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Report Summary

Why RAA did this study?

The Kingdom of Bhutan has always placed its environmental conservation efforts ahead of all socio-economic developments. The importance of such efforts are well resounded through numerous national policy documents.

According to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 60% of the total land area of the country should be reserved as forest cover for all times to come. Such firm stand on the conservation of the pristine environment has given the country a unique place and recognition in the international arena.

Article 25.1 of the Constitution of Kingdom of Bhutan and Chapter 1, Section 3 of the Audit Act of Bhutan 2006, specifically states that “There shall be a Royal Audit Authority to audit and report on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public resources”. In line with this important constitutional responsibility, the RAA is required to examine whether the Government agencies are doing the right things in the right and least expensive way. In doing so, the RAA not only looks at “what has been done”, but also “what has not been done” to achieve the ultimate objective.

Therefore the Audit on the Management of National Parks was taken up with the following objectives;

- ≈ To assess the adequacy of planning, management and reporting systems in achieving the desired outputs and outcomes;
- ≈ To review and assess the management of risks to the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage; and
- ≈ To review the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of various funds allocated to the park offices.

The audit covered three parks and a sanctuary namely; Jigme Dorji National Park (JDNP), Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park (JSWNP), Thrumshingla National Park (TNP) and Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS).

What RAA found?

Given that the parks were facing almost the similar constraints and had near similar problems, it was found appropriate to present combined observations so that a holistic approach could be taken to handle these constraints and problems. Only the major specific issues, if any, have been presented separately.

The RAA also came across certain good practices and some noteworthy achievements, as presented hereunder:

- ✓ In line with Forest and Nature Conservation Act of Bhutan (F&NCA), 1995 and the Forest and Nature Conservation Rules of Bhutan (F&NCR), 2000, all the park management offices had prepared **management plans** on five yearly periods.
- ✓ Since there are villages within the parks' boundary, one of the main activities of the parks is the implementation of the ICDP (**Integrated Conservation Development Programmes**). It was found that, generally, the villagers have economically benefited from this programme.
- ✓ All the parks have their own office buildings with few of them even having constructed staff quarters.
- ✓ Many of the staffs of the parks have undergone various relevant courses both within and outside the country, thereby improving the overall competency level of the park offices.

Despite such achievements, there were several constraints, problems and weaknesses. Some of the notable observations, in these lines, are;

- ✗ There was minimal integration of plans amongst the Parks, Geogs and the Dzongkhags, with the possibility of leading to duplication of works and loss of accountability;
- ✗ None of the park management offices had initiated impact assessment to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the various activities carried out by them;
- ✗ Zonation, though mentioned as a significant activity in all management plans, had not been carried out by the park management offices with the exception of BWS;

- ✘ There are inconsistencies among the various Parks in demarcating the different zones such as core, buffer and multiple-use. The zones are being interpreted differently by different Park Management Offices and also within the various levels of staff in each Park.
- ✘ There is no uniform and consistent approach in implementing environmental awareness programmes amongst parks.
- ✘ There is no consistency amongst the administrative organogram of the various parks, with each park having its own distinct set up.
- ✘ There is no proper documentation, especially in JDNP and JSWNP, on the various activities executed by them in the field,
- ✘ Although most parks have built sound human resource through ex-country and in-country trainings, seminars and workshops, none of them have carried out training need analysis to ascertain the need, relevance, priority etc. of the training.
- ✘ Considering the size of area under them and the need of sending the patrolling teams in groups, most of the parks are still facing the manpower constraint.
- ✘ The management plans of most of the parks, with the exception of TNP, had not come out on time. Besides, many of the activities included in the management plans were not achieved by parks.
- ✘ There is often conflict in balancing the activities between conservation and the development. The recent memory could be that of the development of the rich Takin habitat across the Tshachu area under JDNP. Most people in the park region often view the Park Management Offices as Donors.

What RAA recommends?

Based on the review, findings and analysis the RAA developed certain recommendations with an attempt to address the identified deficiencies, problems and weaknesses.

Some of the significant recommendations requiring immediate attention are;

- ® The Park Management Offices should document all the activities carried out at field level, including the lists for all species.
- ® The Parks should integrate their ICDP activities with Dzongkhags and Geogs to avoid duplication and to obtain greater value for money.
- ® Periodically, the Park Management Offices should assess the impact of their activities in relation to their objectives and desired outcomes.
- ® A more uniform and consistent approach towards ICDP and conducting environmental awareness programmes could be worked out within and amongst the parks.
- ® The Department of Forest should develop a more consistent administrative organogram and the names and functions of the different units within the Park Management Offices should be standardised.
- ® A proper Need Analysis should be carried to determine the need and relevance and to identify the types of trainings required for the staff and other stakeholders. Placing the right people at the right job, especially after the training, should also be looked into by the Department and Park Managers themselves.
- ® Research works should be strengthened at a larger scale. Where appropriate works in conserving parks should be based on some kind of research works done.
- ® The Department and/or the park managers should initiate ways of sharing information amongst the park managers, conservationists and other environmental institutes through various forums.
- ® The Department may also look into the constraints faced by the various Park Management Offices in balancing their activities between the conservation and the development. Any developmental activities need to consider the implications for the biodiversity and integrate appropriate measures, if biodiversity is to be conserved.