



## WFP's Assistance to Nutrition in Bhutan (2019-2023)

School nutrition	Healthy diets	Food fortification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Menu optimization using PLUS School Menus</li> <li>• Farmer to school linkages</li> <li>• School kitchen and stores construction and repair</li> <li>• Food safety and quality</li> <li>• Supply chain analysis and optimization</li> <li>• Realtime and robust Monitoring and Evaluation System</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Behavior Change (SBC) for healthy diets for school aged children</li> <li>• Capacity strengthening of government agencies</li> <li>• Nutrition education via curriculum and edutainment</li> <li>• EduTriton – game-based learning</li> <li>• Community outreach with the Tarayana Foundation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regulatory and compliance framework building</li> <li>• Micronutrient survey</li> <li>• Enhanced production capacity</li> <li>• Robust quality assurance systems including laboratory analysis of fortified foods</li> <li>• Evidence generation &amp; knowledge management</li> <li>• Advocacy and Communication</li> </ul>
Informing national policies and strategies on nutrition		

### Nutrition Situation

As per *Figure 1 and 2*, Bhutanese children are currently suffering from the triple burden of malnutrition - undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. All three problems are linked to sub-optimal diets including inadequate diversity, especially under-consumption of fruits, vegetables, lean animal-based products and plant protein, and overconsumption of processed foods and beverages that are high in sugar, salt and fat. Non-communicable diseases are the main health burden, responsible for 69% of Bhutan's disease burden and 71% of the deaths in 2019.

### Building Human Capital through better Child Nutrition

WFP partners with the Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE) and Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) to create an enabling environment for better school nutrition and improved nutritional status of Bhutanese children. WFP partnered with the MoH and UNICEF to revise the National Health Policy (2020-30) and developed the National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan (2020-25). WFP also supported the MoE to develop the National School Feeding and Nutrition Strategy. These policies aim to increase national goals and multi-sectoral collaboration with other sectors required for effective national health and nutrition programmes and services.

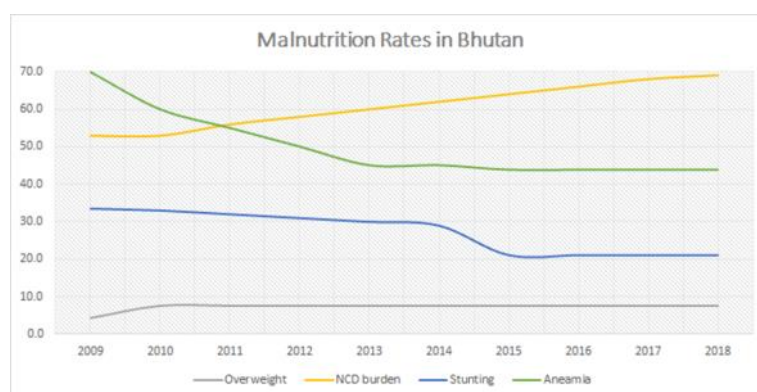


Figure 1

### Malnutrition: In numbers

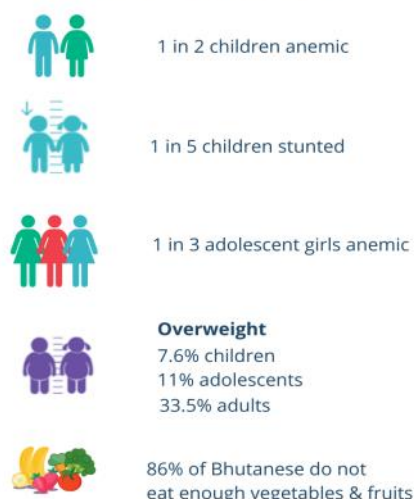


Figure 2

### School Nutrition

WFP is assisting the MoE to improve the nutritional and health status of children by transforming the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme. Nutritious school meal programmes offer an excellent opportunity to provide children with safe, diverse and nutritionally balanced meals. This encourages children to remain in school, develop their physical and cognitive abilities, and build healthy eating habits that can persist into adulthood. When purchased from local smallholder farms, school meal programmes can also maximize benefits for local farmers and communities. WFP is working with government partners to analyze and optimize the supply chain costs for the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme.

WFP is supporting the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme to reach all rural schools with school meals in the country within the 12th Five Year Plan (2019-2023). This includes the following:

- Collaborating with the MoAF to connect 9,000 farmers in five districts with schools to provide fresh and nutritious foods while assuring income for smallholder farmers, the majority of whom are women.
- Working with the MoE to develop national standards for school kitchens, stores and kitchen equipment.
- Supporting the expansion of school meals to additional rural schools across the country via the construction of 23 new kitchens and stores, and refurbishment of additional 36 existing school kitchen and stores.
- Collaborating with the MoE to roll-out PLUS School Menus, a user-friendly software which optimizes school menus by making them more nutritious, cost-efficient and locally sourced, simultaneously. The roll-out of PLUS to five districts has resulted in remarkable results with design of more nutritious meals, at a 15% lower cost and with a 20% increase in use of local food. Thus, PLUS contributes to better nutrition for school children, cost reductions for the Government and stronger rural economy and job for farmers.

- Supporting the MoE to develop and roll-out a real-time and integrated nutrition, health and education monitoring and reporting system to ensure evidence-based decision making.

A major success of these interventions has been a 26% increased dietary diversity in school meals in 2021 as compared to 2019 and reduced food waste at schools from 2% in 2017 to 0.5% in 2019.

### Healthy Diets

Sustainable transformation of health and nutrition requires interventions on both demand and supply side. WFP is assisting the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) to research dietary behaviour and develop a national SBC Strategy and building their capacity to improve diet and health practices of school children (5-18 years). The Strategy will contain a comprehensive intervention package to promote healthy diets including integrating nutrition and health education into the school curriculum, production of a children's TV show, developing EduTrition - a digital and interactive game-based learning platform and supporting the MoE social media campaigns. Adopting a whole-of-society approach, WFP has partnered with Tarayana Foundation to work across 4 districts to help rural and vulnerable population groups eat and stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond focusing on children and adolescents aged between 5-19 years.

### Food Fortification

RGoB has prioritized food fortification as a public health strategy to address micronutrient deficiencies among school children using the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme as a platform. With growing evidence on the effectiveness of the programme, the Government plans to scale-up the use of fortified rice to cover other vulnerable populations, including monastic institutions with gradual introduction through the open market.

WFP provides technical assistance and capacity strengthening towards developing the regulatory framework and compliance mechanisms. This is to ensure food safety and quality, and successful food fortification programme. It also includes working with relevant agencies to strengthen the quality assurance system, food testing capabilities, developing tools and capacity, facilitating advocacy and policy dialogue, knowledge sharing events, and supporting a micronutrient survey to create the evidence base needed to inform policy and regulatory measures. With these foundations laid, WFP together with the Government, would sustainably expand the consumption of fortified foods in Bhutan.

### COVID-19 Response

COVID-19 constitutes a significant risk to the nutrition status of children and communities. Direct and indirect impact of the pandemic such as reduced household income, higher food price volatility, reduced availability of fresh foods, have affected the quality of Bhutanese diets. WFP is working closely with government partners to maintain and improve nutrition, hygiene and food safety during the pandemic including assistance to the safe

