepared a Perspective Plan 2030 in 2014 which was not reviewed and realigned with SDGs. **Chhattisgarh** had published its Vision 2030 document in March 2019.

The mapping exercise undertaken in the selected States was not comprehensive. For instance, certain Schemes/Goals/Targets were not mapped in **Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Maharashtra** and **Uttar Pradesh**.

Thus, both at the Central and State levels, the exercise of formulating policy documents in the context of SDGs was still ongoing. Prescription of a time frame along with effective follow-up by nodal agencies would have assisted in the timely completion of these key tasks. Further, the process needs close monitoring to get adequate assurance about the effectiveness of the exercise for adapting existing plans with SDGs.

2.4 Building Awareness and Stakeholder Involvement

Building awareness of the SDGs and adoption of a participatory multi-stakeholder approach is aimed at ensuring inclusive, effective and sustainable implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Audit examined measures taken by the Central and State Governments to raise awareness among Government officials, stakeholders and general public and also the existence and effectiveness of structures for encouraging stakeholder consultations and partnerships.

2.4.1 Initiatives at Central Level

Steps suggested in the Reference Guide of the UNDG for increasing awareness included holding introductory workshops for sensitising Government officials and stakeholders and organizing awareness campaign for communicating the 2030 Agenda to the general public. Training and capacity building was an important element for increasing awareness and stakeholder engagement.

Initiatives taken for increasing awareness and promoting stakeholder involvement and key areas of concern relating to these initiatives are discussed in **Table 2.2**:

Table 2.2: Awareness Raising and Stakeholder involvement	
Initiatives	Areas of Concern
A. Multi-stakeholder interactions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NITI Aayog, along with partner institutions¹⁰, held national and regional level workshops/consultations for raising awareness, exchanging ideas and experiences and assisting preparedness in States. GoI partnered with Civil Society Organisations in areas such as preparation of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material and taking up research and documentation on SDGs. Multi-disciplinary Task Force facilitated stakeholder consultations. 'Speaker's Research Initiative' (SRI) workshops were organised in July 2015, August 2016, December 2016 and March 2017 to provide SDG-related insights to Members of Parliament. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were delays in finalising outcome of these consultations and placing of the reports in public domain. In case of most consultations, definite outcomes and recommendations for time-bound follow up action were not identified. Thus, there was limited assurance that deliberations shaped roadmap/policies for SDGs. According to its website, SRI workshops on SDG related issues have not been held post March 2017.
B. Raising public awareness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NITI Aayog's consultations aimed at reaching out to stakeholders spearheading public awareness exercises. These consultations expected to "set off an iterative process of information dissemination" across the country. Schemes/Programmes of the Government have provision for outreach and publicity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extent and effectiveness of efforts made by stakeholders to increase public awareness not ascertainable in the absence of feedback. No centralised public awareness campaign envisaged. Absence of dedicated awareness measures for general public may dilute objective of making the 2030 Agenda inclusive and participatory.

¹⁰ Research and Information Systems for Developing Countries (RIS) and United Nations. RIS is an autonomous policy research institute under the Ministry of External Affairs.

C. Capacity Building

- The NITI Aayog advised (December 2017) Central Ministries and State Governments to initiate capacity building measures.
- Instructions issued for training and resource centres to incorporate sessions on SDGs in their training modules/programmes.
- Test check in 15 Ministries showed that 10 Ministries have taken up capacity building exercises.
- Five out of the 15 Ministries where this aspect was reviewed were yet to initiate/report any capacity building exercise.

2.4.2 Actions and Initiatives at State Level

NITI Aayog intimated that State Governments participating in consultations/workshops are spearheading public awareness initiatives in their own domains. NITI Aayog had also advised the State Governments to undertake capacity building initiatives. Initiatives undertaken for raising awareness, enhancing stakeholder engagement and capacity building were examined in seven selected States and the findings are discussed in **Table 2.3**.

Table 2.3: Awareness Raising, Stakeholder's Involvement and Capacity Building initiatives by selected States

Assam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness programme/workshops organised in 19 out of 33 Districts for autonomous councils, civil society organizations and district planning officers. • 52 inter-departmental meetings organised resulting in a '<i>Process Document on Journey towards SDGs in Assam</i>'. • State Level Training Institute and four Regional Training Institutes planned by 2020 but no progress on implementation reported as of December 2018.
Chhattisgarh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E-material for publicity of SDGs issued. • 11 departmental working groups with designated nodal departments set-up for SDGs. However, workshops for sensitizing officials and public awareness were not conducted except for Members of Legislative Assembly (February 2019). • Officials trained on preparation of decentralized District plan based on SDGs at all five divisions (July 2017). • Sensitization workshop for GPDP (<i>Gram Panchayat Development Plan</i>) members conducted, who would further disseminate the information at lower levels.
Haryana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SDG Coordination Centre with responsibility <i>inter-alia</i>, for capacity building and raising awareness has been set up. • Seven inter-departmental working groups formed for facilitating convergence but had not met since adoption of the Vision document.
Kerala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops, trainings and review meetings held for raising awareness among Government officials, public representatives, civil society organizations and other stakeholders but action for raising public awareness not initiated.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Foundation of India (NFI) identified for mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources.
Maharashtra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings of officials held for sensitising them on SDGs but sensitisation of departments at the third tier of Government yet to be conducted. Training programmes for Municipal/<i>Zila Parishad</i> members and District Level Officers planned and training module for continuous Education and Skill Development proposed.
Uttar Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness programme held only at the State level. Workshops and inter-agency consultations held but proceedings in many cases were not documented. Working Groups (October 2016) consisting of different departments constituted but they remained non-functional. Website developed to disseminate information on SDGs was removed due to lack of technical support.
West Bengal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inter-departmental/sectoral meetings held for mainstreaming of the 2030 Agenda. Awareness schemes specifically linked to SDGs not taken up.

It is evident that while some initiatives involving stakeholders and capacity building of officials at the Centre and States have been taken for raising awareness, these were not comprehensive, focussed and sustained. As such, the task of engendering inclusiveness and participatory decision making in implementation of the 2030 Agenda could face constraints.

2.5 Policy Coherence

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires an integrated ‘Whole of Government’ approach, a balanced coverage of all dimensions of sustainable development and ensuring that ‘*no one is left behind*’. In this context, the UNDG guidance on mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda identifies creation of “Horizontal Policy Coherence” and “Vertical Policy Coherence” which are complementary, as key to the mainstreaming process. The existence of arrangements for horizontal and vertical policy coherence both at the Centre and States examined during audit are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

2.5.1 Horizontal Policy Coherence

Identification of inter-connection between Goals and Targets

Horizontal Policy Coherence involves policy-making processes which break down traditional sectoral silos and takes into account the interdependences between dimensions and sectors so that an integrated and balanced approach to SDGs can be adopted. As already brought out in Para 2.3.2, while mapping Schemes/Programmes and Ministries with SDGs, an exercise had been carried out to identify interconnections

between Goals/Targets and their implementing Ministries. In addition, NITI Aayog stated that the issue of trade-offs and synergies will be examined by the Ministries implementing SDGs in due course.

Institutional mechanisms for coordination between Ministries and agencies

Coordinated institutional mechanisms are required for creating partnerships across sectoral Ministries and agencies, and for managing inter-connections between Goals and Targets. Past audits have shown existence of established inter-ministerial and inter-agency mechanisms within governance structures both at the Central and State levels. Most development programmes and initiatives also provide for institutional arrangements for convergence and co-ordination between all the concerned Ministries and agencies. Audit reports¹¹ have however, also highlighted shortcomings in the functioning of these mechanisms and have recommended remedial action.

Audit examined whether institutional mechanisms have been specifically created for addressing coordination issues relating to SDGs. NITI Aayog has cited the multi-disciplinary Task Force as an example of an institutional mechanism created for addressing coordination aspects. Audit noted that a decision taken by this Task Force (October 2017) to create an administrative mechanism for enabling the nodal Ministry for each SDG to coordinate with other Ministries had not been implemented and subsequently the concept of a nodal Ministry itself was done away with in the revised mapping document. NITI Aayog explained (May 2019) that as various goals are interconnected in a matrix-like structure no grouping of goals can be assigned to any specific Ministry.

At the State level, initiative for creating institutional mechanisms for addressing inter-connectedness of SDGs have been taken in all the seven selected States. Findings in this respect for each State are dealt within Para 2.4.2 above.

¹¹

CAG's Report		Concern	Recommendation
No.	Subject		
15 of 2018	National Rural Drinking Water Programme	In many States, institutional framework for planning and delivery at State, District, Block and Village level were non -functional. The Council for co-ordination and convergence among different Ministries/States remained dormant.	Feasibility and practicality of existing mechanism needs review to ensure they serve the intended purpose.
10 of 2018	Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana	Scheme guidelines providing reference tools for policy makers, stakeholders and implementing agencies to ensure consistent and rule based implementation/ monitoring of scheme was not existing.	Operational guidelines should be framed to regulate implementation of the scheme across the States.
23 of 2017	Implementation of Right to Education (RTE)	National Advisory Council to advice the Government on implementation of the provisions of RTE Act was not reconstituted and remained non-functional.	National Advisory Council needs to be reconstituted.

2.5.2 Vertical Policy Coherence (Localisation)

India's VNR Report mentions that *'India is fortunate to have highly committed Governments at the Centre as well as States. In the spirit of cooperative federalism, the two levels of the Government have joined hands to bring about the change India needs'*. The VNR Report also highlights that India has a tradition of strong local government¹² institutions both in rural and urban areas. These institutions, to which substantial financial resources have been devolved, are supported by the Centre and the States in planning and implementing various development initiatives.

Audits of various development schemes and programmes (refer footnote 11) show that these provide for close integration across different levels of Government and local/regional authorities playing an important role. These audits have however, frequently made observations with regard to infirmities in their functioning along with recommendations of improvements.

With specific reference to SDGs at the Centre, NITI Aayog had involved the States in various initiatives *viz.* consultations, workshops, meetings, mapping of Goals and Targets, preparation of Vision and Strategy documents, Capacity Building, Task Force. A dedicated National Workshop on "Building Capacity to Localise the SDGs" was also organised. By launching the SDG India Index & Dashboard in 2018 and ranking the States and UTs, NITI Aayog has sought to promote the spirit of competitive federalism among the sub-national governments. At the level of States, vertical coherence is required to be achieved by the State authorities with subordinate administrative formations and local self-government structures (third tier of Government). Findings with regard to this aspect reported from the selected States are discussed in **Table 2.4**:

Table 2.4: Vertical coherence in selected States	
Assam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nodal department undertook consultations at Districts and department levels for raising awareness but did not cover 14 out of 33 Districts and seven out of 59 departments.
Kerala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SDG Monitoring Group (January 2018) decided to form teams to coordinate the implementation of SDGs at District, Urban Local and <i>Panchayat</i> levels. Teams to be constituted after training to elected representatives and officials of Urban and Rural local bodies which is in process.
Maharashtra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State and District level Steering Committees set up to guide and monitor progress on implementation of SDGs.
Uttar Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiatives identified for vertical coherence and their status are as under: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Localising indicators: A State level workshop was held but decisions taken were not recorded.

¹² *Panchayati Raj* Institutions in rural areas and Urban Local Bodies

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clustering of Goals led by Department of <i>Panchayati Raj</i>: Consultation held for review of <i>Gram Panchayat</i> Development Plan (GPDP) guidelines; integrating SDGs in the GPDPs and preparation of a Goal wise list of activities to be taken at GP level. However, headway held up due to non-submission of framework of GPDP by <i>Panchayati Raj</i> Department. ○ SDG Implementation Task Matrix at District level and review framework at the State and District levels: These tasks were still underway. ● A State Level Task Force created (January 2019) under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary, for implementation of SDGs at the lower formations.
<p>West Bengal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● District Level Monitoring Committees have been formed for implementing the 2030 Agenda. However, there was no institutional links at the lower levels.

From the above, it is evident that gaps still existed in the creation of “Horizontal Policy Coherence” and Vertical Policy Coherence” which could hamper both securing sustainable development in a balanced manner and ensuring that ‘no one is left behind’.

NITI Aayog has however, highlighted in its latest communication (May 2019) that it works directly with all Central Ministries, States and UTs and their Planning Departments, through periodic workshops and review meetings, so as to bring about required coherence.

2.6 Audit Summation

NITI Aayog as the nodal institution for coordinating the 2030 Agenda undertook several initiatives. However, a roadmap with defined milestones aligned with SDG targets to be achieved in the year 2020, 2025 and 2030 is yet to be prepared. It brought out a Three Year Action Agenda and a Seven Year Strategy document but action on preparing the Vision 2030 document was still underway. In the selected States, progress on preparation of similar documents was lagging. NITI Aayog had undertaken extensive consultations with stakeholders to raise awareness but a national strategy to create public awareness on SDGs needs to be formulated. Similarly, efforts to enhance public awareness at State level would also need impetus. Policy coherence is key to ensuring “inclusiveness” and a “Whole of Government” approach in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for which existing mechanisms for co-ordination amongst the Ministries and agencies, and different levels of Government would need strengthening by identifying and addressing interconnections between Goals/Targets and their implementing Ministries.