



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
CHANGING LIVES

# WFP Bhutan Country Brief May 2022



## Operational Context

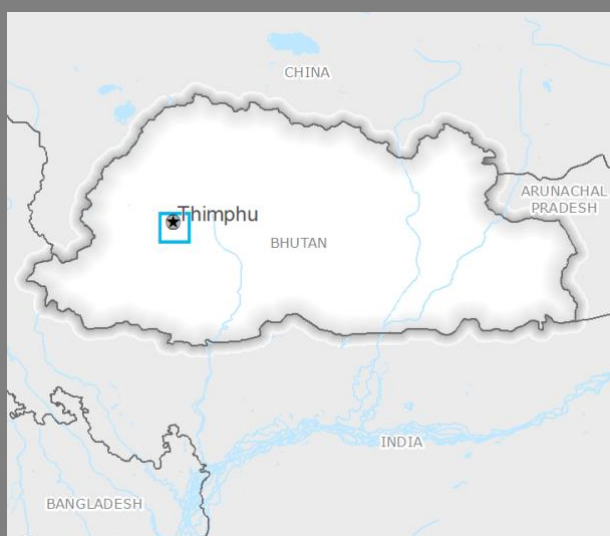
Bhutan will transition to lower Middle-Income Level status by 2023 and considers WFP's support critical to this transition process.

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

A two-week stakeholders consultation mission to develop the USD 22 million Building Resilient Commercial Smallholder Agriculture (BRECSA) project took place in May. Several capacity building trainings for farmers and cooperatives in areas of post-harvest management, food processing, food safety and value addition to food commodities were carried out in several parts of the country.

## Operational Update

- Officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) joined IFAD and WFP staff on a two-week BRECSA project development stakeholder consultation mission. The mission was carried out successfully in south and central Bhutan, following which an aide-mémoire was presented to the MoAF. The Royal Government in partnership with WFP and IFAD have secured USD 13 million from the GAFSP and an additional USD 9 million loan. The project will build linkages between climate-responsive value chain development and market-oriented food production.
- A Training of Technical Working Group members from MoAF on online Agriculture Monitoring and Reporting System (M&R) was conducted by the Policy and Planning Division of the ministry and WFP. The objective of the training was to provide hands-on training for designing data collection forms, data analysis and visualization using WFP Mobile Operational Data Acquisition (MODA) platform. The aim of the M&R Platform is to provide near real-time integrated and sector-wide agriculture data for improved production planning, targeting of agricultural services to farmers, and to support feedback and learning across the sector. The training will also enable officials to manage and update the system.
- The Agriculture Production Division under Department of Agriculture with the support from the World Food Programme and KOICA conducted a two-day training on Postharvest Management and Value Addition of Agricultural Commodities. The beneficiaries included 190 farmers and unemployed youths from the districts of Zhemgang, Dagana, Trongsa, Lhuentse and Mongar.
- A Business-to-Business meeting was organized by the Regional Agriculture and Marketing Cooperatives Office (RAMCO), Gelephu, with farmers groups and cooperatives in Trongsa and Bumthang. The meeting created awareness on the cost of production and price fixing strategies and also explored possibilities of intra and inter-district linkages. The cooperatives and farmers groups are linked to markets through the National School and Hospital Feeding Programme (SHFP) under the MoAF. A total of 40 farmer groups and cooperatives are linked with 20 schools and the hospital in Trongsa. In Bumthang, 43 groups and cooperatives, were linked with 16 schools and the hospital.

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## WFP Bhutan Strategy

### Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023

Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	June-November 2022 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.94m	6.50m	0.00

#### 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

- Cost escalation in construction materials and labour charges has hindered the timely implementation of WFP's support to school infrastructure requiring several revisions to the construction cost estimates.
- 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.

- Two farmer groups were provided with a set of food processing equipment to make potato and banana chips. Besides supplying vegetables to schools, the Tangsibji and Tshangkha vegetable groups produce large quantities of potatoes as their main cash crop. The groups are from potato growing villages in Trongsa district. Prior to COVID-19, the groups exported potatoes through the Food Corporation of Bhutan Limited in Phuntsholing. RAMCO also provided training on equipment handling and maintenance, food hygiene and processing.
- In partnership with Department of Disaster Management (DDM), WFP completed a week-long sensitization programme on Disaster Risk Management, Incident Command System (ICS) training, and a tabletop simulation exercises in Haa and Trashiyangtse districts. The programme is aimed at strengthening the capacities of the district administration officials, regional offices, and newly elected local government leaders including representatives from De-Suung and Bhutan Red Cross Society. A key objective was to review and update the Dzongkhag Disaster Management and Contingency Plan (DMCP) through a tabletop simulation exercise. This contributed towards enhancing preparedness and response capabilities of the local government during disasters.
- A Geo-information Systems (GIS) digitization workshop was organized by the DDM and WFP in Trongsa and Haa districts for frontliners and local government officials. A free spatial data repository called open street mapping was used to collect data and information, which can be used for research, analysis and disaster management. The data collected in Haa and Trongsa focused particularly on critical infrastructure.
- WFP held an interactive two-hour learning session on Applying Social Behaviour Change (SBC) Principles in Your Work. The session was led by the CO's Social Behaviour Change Specialist. The series was part of the common learning initiative, with participants from all partner UN agencies. The session was held with participants joining in virtually and in-person. The interactive learning session provided a general introduction to SBC and tools. It also provided practical tips on how UN professionals can apply SBC principles and processes to their respective areas of work to get people to implement recommended behaviours.

*Photo Page 1: The team members of the BRECSA stakeholder consultations mission interacting with a farmer @WFP/Binai Lama*

## Donors

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