



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief

March 2022



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 US\$ 1.9 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 #healthzheyala social media campaign was launched in partnership with the Ministry of Education to create a dialogue on healthy diets for children among caregivers leading up to the National School Nutrition Day on March 28. With the approval of the GAFSP proposal, WFP and IFAD began working with the Ministry of Agriculture to design the Building Resilient Commercial Agriculture (BRECSA) project.

Operational Update

- A social media campaign #healthzheyala was organized in partnership with the School Health and Nutrition Division (SHND) under the Ministry of Health to observe the National School Nutrition Day on 28 March. This is the fourth year Bhutan has observed the National School Nutrition Day. This year, the 10-day campaign focused on targeting caregivers of children and advocacy for healthy diets. The campaign was launched on the newly created school health and nutrition Bhutan Facebook and Instagram handles of the SHND. The campaign generated over 80 posts and garnered about 1,000 Facebook followers and over 250 Instagram followers. The SHND and WFP nutrition team will continue advocacy and communications on healthy diets through these pages. In Bhutan, Facebook is one of the top three social media platforms used.
- Following the approval of the BRECSA proposal by GAFSP, the first set of meetings took place between WFP, IFAD and MoAF. The BRECSA project will receive GAFSP grant of USD 13 million, with IFAD providing an additional soft loan of USD 8.9 million. WFP is the technical support agency for the project. The project will promote agro-ecological production, targeting smallholder farmers and cooperatives in the country. Building climate resilience, enhancing nutrition, strengthening opportunities for smallholder farmers, cooperatives, youth and private sector agriculture entities, and a holistic development of market systems are some of the key areas of interventions to strengthen Bhutan's food systems. The two major components of the project will focus on building resilient production systems and enhancing job creation, income generation and access to markets.
- A series of virtual meetings were carried out as part of project design report (PDR) for the BRECSA project. The BRECSA project design mission comprises National and international experts from IFAD and WFP. The PDR team will initiate a series of stakeholder consultations followed by a three-week mission from 25 April. This will involve field visits and interactions with grassroots level stakeholders, beneficiaries, farmers and value chain actors. The detailed project design report will be finalized by end of June, this year.

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Further information: www.wfp.org/countries/Bhutan

WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Apr-Sep 2022 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.94 m	6.36 m	0.00 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 a surge in COVID-19 community transmission, lockdown measures continued in most districts, including Thimphu. This affected the implementation and monitoring of activities. Where possible, virtual meetings, workshops and campaigns were carried out.

- WFP organised a three-day virtual workshop on innovative qualitative research on 7 March with support from KOICA. The workshop informed the National Social Behaviour Change (SBC) Strategy to promote healthy diets among school-aged children. Members of the SBC taskforce, representing various agencies like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), Ministry of Health, UNICEF, WHO, Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan and UNFPA attended the workshop. The SBC Strategy is one of the approaches outlined in the National School Feeding and Nutrition Strategy 2019-2030, to help address the burden of malnutrition through targeted and tailored interventions and messaging. The detailed project design report will be finalised by end of June, this year



Photo page 1: Children in a school in Bumthang district. @WFP/Kinley Wangmo

Photo page 2: The Social Behaviour Change taskforce members met virtually for a three-day workshop on innovative qualitative research. @WFP/Susan Shulman

Donors

KOICA; First-line of Defence (USAID); Global Logistics Cluster support; WFP internal funds