



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief May 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

As an immediate mitigation measure to school closures in the country, WFP, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and other UN partners launched take home rations distributions to some 10,000 students identified as vulnerable by the Government.

WFP provided support to the food agencies in the country with food safety and quality management guidance documents and support.

Operational Updates

1. As an immediate mitigation measure to COVID-19 related school closures in the country, WFP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, launched the school feeding take-home ration to help 10,000 vulnerable students in the country meet their daily dietary and nutritional requirements. The proposed food basket will consist of rice and oil fortified with essential vitamins and minerals, chickpeas, and pulses.
2. WFP, together with UNICEF, is developing a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on the food security, household income and health of the most vulnerable households identified for take-home ration distributions by the Ministry of Education.

In addition, WFP has initiated discussions with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to design a joint food and nutrition security assessment and real-time tracking of COVID-19 impacts.

WFP is also in discussion with the National Bureau of Statistics on using Geopoll and the 72-hour assessment tool to support national assessments and targeting of food assistance.

3. On 12 May 2020, in the 13th Food and Agriculture Technical Committee meeting, the committee draft standards on Fortified Rice Kernels and Fortified Rice were approved for wide circulation. This takes WFP a step further towards finalizing the standards for Fortified Rice Kernels and Fortified Rice in the country

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WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Jun-Nov 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.94 m	5.34 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.

- As part of WFP's technical assistance to ensuring food safety and quality in Bhutan's national food security reserve stocks, WFP visited the Food Corporation of Bhutan's (FCBL) HQ and discussed the food safety and quality management guidance for these stocks.
- WFP, in partnership with FCBL and Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA), developed a guidance note and brochure on safe practices during food transportation. Copies of the brochures were handed over to the relevant agencies for dissemination.
- WFP organized a consultative meeting with the Department of Trade, the Ministry of Economic Affairs to discuss providing technical assistance for safe upkeep and management of food stocks. As an outcome of the meeting, WFP has extended its assistance to the Ministry in instituting a proper inventory management system that can be adopted by traders and dealers. WFP will also organize trainings in collaboration with relevant food regulatory authorities, that will cover subjects like fumigation and store management.

Donors

- [Korean International Cooperation Agency \(KOICA\)](#)
- [The Government of Australia](#)
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Photo Above: Bhutan's Education Minister Jai Bir Rai inaugurating the Take-Home ration for vulnerable students in the country