WFP Bhutan
Country Brief
February 2021

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, 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.

Operational Updates

- In collaboration with the Renewable Natural Resources Statistical Division (RSD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), WFP held the first workshop on “Strengthening the Agriculture Statistical and Monitoring and Reporting System”, with officials from two pilot districts and representatives from MoAF. The RSD and WFP initiated this activity as a joint effort to streamline and strengthen the administrative data flow in the Statistical System. The workshop discussed different modules developed in WFP’s mobile operational data acquisition (MODA) platform, including ODK collect.

- In Trongsa and Zhemgang, with WFP’s financial support, the Government distributed farm input supplies (such as seeds) and water supply items (such as pipes, sprinkler and drip sets and water harvesting materials) to farmers. Farmers continued to produce winter vegetables to be sold on local, district and national markets.

- In the districts where ‘farm to school’ linking program is implemented, WFP supported the renewal of annual contracts for the supply of fresh local vegetables to the schools. Both the farmers and schools expressed their satisfaction with the agreement and the program.

- WFP in collaboration with the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) steered a workshop to update the District Disaster Management Contingency Plans (DMCP) and to review the Disaster Management Act 2013. District Disaster Management Officers (DDMO) and District Statistical Officers of the 12 districts in western Bhutan participated in the workshop. Lessons learnt from the workshop, including on pandemic preparedness, will further strengthen the design and implementation of the revised DMCPs. Additionally, the DDMOs will be trained to update and implement the district plans.

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Highlights

In February, WFP engaged with the Government to advance national programmes in agriculture, disaster risk management and nutrition. WFP conducted three workshops to: i) Strengthen the Agriculture Statistical and Monitoring and Reporting System; ii) Update the District Disaster Management Contingency Plans (DMCPs) and to review the Disaster Management Act 2013 and; iii) Finalize formative research design for a National Social Behaviour Change Communication Strategy.
**WFP Bhutan Strategy**

### Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Requirement (in USD)</th>
<th>Allocated Contributions (in USD)</th>
<th>Mar-Aug 2021 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.9 m</td>
<td>5.63 m</td>
<td>0.0 m</td>
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### 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

- The 43-day long national lockdown that was recently lifted affected support services to the smallholder farmers. The extension staffs had difficulties in providing regular production support services to the farmers. Logistics and market access were severely disrupted due to restrictions on travel and mobility. This also led to postharvest losses, which denied the farmers of a good opportunity to sell their produce and earn income.

- 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.

- Together with the DDM, WFP reviewed the Disaster Management Information System (DMIS) to understand the ways for further improvement and to propose on the approach for the integration of 72Hrs Rapid Assessment Approach (RAA).

- WFP kicked-off the field-based Global Logistics Cluster (GLC) preparedness project with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest which is the Logistics Cluster lead in Bhutan.

- WFP handed over 1130 face shields and 4,250 face masks to the Department of School Education, Ministry of Education (MoE) for school staff and children. This is part of WFP’s commitment to ensure school feeding is supported even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In collaboration with the MoE, WFP conducted a 2-day workshop on February 25-26 to finalize formative research design for a National Social Behaviour Change Communication Strategy. Experts and stakeholders from the Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, UNICEF and SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation) participated in the formulation workshop.

- Since 2018, MoH and MoE have reported several outbreaks of oral/tongue lesions (glossitis) among school students mainly concentrated within the boarding and central schools of Bhutan. WFP is supporting MoH and MoE with i) financial support towards the development of investigation protocols by the technical taskforce and, ii) technical support to Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority on a food safety investigation, including analysis of food commodities for safety and quality parameters in laboratories based in India.

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**Photo 1:** Workshop with the RSD, MoAF (© Binai Lama).

**Photo 2:** Workshop to finalize formative research design for the SBCC (© WFP/Gayjoong Bhutii).