



WFP
World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

Informing national school feeding and nutrition policies and strategies in Bhutan

Nutrition situation

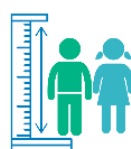
Bhutan's children are experiencing the triple burden of malnutrition - undernutrition, overnutrition, and micronutrient deficiencies. All three conditions are linked to sub-optimal diets including inadequate dietary diversity, especially underconsumption of fruits, vegetables, lean animal-based products and plant proteins, and overconsumption of processed foods and beverages that are high in sugar, salt, and fat.

Building human capital

WFP partners with the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD), and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MoAL) to create an enabling environment for healthier school nutrition and improved nutritional status of Bhutanese schoolchildren.

WFP, together with MoH and UNICEF, revised the National Health Policy (2020-30) and developed the National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan (2020-25). WFP has also supported MoESD to draft the National School Feeding and Nutrition Strategy (2019-2030). These policies aim to strengthen national goals and multi-sectoral collaboration for effective national health and nutrition programmes and services.

Malnutrition: In numbers



1 in 5 children stunted



1 in 3 adolescent girls anemic



Overweight
8% children
11% adolescents
34 adults



86% of Bhutanese do not eat enough vegetables & fruits



School Nutrition

WFP assists the MoESD in improving the health and nutritional status of schoolchildren through the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme (NSFNP) by:

- Collaborating with MoAL to connect 96 schools with 9,000 farmers in five districts to provide diverse, locally available, and nutritious foods for school meals. This also assures incomes for 2,855 smallholder farmers, 60 percent of whom are women.
- Partnering with MoESD to develop national standards for school kitchens, storages and kitchen equipment. WFP is supporting the construction of 15 new school kitchens and refurbishing 36 existing kitchens and storages.
- Collaborating with MoESD on the use of WFP's School Menu Planner (SMP) PLUS tool, a digital platform that optimizes school menus to be more nutritious, cost-efficient using locally sourced food. The use of SMP PLUS in 145 schools in seven districts provides cost-efficient and nutritious meals with increased dietary diversity for 31,000 schoolchildren. WFP is also supporting the decentralization and optimization of the NSFNP's supply chain.
- Supporting MoESD to develop and implement an Educational Information Management System (EMIS), a real-time monitoring and reporting system that integrates health, nutrition, and education indicators to ensure evidence-based decision making.

The WFP support has resulted in a 26 percent increase in dietary diversity in school meals from 2019 to 2021, and 28 percent increase in the use of locally available food for school meals, benefiting 100,000 schoolchildren, annually.

Healthy diets

In 2022, WFP and MoESD carried out research into the dietary behaviours of schoolchildren, developing a national Social Behaviour Change (SBC) Strategy and strengthening the capacity of kitchen staff and mess committee to improve the dietary and health practices of schoolchildren. The SBC strategy promotes nutritious diets, including integrating nutrition and health education into the school curriculum, a children's TV show, and media advocacy campaigns.

WFP partners with civil society organizations like the Tarayana Foundation to advocate for and support healthy diets among rural and vulnerable populations.

Food fortification

WFP supports the development of Bhutan's food fortification regulatory framework and compliance mechanisms through technical assistance and capacity strengthening to ensure food safety and quality.

With the successful introduction of fortified rice as a public health strategy to address micronutrient deficiencies among schoolchildren using the NSFNP as a platform, WFP continues to support the government to scale-up the use of fortified rice to reach other vulnerable populations, including monastic institutions, and to gradually introduce fortified rice through the open market. WFP also supports the government in its plan to explore fortification of other staple foods in addition to the fortified rice. With these foundations, WFP, together with the government, will sustainably expand the consumption of fortified foods in Bhutan.

