



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief August 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's ongoing support in the Agriculture monitoring and evaluating (M&E) systems aim at providing long-term support to Bhutan's Economic Contingency Plan. WFP has also made progress in its efforts to make use of a menu optimizer tool (PLUS) to ensure dietary diversity in school meals. Furthermore, WFP made various advances in its partnership building initiatives by discussing cooperation with Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), engaging with Tarayana Foundation for its advocacy programme, and organizing a webinar with Association of Official Analytical Collaboration (AOAC) India section on analytical capacity strengthening.

Operational Updates

- In partnership with various divisions under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, WFP is supporting the strengthening of agriculture statistical and M&E systems. This will help address the short-term COVID-19 response and support the agriculture sector's long-term efforts for increased production, market linkages, income, and job creation in line with Bhutan's Economic Contingency Plan.
- WFP has planned to kickstart the implementation of the PLUS optimizer tool in the country, by using an updated version of the tool in schools in Trongsa. PLUS is a digital platform to optimize school menus in terms of nutrition, cost and use of local foods. WFP is currently assimilating data inputs such as commodities available, price, nutritional requirements, and food sources to design the optimized menu.
- WFP initiated the first-consultative meeting with the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) to exchange information on respective areas of work and identify broad areas of cooperation. The parties discussed on topics including logistics/supply chain, and capacity strengthening in various thematic areas, such as post-harvest management, marketing and export promotion, agri-technologies, production, and standardization among others. WFP also discussed the option of a digital collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), leveraging the existing memorandum of understanding between BCCI-CII and recent training programmes conducted by WFP in collaboration with CII Food & Agriculture Centre of Excellence.

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WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Sep 2020 - Feb 2021 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.9 m	5.3 m	0.0 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

- Due to the ongoing climate of uncertainty because of COVID-19, WFP is facing challenges in the implementation of some interventions and activities, planned in collaboration with its implementing partners. As responding to the COVID-19 crisis has been prioritized, WFP will likely face some delay in implementing and completing some of the critical activities planned in its Country Strategic Plan.
- 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.

- WFP is in the final stage of entering into a formal agreement with a civil society organization, The Tarayana Foundation, for a community outreach/advocacy project in the four districts selected for agriculture related interventions. The partnership is anchored on Tarayana's strong community presence combined with WFP's technical oversight, convening power and stakeholder management capacities. The project, with an overall timeframe of one year, will focus on nutrition and health advocacy to help rural and vulnerable population groups eat and stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
- WFP, in collaboration with relevant government counterparts such as School Health & Nutrition Division, School Planning and Building Division, and Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA), planned a joint assessment on food safety and kitchen/store infrastructure in schools. WFP planned to visit and assess the situation in four schools across two districts. However, WFP could visit only one school due to the national lockdown announcement. Based on the joint assessment observations and stakeholder recommendations, WFP will support the safe reopening of priority schools through the refurbishment of kitchen and stores and provision of infrastructures such as pallets, baskets, exhaust fans, etc. to improve food safety and quality management.
- WFP, in collaboration with AOAC India section, organized the first technical webinar as part of Phase-I of technical cooperation between WFP, AOAC and BAFRA. Dr Lalitha R Gowda delivered a talk on Detection of LMOs (Living modified organisms): Advances and Technical Requirements. Dr Gowda is a member of the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee, Government of India, Chair of Scientific Panel on genetically modified organisms and a member of the Scientific Panel on Method Analysis and Sampling with Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). The partnership with AOAC was an outcome of the first-ever bilateral consultation with BAFRA held in July to discuss ongoing and future areas of collaboration including analytical capacity strengthening.
- The SAARC Development Fund (SDF) approved US\$ 8.58 million to improve nutrition through fortified rice in Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. The project, called "Scaling up rice through social safety net programmes in Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka" was submitted by WFP as a regional project to be co-financed by SDF under SDF's social window. Through this project, Bhutan will receive US\$ 2.25 million. Nepal and Sri Lanka will get US\$ 2.75 million and US\$ 3.58 million respectively.

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