



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief April 2020



Operational Context

Bhutan will transition to lower Middle-Income Level status by 2023 and considers WFP's support critical to this transition process.

The national poverty rate, as measured by the international poverty line of USD 1.90 per person per day (PPP), has fallen from 23 percent in 2007 to 8.2 percent in 2017.

Although people's overall nutritional status has improved, health problems related to a lack of nutritional and balanced diets remain a challenge, including micronutrient deficiencies.

Bhutan remains highly vulnerable to earthquakes but lacks the necessary data information systems, response plans and coordination systems to adequately prepare for emergencies.

WFP has been present in Bhutan since 1974.



Population: **0.73 million**

2015 Human Development Index: **132 out of 188**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **21.2% of children between 6-59 months**

Highlights

WFP is proposing reaching out to approximately 10,000 vulnerable students across the 20 districts of the country with a food basket / Take Home Rations (THR) including fortified commodities like rice and edible oil.

Other assistance on the backdrop of COVID-19 includes providing food safety and quality guidance, publishing a paper on impact of the pandemic on food and nutrition security, food storage capacity support and nutrition community outreach on how to eat and stay healthy during the pandemic.

Operational Updates

1. In partnership with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and UNICEF, WFP is planning to provide nutritious food to students identified by the Government as the most vulnerable through take home rations. These rations will consist of rice and oil fortified with essential vitamins and minerals, and chickpeas and pulses. They will be distributed while implementing appropriate infection prevention control measures.
2. In support to the Government's efforts to preposition 20,000 mt food to meet the requirements of 50 percent of the population for about 6 months, WFP is providing technical assistance on food safety and quality to minimize food losses and to preserve the inherent nutritional quality of the food. In this regard, WFP developed various technical guidance documents on food safety & quality, in consultation with relevant government agencies to ensure food safety & quality at the warehouse level, during transportation and distribution via retail stores.
3. The UN has organised its support to the Government under seven action areas according to the "Protective Shield" with WFP providing coordination support to map national contingency plans for all sectors and coordinate UN assistance to national contingency planning.
4. WFP has reprogrammed USD 300,000 to support the national Agriculture Stimulus Plan to enhance agriculture production, farmer linkages to markets, setting up a national monitoring system for farmers and documenting value chain models for national scale-up.

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Photos Above: © WFP/ Gopi Kharel. WFP Bhutan staff members and officials from the Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority during a food inspection/quality assessment check in a food storage warehouse. Bhutan is prepositioning food enough for half of the entire population for 6 months. WFP is providing technical assistance on food quality and safety.

5. WFP is supporting the Royal Government of Bhutan with nutrition information about staying and eating healthy during the pandemic. The messages and education material will target rural communities with a focus on vulnerable population groups such as school children, pregnant women and elderly. The messages are designed to encourage consumption of local, diverse, seasonal and nutritious food. Linkages of nutrition to immunity and WASH (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene) will be integrated in the messages.
6. WFP has developed a policy paper on the impact of COVID-19 on Food and Nutrition Security in Bhutan, to be updated regularly as the situation changes
7. WFP has supported the Royal Government of Bhutan's efforts to preposition food (Rice, Pulses & Edible Oil) under the National Food Security Reserve. WFP has donated two portable storage facilities to increase the current storage capacity by 1000 mt. Funds have been disbursed towards procurement of storage and related equipment
8. WFP has initiated discussions with the National Bureau of Statistics in terms of using Geopoll and the 72 hours assessment platform to support national assessments and targeting of food assistance

WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	May-October 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.94 m	5.33 m	0.09 m

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: School-age children, women and vulnerable groups in Bhutan have improved nutrition in line with national targets by 2023

Focus area: Root Causes

Activities:

- Assist the Government in its transition to a national school nutrition programme based on an integrated approach to school feeding that connects school feeding with nutrition education, school health and school agriculture and embeds gender across all activities, strengthened supply chains and school nutrition infrastructure optimization.
- Provide technical assistance to the Government and the national food production and trade sectors to ensure that sound policies are in place and ensure quality and safety of fortified foods, especially rice, throughout their supply chains.

Strategic Result 5: Countries have strengthened capacities to implement the SDGs

Strategic Outcome 2: Government has strengthened capability to address food security and nutrition challenges and prepare for and respond to crises, including those resulting from climate change, by 2023.

Focus area: Root Causes

Activities:

- Provide the Government with gender-informed and vulnerability-focused capacity strengthening relevant to its management of national emergency resources, development, enhancement and testing of national emergency response plans and coordination systems, through WFP's leadership of the emergency logistics and communications sectoral working group.

Challenges

- Bhutan has limited awareness about its disaster risks, compounded by the fact that the country has not faced major disasters in recent times. There are also some knowledge gaps on the relationship between disasters and its impact on food security. In response, WFP is working with government partners to increase national disaster awareness.
- While the implementing partners in nutrition are highly committed, their numbers are limited, which hinders their ability to support the implementation of national health and nutrition strategies. WFP is therefore supporting the Department for Disaster Management to build stronger national capacity to prepare and respond to disasters.

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