



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief December 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 signed a partnership agreement with a local NGO, Tarayana Foundation, on nutrition community outreach to promote improved dietary and health practises of vulnerable households in the country. With a field monitoring trip to rural districts of the country, WFP reviewed the progress and challenges on its support to the Government's Economic Contingency Plan, school linking programme, post-harvest management and agriculture marketing. WFP also supported two workshops related to fortification and review of disaster management contingency plans of districts in the East.

Operational Updates

1. The national planning body, the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC), invited WFP staff members in Bhutan for a lunch to congratulate the organization for being awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize. The event further solidified the relationship with GNHC.
2. WFP signed a partnership agreement with the NGO, Tarayana Foundation, for a nutrition community outreach project titled: "Nutrition and health advocacy to help rural and vulnerable population groups eat and stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond". The project aims to improve dietary and health practices of 1,076 Bhutanese households in Lhuentse, Samtse, Zhemgang and Trongsa districts.
3. The Food Fortification Taskforce for Bhutan, a multi-sectoral team, convened a meeting to take stock of activities and progress in 2020 and plans for 2021. The taskforce acknowledged that there were no cases of beri-beri among school children receiving school meals. However, with a few cases detected in other sections of the population, the Ministry of Health has issued a circular to all institutions in the country to start introducing fortified rice in their meals.
4. WFP organized a technical webinar for National Food Testing Laboratory (NFTL) staff. The webinar focussed on technology advancements and lab equipment available for vitamin-mineral analysis in foods. The objective was to help NFTL conduct a gap analysis of laboratory infrastructure requirements by developing an understanding of current technology and products available in the market.

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WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Jan-Jun 2020 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.94 m	5.62 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

- 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 of Disaster Management to build stronger national capacity to prepare and respond to disasters.

Photo Page 1: WFP Bhutan and Tarayan foundation sign partnership agreement on an SBCC project to advocate vulnerable population on nutrition and health in the country. © WFP/Jigme Tenzin

Photo Page 2: A woman farmer in Taktse village, Drakteng geog, Trongsa. She is a member of the local vegetable group. © WFP/Binai Lama

5. Staff members of WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), undertook a field monitoring visit to Trongsa and Zhemgang districts to meet with district agriculture sector officials. WFP reviewed the support provided through the Economic Contingency Plan and monitored WFP-MoAF annual work plan activities for 2020-21. During the visit, WFP also met with *geog* (sub-district) officials, leaders and members of farmer groups, and other stakeholders to understand the progress and challenges on the Economic Contingency Plan's priorities, school linking programme, post-harvest and agriculture marketing.
6. WFP participated in contract renewal consultations related to the farm to school linking program in Trongsa district; annual contracts were renewed between the participating schools and farmer groups in three *geogs*: Nubi, Tangsibje and Drakteng. WFP supported the contractual process and observed the facilitation capacity of the sub-district's extension officers. WFP also provided necessary advice on the facilitation of business linkages. The journey allowed WFP to reinforce the objectives and intentions of the farm to school linking programme, aligning it to broader agriculture marketing and rural enterprise development goals.
7. WFP supported the Department of Disaster Management to update the Disaster Management Contingency Plans in the eastern districts with district disaster management officers and district statistical staff members. In addition to updating the plans, WFP facilitated a consultative session with a SWOT analysis to map the current challenges and issues related to the implementation of these plans.

