



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief July 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

The month of July saw progress in WFP's intended agriculture support through the value chain as well as the planned national social and behaviour change communication campaign for improved diets. WFP held a high-profile meeting with the Agriculture Minister which resulted in the Government supporting WFP's proposed interventions for the agriculture sector.

Additionally, WFP succeeded in forging new national and international technical partnerships in the field of food safety and quality. This will improve collaboration on fortification and capacity strengthening initiatives.

Operational Updates

1. WFP met with the Honourable Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests to discuss WFP's support. The high-profile meeting covered discussions on WFP's food system assistance to the agriculture sector. This includes strengthening demand for local nutritious foods, supporting the production of climate smart agriculture, and supporting post-harvest management, marketing, knowledge management, and cost efficiency. The two parties also discussed a social and behaviour change communication campaign to transform dietary habits for Bhutan's children. This campaign would complement the Prime Minister's plan for the 'Healthy Drukyl' online campaign.
2. As an extension of WFP's food system support to the Agriculture Stimulus Plan across the agriculture value chain, WFP continued with field visits to important agriculture centres such as Mongar and Lhuntse to engage relevant officials and stakeholders on WFP's plans. This support will aim to improve agriculture production, marketing and build farmer linkages to schools and local markets.
3. WFP initiated the first-ever bilateral consultation with Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority to discuss ongoing and future areas of collaboration. The discussions resulted in plans for broad alignment on import controls for fortified rice kernels, technical cooperation with the Association of Official Analytical Collaboration (AOAC), joint monitoring of schools, development of advocacy materials and field test kits; and participation in the upcoming rice fortification workshop among others.

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WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Aug 2020-Jan 2021 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.94 m	5.34 m	0.06 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 WFP's 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.

4. WFP facilitated a meeting between AOAC India section and BAFRA to mutually define the areas of technical cooperation. The meetings resulted in agreement on a two phased approach, with Phase-I including online webinars to address the '3Ms' – Man, Machine and Method – as part of analytical capacity strengthening.
5. WFP initiated a partnership meeting with UNICEF and the School Health and Nutrition Division under the Ministry of Education to review how nutrition could be integrated into the existing curriculum. The parties explored possibilities of promoting nutrition in schools via platforms like e-learning curricula, mass media such as TV & radio, digital platforms such as the Ministry of Education's *Sherig* YouTube channel. They also talked about the long-term plan of integrating nutrition education via the social and behaviour change communication strategy that WFP is in the process of formulating.
6. WFP initiated the production of an advocacy video on rice fortification with a threefold objective of advocacy, education and knowledge management. The video will briefly capture the entire lifecycle of rice fortification in Bhutan from genesis and development of a business case, to understanding the process, development of the product and engagement with key stakeholders. The video will be formally launched in the upcoming rice fortification workshop. A shorter version will be used for advocacy through social media platforms.



Photos Page 1 & 2: WFP staff members discuss agriculture support with Government district officers and farmers.