



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief October 2023



Food preparation training. Photo: WFP/ Kencho Wangmo

Operational Context

As Bhutan transitions out of the least developed country category by the end of 2023, WFP's support remains critical to the transition process.

The national poverty rate, as measured by the international poverty line of US\$1.9 per person per day, decreased from 23 percent in 2007 to 8.2 percent in 2017 and again increased to 12.4 in 2022.

Although the population's overall nutritional status has improved, there is a 'triple burden of malnutrition' with undernutrition, overnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. These are related to a lack of knowledge and access to nutritious and diversified foods.

Bhutan remains highly vulnerable to climate shocks but lacks the necessary data information systems, response plans and coordination systems to adequately prepare for emergencies.

WFP has been in Bhutan since 1974.



Population: **0.76 million**

Chronic malnutrition: **21% of children under five**

Income Level: **Low-income**

2021/22 Human Development Index: **124 out of 183 countries**

Highlights

- In partnership with relevant government agencies WFP continued its training programme on school feeding management, carried out a survey on knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) around healthy diets, and conducted a cooking competition as a part of social behaviour change (SBC) eat smart, be smart campaign.

Operational Update

- WFP and the Health and Wellbeing Division of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development trained 158 cooks, 83 mess-in-charges, 1 Principal and 3 district education officers from 83 schools in Dagana, Zhemgang, Sarpang and Samtse districts. Participants learnt about the basic concepts of nutrition, food safety, hygiene, and sanitation with proper preparation of healthy and nutritious school meals, food store management, bookkeeping and reporting requirements for the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme. The training to these participants from the four districts marked the successful completion of one of the capacity strengthening activities funded by KOICA for a project ending 31 December 2023. In total, 547 school cooks and 234 mess-in-charges were trained during the entire project period 2019-2023.
- WFP, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, carried out an endline KAP survey from 29 September to 6 October in 15 schools in Chhukha and Thimphu districts. With a sample size of 390 randomly selected schoolchildren, the survey measured knowledge, attitude, and practices around healthy diets after the exposure of SBC package consisting of interactive activities and social media campaign developed and piloted during July to October 2023. Findings will inform the Ministry of Education and Skills Development, WFP, and Ministry of Health on designing a scale-up of SBC package to improve dietary habits of school children in Bhutan.

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WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan (2019 – 2023)		
Total Requirement (in US\$)	Allocated contributions (in US\$)	November 2023 – April 2024 net funding requirements (in US\$)
9.53 M	9.95 M*	0.1 M

*Allocated contributions including long term contribution for implementing activities in multiple years.

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 national school nutrition programme based on an integrated approach to school feeding that connects school feeding with nutrition education, school health and school agriculture, 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 the 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 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.

Donors

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), First-line of Defence (USAID), Global Logistics Cluster support, WFP internal funds, Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme

- As part of the SBC campaign, “eat khe-ta, be se-ta” (eat smart, be smart), WFP, Ministry of Education and Skills Development and Ministry of Health held a cooking competition among the 15 pilot schools in Chhukha and Thimphu. The contestants were students who took the challenge of healthy cooking because eating khe-ta (smart) starts from cooking khe-ta (smart). The video of the competition between the top three school teams will be shared through the Ministry of Education and Skills Development's social media channels.
- With the Department of Local Governance and Disaster Management, WFP organized a workshop to develop a standardized unified disaster assessment form which will be applied by all relevant agencies for timely and effective disaster response by evaluating the current system for data collection and submission. This will be connected to the established 72-Hours Rapid Assessment System in the Department of Local Governance and Disaster Management.
- WFP supported the National Statistics Bureau to conduct Bhutan Statistical Database System (BSDS) rollout training for the newly recruited Gewog Agriculture Extension Officers and District Statistical Officers from 30 – 31 October 2023. The main objective of training was to train the new recruits on the usage of the public dashboard, validate data and enter data into the BSDS system. It was also used to identify and appoint District Statistical Officers as the BSDS focal point in their respective Districts. A total of 51 participants comprising 10 women and 41 men attended the training.



Students at Dechencholing Higher Secondary School observing the international day for disaster risk reduction. Photo: WFP/ Dechen Pem