



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief June 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**

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Highlights

As part of the COVID-19 response, WFP is assisting the Royal Government of Bhutan in the areas of food safety and quality management. WFP organized a capacity strengthening training session on food safety and quality management in partnership with the department of trade and the Confederation of Indian Industry, for major domestic wholesalers and enterprises who are currently procuring and storing a large quantity of food items in the country.

As part of the Government's plan for the COVID-19 response, WFP also agreed to support the Agriculture Stimulus Plan and has front-loaded assistance across the value chain, from demand creation for local food, production support, marketing, mitigating post-harvest losses, and through policy and inter-agency coordination support.

Operational Updates

1. WFP supported a joint on-site assessment on food safety and quality aspects of traders' storage locations in Thimphu in partnership with counterparts from the Department of Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs.

With insights from the on-site assessment, and discussions with government counterparts, WFP partnered with the Confederation of Indian Industry Food & Agriculture Centre of Excellence, and companies such as Cargill, Big Bazaar and Spencer's, to develop a customized training on industry best practices on food safety and quality management during warehousing, transportation, distribution and retail. The training also covered the science behind safe storage of food commodities, storage structures and the basics of inventory management. The hybrid training session, involving live presentations and online sessions, were delivered to major wholesalers and enterprises inside the country currently dealing in food procurement.

2. WFP is supporting the Agriculture Stimulus Plan across the whole value chain from demand creation for local food, production support, marketing, mitigating post-harvest losses, and through policy and inter-agency coordination support as well as assistance on enhanced cost-efficiency and knowledge management.

WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Jul-Dec 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.94 m	5.34 m	0.08 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 this assistance to the agriculture sector, WFP visited Gelephu, Zhemang, Trongsa and Samtse districts in early June and met with relevant officials and stakeholders to engage them on WFP's plans to enhance agriculture production, and marketing, (including linking local farmers to schools, institutions and local market network).

- WFP, in partnership with the United Nations and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), celebrated the second World Food Safety Day on 7 June 2020. In collaboration with Bhutan Agriculture & Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) and supported by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, WFP engaged in a social media campaign for the week of first June across UN Bhutan's social media platforms. The social media campaign, which provided information on best practices related to food safety and quality management, gained positive traction across prominent platforms.

Furthermore, WFP supported BAFRA and FAO with co-branded merchandise that were distributed to more than 90 key government stakeholders reemphasizing this year's theme: "Food safety, everyone's business". WFP also published a supplement in the most popular and the national newspaper, Kuensel, covering frequently asked questions on food safety and an infographic on safe practices for food retailers.

- WFP participated in a consultative meeting with relevant educational authorities advocating for safe school reopening. WFP advocated for alternate modalities of reaching out to the most vulnerable school children, continuing with provision of fortified commodities; and nutrition and health education to target students and parents with key messages. Other areas of proposed assistance included construction of new kitchens and stores in two schools and refurbishment of existing kitchens and stores in five schools; and provision of storage infrastructure to enhance food safety and quality.
- Subsequently, WFP supported the development of safe reopening protocols and checklists during a consultative workshop organized by the Policy and Planning Division, Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF and other development partners. The document aimed to guide and support teachers and students to stay healthy and safe while following health, safety and psychosocial protocol for COVID-19 prevention and control measures. Schools across the country reopened for students of grades 10 and 12 on 1 July 2020.

Photo Page 1: WFP staff members and participants of the food quality and management training from 23-26 June 2020.