



WFP EVALUATION



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Evaluation of Bhutan WFP Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Evaluation Report – Volume I

OEV/2022/028

December 2022

Acknowledgements

The evaluation team is very grateful for the support and guidance provided throughout the evaluation process by Soo Mee Baumann and Catrina Perch (Evaluation Managers), Andrea Cook (Director of Evaluation) and Sameera Ashraf (Monitoring and Evaluation Officer) at the Office of Evaluation. The team would also like to thank the country office in Thimphu, the regional bureau in Bangkok and the Internal Reference Group for their support on this CSPE. Additionally, the team would like to express gratitude to all the key informants from WFP staff, WFP partners and beneficiaries who have made themselves available to contribute to the exercise, providing information and insights.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Evaluation features

1. The evaluation of the Bhutan country strategic plan (CSP) for 2019–2023 was conducted between April and December 2022 and covered the implementation of the CSP from January 2019 until July 2022, as well as the design phase for the transitional interim CSP in 2018.
2. An independent external team conducted the evaluation using mixed methods and drawing on monitoring data, document reviews and over 60 interviews, together with field observations and focus group discussions with community members. The findings, conclusions and recommendations were discussed with internal and external stakeholders at two online workshops held in October and November 2022.
3. The main users of the CSP evaluation are the WFP Bhutan country office, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, technical units at WFP headquarters and the Royal Government of Bhutan, as well as other United Nations entities, civil society organizations, knowledge partners and donor agencies.

Context

4. Bhutan is a landlocked country with a population of over 650,118,¹ of whom an estimated 24 percent are under the age of 15.² Around 43 percent of the population live in urban areas.³
5. Bhutan's strong economic growth and social sector investments resulted in a reduction in poverty rates from 23 percent in 2007 to 8 percent in 2017. In 2022, however, poverty increased to 12.4 percent⁴ as a result of border closures related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which had significant negative consequences for the economy, especially the tourism sector. Bhutan is expected to graduate to the status of a lower-middle-income country by late 2023.⁵
6. Bhutan is a food-deficit country that is highly dependent on food imports from neighbouring countries.⁶ While agriculture supports the food security and livelihoods of more than half the population, only 3 percent of the total land area is utilized for that purpose.⁷ The country is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, with temperatures in the Himalayan region forecast to increase three times more than the global average.⁸
7. Bhutan faces the triple burden of malnutrition – with the co-existence of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overnutrition – and persistently high rates of stunting in children.
8. The net primary school enrolment rate is high, at 93.5 percent, with no significant gender disparities.⁹

¹ Royal Government of Bhutan National Statistics Bureau. 2022. [Bhutan Living Standard Survey Report 2022](#).

² United Nations Population Fund. 2022. [World Population Dashboard – Bhutan](#) (accessed in November 2022).

³ World Bank. 2021. [Urban population \(% of total population\) – Bhutan](#) (accessed in November 2022).

⁴ Royal Government of Bhutan National Statistics Bureau. 2022. [Poverty Analysis Report](#) (accessed in November 2023).








⁵ Royal Government of Bhutan. 2021. *Twelfth Five-Year Plan (2018–2023). Mid-term review report* (not available online).

⁶ United Nations System in Bhutan. 2018. [Common Country Analysis \(Bhutan\)](#).

⁷ Royal Government of Bhutan Gross National Happiness Commission. 2021. [Transformations for Sustainable Development in the 21st Century – Bhutan's Second Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

TABLE 1: SOCIOECONOMIC INDICATORS			
	Indicator	Value	Year
	Total population (1)	650 118	2022
	Life expectancy at birth (years) (2)	72	2021
	Agriculture, forestry and fishing contribution to gross domestic product (%) (3)	19.2	2021
	Percentage of households reporting “poor” or “borderline” food consumption (%) (4)	8	2015
	Prevalence of stunting (moderate and severe) in children under 5 (%) (5)	21.2	2015
	Gender Inequality Index score (6)	0.42	2021
	Net primary school enrolment rate (%) (7)	93.5	2021

Sources: (1) Royal Government of Bhutan National Statistics Bureau. 2022. [Bhutan Living Standard Survey Report 2022](#); (2, 3) World Bank. 2021. [World Bank Data – Bhutan](#); (4, 5) Royal Government of Bhutan Ministry of Health. 2015. [National Nutrition Survey 2015](#); (6) United Nations Development Programme. 2022. [Human Development Report 2021–2022. Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World](#); (7) Royal Government of Bhutan Ministry of Education – Policy and Planning Division. 2021. [Annual Education Statistics 2021](#).

WFP country strategic plan

9. Until the end of 2018, WFP's main focus in Bhutan had been to support the national school feeding and nutrition programme (NSFNP). The transitional interim CSP for the period January–December 2018 was largely a continuation of previous projects, supporting the Government in its delivery of the NSFNP. One key strategic change, however, was the decision to phase out in-kind assistance for the NSFNP by the end of 2018. The CSP for

2019–2023 introduced a shift to capacity strengthening alone, with two strategic outcomes focused on support for the NSFNP, on the one hand, and for emergency preparedness measures on the other.

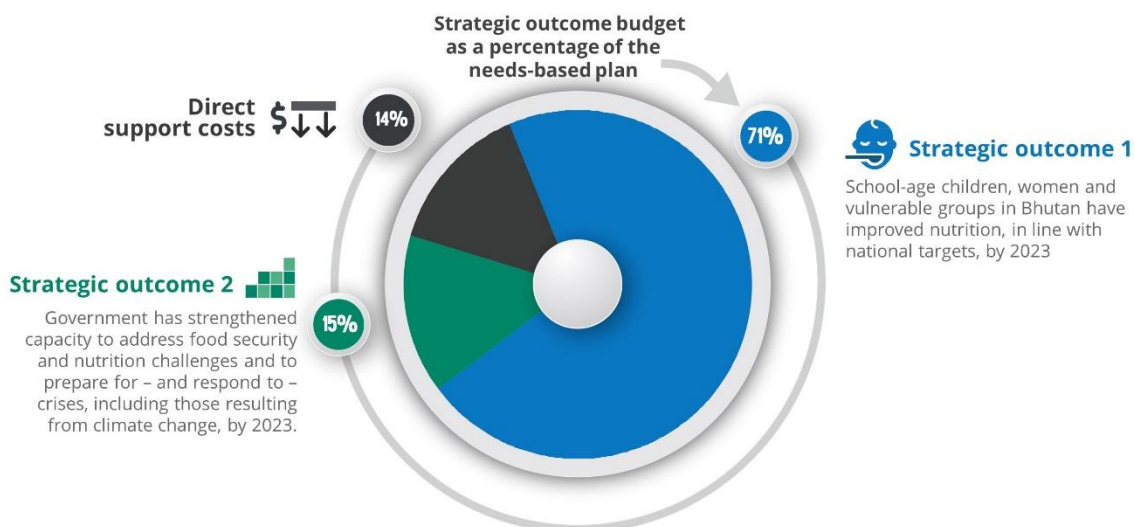
10. Activity 1 under strategic outcome 1 included capacity strengthening aimed at ensuring that children had access to quality meals at school, accompanied by a broader integrated package of health and nutrition services. In parallel, WFP engaged in initiatives that linked local farmers to schools in order to provide schoolchildren with meals made with locally produced fresh food items and to generate income for local farmers. From 2020 onwards, the support for smallholder farmers was geographically expanded and evolved into support for agricultural value chain development, with the introduction of several sub-activities not originally included in the CSP, partly in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

11. Activity 2 under the same strategic outcome included the provision of technical assistance at the policy level to ensure the quality and safety of fortified foods.

12. Activity 3 under strategic outcome 2 covered emergency preparedness, disaster management and coordination, together with the provision of technical support, training and infrastructure for data preparedness.

13. The CSP had a total budget of USD 8.4 million, excluding indirect support costs. By August 2022, 65 percent of the needs-based plan (USD 5.4 million) had been resourced. Earmarked contributions amounted to USD 4.2 million and were primarily earmarked at the activity level. Expenditure totalled USD 2.99 million (36 percent of the needs-based plan and 55 percent of total allocated resources). The Republic of Korea and Canada were the major donors, with smaller allocations received from internal WFP sources, a combination of bilateral and private donors and the Royal Government of Bhutan.

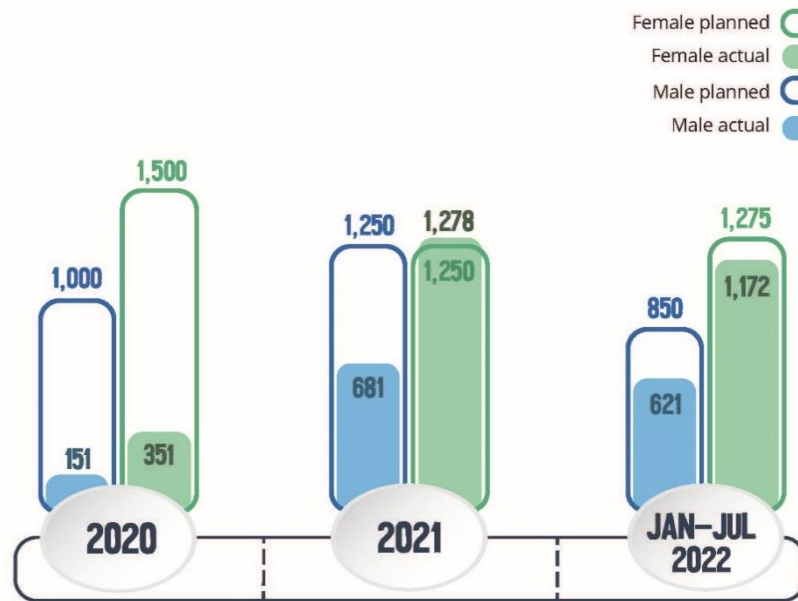
Figure 1: Bhutan country strategic plan (2019–2023) strategic outcomes, budget, funding and expenditure



Source: Country portfolio budget resources overview report. The needs-based plan for the full CSP cycle allocated resources until December 2022 and expenditures until August 2022. Indirect support costs are excluded.

14. No direct beneficiaries were targeted to receive food assistance or cash-based transfers under the CSP. The country office planned to assist 9,000 smallholder farmers through capacity-strengthening interventions over the full CSP implementation period. WFP reached 20 percent of those farmers in 2020, 77 percent in 2021 and 84 percent in the period January–June 2022.

Figure 2: Actual versus planned beneficiaries by gender (2020–July 2022)



Source: Annual country reports for 2020 and 2021 and country office data for 2022

Evaluation findings

To what extent is the country strategic plan evidence-based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable?

Alignment with national priorities and relevance to needs

15. The choices underpinning the CSP design are built on and consistent with studies on nutrition by international partners, such as the World Health Organization and the World Bank, and specific assessments by WFP including on the linkages between agriculture and schools. The CSP was fully aligned with selected national key results areas under Bhutan’s twelfth five-year development plan (2018–2023), as well as with key public policy documents such as the *Food and Nutrition Security Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2014*,¹⁰ which emphasized the need for a shift in focus from food to nutrition. The alignment of disaster risk management activities was ensured through participation in the national logistics preparedness working group and supporting the Government in the development of national “road maps” for emergency logistics. The emergency telecommunications cluster also set out to develop a road map, but it needs to be revisited in the light of the Government’s shifting priorities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

16. Alignment on gender issues was ensured through linkages with the national plan of action for gender for 2008–2013¹¹ and the 2020 national gender equality policy.¹²

17. While the CSP did not involve the targeting of in-kind assistance, the technical assistance activities were aimed at helping to improve the Government’s capacity to address the needs of the most vulnerable in Bhutan.

Internal coherence

18. The CSP fits in with the priorities of – and reflects many of the comparative advantages cited in – the WFP strategic plan for 2017–2021. While its line of sight provided a clear overview of the two strategic outcomes, its vertical structure, coupled with the absence of a full-fledged theory of change, led to a “siloeed” design and its implementation has involved limited interlinkages between the two outcomes. An

¹⁰ Royal Government of Bhutan. 2014. [Food and Nutrition Security Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 2014](#).

¹¹ Royal Government of Bhutan National Commission for Women and Children. 2008. [National Plan of Action for Gender 2008–2013](#).

¹² Royal Government of Bhutan National Commission for Women and Children. 2020. [National Gender Equality Policy 2020](#).

attempt is being made to improve the interlinkages by introducing climate-resilient agricultural value chain activities that connect school nutrition with disaster preparedness work.

External coherence

19. Through the CSP WFP has contributed to the implementation of the Bhutan United Nations sustainable development partnership framework for 2019–2023. While there has been good strategic positioning in the areas of school nutrition and rice fortification, however, some overlapping with other agencies has been found in the disaster risk management sector. WFP has worked with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on joint advocacy and policy development work, and with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on agriculture-related activities. Other activities were mostly implemented to provide unilateral support to the Government.

Adaptation to changing needs

20. WFP Bhutan has positioned itself as a key support agency and has continued to engage over time with the main public sector entities. It has remained strategically relevant to the NSFP, even after the latter’s successful transition to a fully government-operated programme. The focus on agriculture has allowed it to respond to the changing context and support the Government’s goal of food self-sufficiency, established as a priority in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What are the extent and quality of WFP’s specific contribution to the country strategic plan’s strategic outcomes in Bhutan?

Strategic outcome 1

21. Government capacity strengthening has been most effective in the areas of school nutrition and rice fortification, where WFP support has resulted in strong systems effectively managed by the Ministry of Education and the Food Corporation of Bhutan Ltd. This has been achieved through a combination of support for policymaking and coordination processes, systems-building activities, staff training and improvements to school infrastructure such as kitchens and storage facilities.

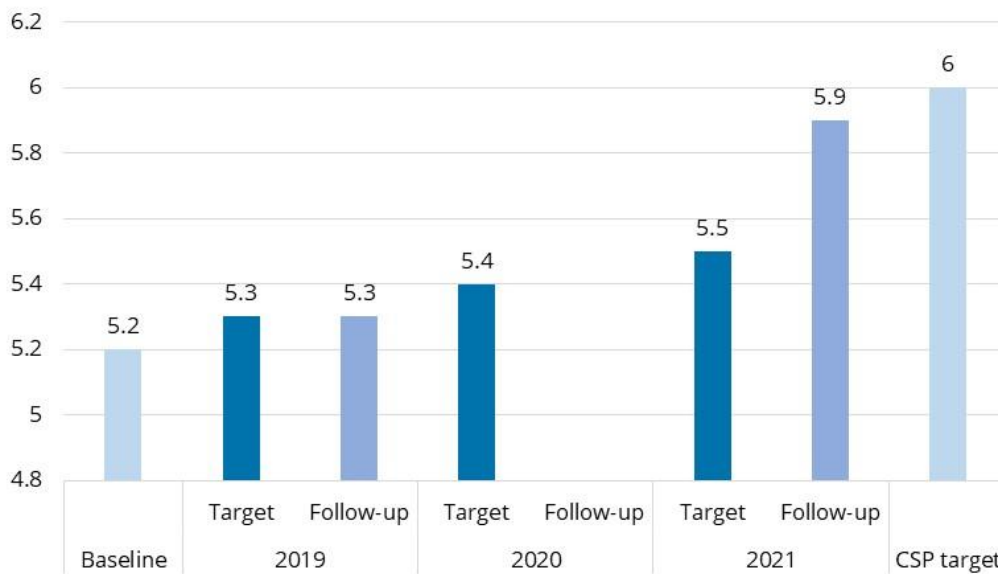
22. At the policy level, WFP has supported the drafting of the national school feeding and nutrition strategy for 2019–2030, the national nutrition strategy and action plan for 2021–2025, the standards for fortified rice kernels and the 2040 renewable natural resources strategy. Capacity-strengthening support has also been provided to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock for its policymaking and agricultural marketing systems.

23. There is some evidence of improvements in access to – and the nutritional quality of – school meals. WFP’s advocacy led to a 50 percent increase in the monthly stipend for school meals, which nonetheless remains insufficient to ensure balanced nutrition owing to inflation.

24. WFP also launched the “school menu planner plus” online menu creation platform, which is designed to help create cost-efficient meals with nutritious locally sourced foods. Initial findings showed a 20 percent reduction in costs and a 60 percent increase in the consumption of fresh local produce by schoolchildren. However, further work is required to tailor portions to meet the children’s needs by age and sex. The procurement of some livestock products, such as meat, dairy products and eggs, has also been challenging owing to seasonal fluctuations in availability.

25. Dietary diversity improved considerably for children at boarding schools, having already come close to reaching the target values set for the end of 2023 by the end of 2021. All school meals contain fortified rice.

Figure 3: School meals programme – dietary diversity



Source: Annual country reports for the period 2019–2021. Dietary diversity data for school meals were not collected in 2020, as the majority of schools remained closed throughout the year.

26. Links between farmers and schools improved but some gaps remain. The proportion of perishable foods in the school meals produced by local farmers increased from 36 percent in 2019 to 64 percent in 2021.¹³ However, the full use of the school menu planner plus platform was hampered by the lack of availability of required vegetables, partly because farmers had opted to grow different crops or sell to the market for more attractive prices.¹⁴ In some instances, that led to schools substituting some vegetables and possibly compromising the nutritional value of the meals.

27. WFP initiatives to promote an integrated approach to nutrition, such as by supporting the national social and behaviour change communication strategy and pilot projects on the dissemination of nutrition messages, are in their initial stages but on the right track.

28. WFP introduced various platforms for the monitoring of the NSFNP, which caused some confusion. A WFP mobile data collection and analytics platform introduced in 2019 was replaced in 2020 by a mobile data analytics platform, which has since been replaced with the education management information system (EMIS) for the Ministry of Education. While the latter system was considered useful by users, there are implementation gaps at the school level and data is often not updated owing to a lack of time and issues related to connectivity and information technology, particularly in rural schools. For agriculture support, WFP relies on data collected through the monitoring systems of government partners; that data is generally considered adequate.

29. On rice fortification, WFP adopted a systems-oriented approach to facilitate the institutionalization of sustainable regulatory, technical and infrastructural provisions in order to ensure that the fortified rice delivered to schools and introduced into the supply chain was safe. Specifically, WFP provided technical and financial assistance for the Food Corporation of Bhutan Ltd. to establish a turnkey rice fortification plant; and capacity-strengthening support for the Bhutan standards bureau, including policy advice on the amended food act and for the development of rice fortification standards, and for Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority, to ensure the regulatory monitoring of fortified rice.

Strategic outcome 2

30. Implementation under strategic outcome 2 focused on technical support and training on the use of disaster impact assessment tools and studies, which were the main outputs. Owing to funding challenges,

¹³ WFP. 2022. [Annual country report 2021: Bhutan](#).

¹⁴ Stakeholder interview.

most of the activities were discrete pieces of work undertaken to support the Department of Disaster Management, with follow-up work required for further integration and use of the tools and studies. Support for the 72-hour rapid assessment approach, which is used to estimate the likely impacts of a disaster and enable a response within 72 hours, was appreciated by partners. However, it was also noted that prototype products needed to be properly customized to the local context. In some cases, uptake was slow owing to shifting government priorities, WFP's failure to engage with the right stakeholders from the start, such as for earthquake impact assessments, and a lack of clarity on scoping and the roles and responsibilities of government actors, such as in studying the impacts of glacial lake outburst flooding.

31. WFP facilitated regular coordination among partners as a leader of the emergency logistics group and the emergency telecommunications workshop. In response to requests from the Government, various items of infrastructure and equipment were provided for use in the national COVID-19 pandemic response. WFP also supported the drafting of a road map for disaster risk management for 2022–2026, but the document has yet to be endorsed; the endorsement of a national disaster risk management road map and increased government commitment to and financial resources for its implementation are crucial to the integration of WFP's work into government systems.

Contribution to cross-cutting aims

Gender equality

32. WFP is promoting gender equality as a cross-cutting aim through its initiatives on school nutrition and agricultural value chains. Progress on the inclusion of gender considerations in disaster management work has been limited.

33. WFP contributes to efforts to address the nutrition challenges of a majority of school-age children in a gender-sensitive way, with better results achieved for girls than for boys.¹⁵ School meals programme stipends and meal planning, however, are based on flat rates, irrespective of age group or sex-related nutritional needs.

34. Two thirds of the farmers participating in agricultural value chain development activities were women, which is in line with rural demographic patterns. The evaluation noted that increased agriculture production for women farmers led to diversified household diets and higher incomes from selling surplus produce. However, there was no evidence of any broader transformative – or other gender-differentiated – effects for women. That may be because such effects take time to materialize. WFP and IFAD have been working together on future initiatives to maximize opportunities for women farmers in agricultural value chains, with activities such as business development training, leadership training, grant-matching schemes and job-creation techniques, alongside efforts to reduce women's workloads.

Environment

35. Bhutan is the only carbon-neutral country in the world and environmental sustainability is high on the national agenda. Accordingly, environmental sustainability features highly in the CSP and most activities are assessed as having sufficiently contributed to climate change adaptation. Examples include connecting local farmers to schools to avoid centralized procurement for school meals; identifying the shortest supply routes for delivering dry foods to schools; and providing farmers with green technologies, such as low-cost polyhouses and rainwater harvesting equipment.

Sustainability

36. Highly relevant to national policies and firmly embedded in government institutions, WFP's country capacity strengthening achievements in the areas of school nutrition, rice fortification and agriculture are mostly sustainable. The prospects for the sustainability of disaster risk management activities, despite their initial alignment with government plans, are lower. As most social and behaviour change communication work is still in its early stages, its sustainability will depend on how the results and lessons generated are applied to advocacy and policy support, and the extent to which the Government adopts and integrates them into national systems, in particular in the education and health sectors.

¹⁵ Royal Government of Bhutan Ministry of Education – Policy and Planning Division. 2021. [Annual Education Statistics 2021](#).

To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

Timeliness

37. Notwithstanding the delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, most CSP outputs were delivered on time, albeit with some variations between activities. In 2021, implementation resumed for most of the activities that had been halted or scaled down after the onset of the pandemic. However, some activities, including support for rice fortification and disaster risk management, did not achieve the planned output levels owing to difficulties linked to access to financing and reprioritization by the Government. The outputs delivered were considered to have been of the expected quality by stakeholders.

Coverage

38. WFP engaged with all the relevant public sector institutions, as originally intended, although to varying degrees. Decision making on the selection of final NSNFP beneficiaries was undertaken by government counterparts, with generally limited influence on the part of WFP. The programme reached a large share of all schoolchildren (64.5 percent). WFP and UNICEF are also advocating the inclusion of monastic institutions in the programme in order to improve its coverage of more disadvantaged households. However, WFP has not yet focused on advocacy in relation to disability inclusion for the school meals programme.

39. For its agricultural activities, WFP focused on farmers in five districts not already covered by the other Rome-based agencies. The 9,000 smallholder farmers targeted represent an estimated 5.7 percent of all persons employed in agriculture, which is similar to the planned coverage of initiatives by the other Rome-based agencies (4.5 percent targeted by IFAD and 8.5 percent by FAO). Farmers were selected by agricultural extension officers, in coordination with district and regional offices, and were not consulted on the targeting criteria. Given the funding constraints, the geographic division has proved efficient and fair for the target population but does not maximize the synergies between the agencies. In agriculture and disaster risk management, WFP helped to enhance the Government's capacity to generate data for more informed decision making on beneficiary targeting. The underlying data, tools and approaches, however, have not yet been finalized or applied in practice.

Cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness

40. Channelling WFP support through administrative structures at the national and local levels was cost-effective. The CSP's strong focus on country capacity strengthening meant that very few physical goods were directly procured by WFP. Nevertheless, the country office adopted a range of both standard and innovative measures and systems to maximize the economic benefits of acquiring inputs for its own country capacity strengthening activities, as well as for interventions implemented by national and local counterparts. For instance, it sought to enhance cost-efficiency by seeking support from the WFP Dubai Office to reduce transaction costs for the procurement of mobile storage units, and from WFP Management Services Engineering Branch in Rome to reduce the cost of redesigning school kitchens and storage facilities. The sourcing of premises for training and accommodation through government partners and the local procurement of agricultural inputs and equipment also helped to reduce costs.

41. Table 2 compares the annual direct support costs – a proxy for the implementation-related fixed costs, largely associated with staff costs – to the total direct costs (the sum of direct support costs and total direct operational costs). The ratio was higher than expected in 2019, reflecting the start-up costs for the new country capacity strengthening approach. It improved in 2020 but then deteriorated again in 2021, owing to limited funding. The country office will require additional funding to restore the balance.

**TABLE 2: DIRECT SUPPORT COSTS AND TOTAL DIRECT COSTS, BY YEAR AND ACTIVITY
(PLANNED VERSUS ACTUAL)**

Year	Direct support costs (as a percentage of total direct costs)		Direct support costs (USD)		Total direct costs (USD)					
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Activity 1		Activity 2		Activity 3	
					Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
2019	9.43	16.11	194 767	84 001	1 227 507	312 942	341 233	42 275	301 972	82 165
2020	8.39	3.96	152 983	60 727	1 124 134	1 197 993	263 121	141 166	282 260	134 865
2021	14.06	42.66	229 112	160 436	1 043 794	191 462	130 028	68	226 634	24 114

Source: Bhutan annual country reports for the period 2019–2021 (data extracted on 23 May 2022). The “planned” figures represent those in the needs-based plan.

What are the factors that explain WFP’s performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected under the country strategic plan?

Resource mobilization

42. The shift to a CSP model has not had the intended impact on resource mobilization, as funding has remained heavily earmarked at the activity level, with considerable variation in the adequacy of the resources received. This has proven challenging for medium-term planning. Access to financing for capacity strengthening constitutes a specific challenge for the country office. Externally, there is limited donor interest owing to the imminent graduation of Bhutan to lower-middle-income status and a lack of physical presence in the country on the part of bilateral donors. At the time of the evaluation, an integrated resource mobilization strategy for more strategic, effective and efficient fundraising was being prepared.

Monitoring and reporting

43. Monitoring and reporting systems based on corporate guidance have proven to be of limited utility to decision-making by the country office in Bhutan. The use of corporate performance indicators facilitates aggregation and comparison with results in other countries, but it has not provided more detailed, context-specific, information on programme performance on the ground. At the same time, output and outcome indicators are not embedded in a clear overarching results chain and there are data gaps, such as for the Systems Approach for Better Educational Results indicator used to assess national school feeding capacity (due to a lack of funding) and the emergency preparedness capacity index in regard to national emergency preparedness capacity (due to a lack of interest on the part of national stakeholders). Relevant indicators based on corporate guidance were added to the CSP logical framework for the recently expanded focus on agriculture, but monitoring systems rely on government sources and there are gaps in the joint work with the Government on process monitoring.

Partnerships

44. Partnerships with counterpart government departments, which have expanded considerably under the CSP, have been effective and relevant. Examples include the longstanding partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Food Corporation of Bhutan Ltd. in the field of school nutrition, and collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives on the agriculture portfolio. Interaction with the Department of Disaster Management and other actors is ongoing, but most of the activities to date have been of a one-off nature. There is a need to re-engage with national partners on rice fortification and emergency telecommunications, given the changes in the Government’s priorities.

45. Overall, most support for the Government was provided without the involvement of other United Nations entities. Collaboration with other United Nations entities has mainly consisted of joint advocacy and policy development support, with some good results achieved through collaboration with UNICEF and UNDP on the national nutrition strategy and action plan for 2021–2025 and in the COVID-19 pandemic response. WFP was unable to build close working relations with FAO owing to the small size of the FAO country office,

but collaboration with FAO and IFAD did result in the participation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock in the 2021 United Nations food systems summit. WFP and IFAD have jointly mobilized project resources for smallholder agriculture work, which is a positive step towards ensuring synergies between the Rome-based agencies so that they complement each other in a food-systems approach across geographical areas.

46. The CSP does include some South–South and triangular cooperation, linking government agencies with counterparts in India and some international agri-food sector companies, but WFP’s role has been rather limited.

Human resources

47. WFP’s workforce in Bhutan grew from 8 staff in 2018 to 20 in 2022, in line with its expanding portfolio. Human resource capacity is for the most part sufficient to deliver the planned support to the NSFNP and operationalize the logistics and supply chain work. Expertise in agriculture is in line with WFP’s expanding role, but the number of staff is inadequate for the recently expanded portfolio. Hiring more long-term staff to deliver the capacity strengthening initiatives, in spite of the efficiency-related trade-offs that this entails, demonstrates WFP’s commitment to taking a medium-term approach.

Conclusions

48. **Achievements.** WFP has performed well in delivering the planned outcomes for all three areas of work.

49. Efforts in the areas of school nutrition and rice fortification have resulted in strong systems, fully owned by national stakeholders, which have contributed to the improved nutritional quality of school menus. The work to support social and behaviour change communication on nutrition is on the right track but only in its initial stages. The agricultural value chain work has benefitted farmers and cooperatives and WFP assistance has led to the integration of useful country capacity strengthening measures for policy design and monitoring. The joint advocacy by the Rome-based agencies was considered successful in engaging local stakeholders and initiating policy shifts towards a food systems approach. Contributions to disaster risk management were more dispersed in nature, but the outputs delivered are likely to strengthen national capacity. WFP’s internal capacity in relation to data systems has enabled the systematized generation of reliable data, but efforts are ongoing and there is room for further tailoring the tools and approaches to the local country context.

50. The CSP has contributed to the mainstreaming of environmental considerations across the entire portfolio, particularly in WFP’s work on agriculture and disaster risk management. While the mainstreaming of gender and social inclusion has varied across activities, the support provided for school nutrition and agriculture is contributing to gender equality and social inclusion for beneficiaries. However, the broader gender-transformative effects have not yet been identified. There is a need to devote greater attention to disability inclusion in the school meals programme. The focus on integrating the principles of disability, gender and social inclusion into the disaster risk management area of work has been limited. The focus on country capacity strengthening suggests that most of the results achieved are sustainable yet dependent on government priority-setting and the availability of sector-specific resources and capacity.

51. **Strategic focus and alignment.** The CSP is adequately aligned with the priorities in Bhutan’s twelfth five-year plan (2018–2023) and relevant sector policies. While school feeding is still seen as WFP’s main contribution to addressing the country’s priority needs, WFP successfully responded to the request to provide support for agricultural value chain development when that was raised as a national priority. Engagement in the disaster risk management area of work has not been as impactful as hoped, however, owing to the fact that other government priorities have taken precedence in recent years. Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic has helped to position WFP as the main supplier of emergency logistics and has generated interest in its potential role as the main provider of support for agriculture from a disaster risk management perspective.

52. **External coherence.** Overall, there is good collaboration between WFP and other United Nations entities, although most activities are unilaterally implemented based on a division of labour among agencies that maximizes complementarities but diminishes synergies.

53. **Internal coherence and performance monitoring.** The lack of a theory of change has resulted in a disconnect between the strategic outcomes and attempts at integration have not fully materialized.

Outputs and outcomes are not embedded in a clear overarching results chain and there are monitoring gaps, especially in regard to data on capacity strengthening-related indicators. Moreover, corporate indicators, despite being standardized and well thought-out, have not always proven relevant to the context and lack an accompanying narrative. Annual reporting is limited and there are no systems in place to consolidate and document performance.

54. **Transaction costs and human resources.** Channelling assistance through government entities has been cost-efficient and has helped to strengthen – and to some extent develop – national and local administrative structures. WFP and the Government have successfully collaborated and innovated to maximize economies for input acquisition. The hiring of long-term staff incurred additional expenditure but is important for continuity.

55. **Financial resourcing.** The shift to a CSP model has not yet had the intended effect in terms of resource mobilization and funding is both limited and heavily earmarked at the activity level, which is a challenge that is only likely to increase as Bhutan approaches lower-middle-income status towards the end of 2023.

Recommendations

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	Optimal strategic focus and alignment with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals					
1.1	<p>The new country strategic plan should build on WFP's internal capacity and competitive advantages and be aligned with changing government priorities and capacity. The following key issues should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP Bhutan should focus on selected services that are important in meeting the population's needs and that match the Government's priorities (taking into consideration ongoing government reforms, absorption capacity and the next five-year plan). • WFP Bhutan should strike a balance between consolidating its work and expanding the scope of the country strategic plan in terms of the sectors that it addresses. It seems logical to take the next steps to support school nutrition (including its expansion to monastic schools) and social and behaviour change communication on healthy diets (which is clearly a priority area of work). • Support for agriculture should be increased within a food systems approach, building on the value proposition developed in the decentralized evaluation. • Future support on disaster risk management needs to be less fragmented, combining a role in advocacy and partner coordination with selected areas of country capacity strengthening support, in line with government priorities. 	Strategic	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau; headquarters	High	December 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.2	<p>Develop a theory of change together with the country strategic plan line of sight.</p> <p>WFP Bhutan has shown that it has the capacity to achieve results in terms of the quantity, timeliness and quality of its support. The challenge to be met for the next country strategic plan is to shift to a more integrated portfolio with maximized economies within the portfolio, as well as in relation to country office staffing (see recommendation 4). To adopt a more integrated country strategic plan, WFP Bhutan should develop a theory of change so as to better identify inter-sectoral connections (links between country strategic plan outcomes and synergies) and to provide insight into the institutional and individual/household-level outcomes and outputs.</p> <p>The theory of change should also identify the key assumptions and risks, in particular in relation to the ongoing public sector reforms. It is also suggested that an annual check be established to review progress in country strategic plan implementation based on the theory of change and line of sight.</p>	Strategic	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau and headquarters, as needed	High	December 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.3	<p>Build on existing evidence and address evidence gaps, taking into account the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFP Bhutan should invest in a set of needs assessment studies to address evidence gaps, with attention paid to the generation of baseline data on institutional capacity and gaps, including in relation to the challenges at the school and district levels concerning the integration of the Mobile Operational Data Acquisition-based monitoring system for the national school feeding and nutrition programme into the education management information system, and to identify the capacity development needs of teaching staff in relation to the expansion of social and behaviour change communication on nutrition through schools. A study should be undertaken on how best to (further) integrate gender and disability inclusion across the portfolio. The next country strategic plan should indicate that the key evidence gaps will be filled in collaboration with the relevant government counterpart agencies. 	Strategic and operational	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau; headquarters; the Government; other United Nations agencies; civil society and non-governmental organizations in Bhutan	High	July 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase, and during the implementation of the next CSP

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2	Achieve better harmonization with other United Nations entities and processes					
2.1	<p>Develop a partnership strategy to position WFP Bhutan more clearly in relation to other United Nations entities.</p> <p>Develop a partnership strategy, with a focus on maximizing complementarities with other United Nations agencies – both for programmatic work, in line with the results of the ongoing common country analysis process and the next United Nations sustainable development partnership framework, and for operational aspects, as part of the rollout of the United Nations' Business Operations Strategy – and with service providers (civil society and non-governmental organizations, academia and private sector actors). In particular, WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek further collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund on social and behaviour change communication on nutrition – to ensure that messages are coherent for key nutrition target groups across the life cycle, with a focus on adolescent girls and boys as future parents – and on disability-inclusive schools; • advocate for the development of a common Rome-based agency approach to country capacity strengthening and further explore joint resource mobilization opportunities; and • explore opportunities for joint advocacy on disaster risk management with selected partners, including the United Nations Development Programme. 	Strategic	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau; headquarters; the Government; other United Nations agencies; civil society and non-governmental organizations in Bhutan; academic institutions; private sector actors	High	Throughout 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.2	Continue engagement in technical working groups. Continued engagement in the relevant sectoral technical working groups – on social and behaviour change communication and emergency logistics – is recommended, as the working groups provide a good platform for coordination, knowledge-sharing and collaboration on advocacy and policy development with a wide range of actors.	Operational	Country Director, with the technical team	The Government; other United Nations agencies; civil society and non-governmental organizations in Bhutan	High	Ongoing
3	Enhance the management of development results, reporting and accountability and increase flexibility to plan for and respond to dynamic operational environment					
3.1	Review the result indicators and improve performance monitoring. Define, track and analyse a comprehensive set of indicators across all country strategic plan activities, including improved indicators for monitoring capacity strengthening and gender equality, disability and social inclusion. Draw on the updated corporate results framework and define and improve supplementary country-specific indicators to ensure monitoring coverage. For the remaining time under the current country strategic plan, it is suggested that WFP start collecting data on the Systems Approach for Better Education Results indicator.	Operational	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau; headquarters, as needed	High	Throughout 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3.2	<p>Develop a knowledge management plan.</p> <p>Develop a knowledge management plan and system for capturing, storing and disseminating relevant information internally and externally. Particular attention should be paid to generating and storing baseline and follow-up data, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improving the tracking of the inputs and outputs of country capacity strengthening efforts for the Government (reports on workshops and other training, joint field mission reports and so on); regularly preparing knowledge products (memos, case study papers, PowerPoint presentations, videos, blogs and so on) to present an analysis of data on the national school feeding and nutrition programme and an overview of insights gained from two years of support for smallholder farmers; and accompanying annual country reports with a more detailed annual report, or set of reports, for each area of work to support external advocacy while meeting internal requirements. 	Operational	Country Director; monitoring and evaluation officer; programme officers; communications and advocacy officer	Regional bureau; headquarters, as needed	High	From the annual country report for 2022 onwards

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4	Enhance resource mobilization					
4.1	<p>Strengthen and diversify the resource mobilization strategy.</p> <p>A strong resource mobilization strategy should include close collaboration with the Government and other partners on joint activities and should look beyond traditional bilateral donor agencies to explore options for gaining access to non-conventional and less competitive funding sources. Such options can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (further) technical collaboration; • corporate social responsibility funds; and • further work with international financial institutions and/or efforts to foster market linkages with private sector entities – especially in India or other countries in Asia – for engagement either with WFP Bhutan or directly with government agencies. <p>Rather than seeking to reap the rewards of ad-hoc opportunities, such arrangements should be based on clear decisions related to WFP's strategic positioning in Bhutan.</p>	Strategic	Country Director; budget and programme associate; programme officers	Regional bureau; headquarters	High	December 2022

1. Introduction

1. Effective partnerships across contexts form the core of the World Food Programme's (WFP) corporate shift to the country strategic plan (CSP) approach adopted in 2016. CSPs are aimed at bringing about systemic change in an internally coherent and coordinated way, with more in-built flexibility to respond to fluctuating circumstances and unforeseen emergencies. In line with the Global Call to Action of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), WFP through its CSPs is seeking increased external coherence and complementarities, with better alignment and integration of capacities and programmes with national Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, interventions and investments from governments, other United Nations (UN) agencies and actors from the private sector and civil society. CSPs provide a line of sight for how resources deployed translate into results achieved.¹⁶

2. As the new WFP Evaluation Policy 2022¹⁷ indicates, CSP evaluations (CSPEs) are to be implemented in the penultimate year of the CSP based on the principles of independence/impartiality, credibility and utility. The summary terms of reference (ToR)¹⁸ (Annex I) describe the evaluation's objectives in terms of evidence and learning on WFP performance for country-level strategic decisions, specifically for developing the new CSP, and for accountability to WFP stakeholders.

1.1. Evaluation features

3. In line with the terms of reference, the evaluation covered all WFP activities in Bhutan (including cross-cutting results) for the period from January 2019 until July 2022. The design period of the CSP during the transitional interim country strategic plan (T-ICSP) implementation in 2018 was also covered, in particular in relation to both the envisaged strategic shift towards a focus on strengthening government capacities only (no more direct implementation), and how the CSP builds on, or departs from, the previous activities, and what the consequences are.

4. The Bhutan CSPE was implemented in the period April–November 2022, with a desk review and two-week country mission (18-29 July), by an evaluation team (ET) composed of four members. The theory-based evaluation assessed WFP contributions to CSP strategic outcomes (SOs) and reconstructed a theory of change (ToC) on the causal relations among the implementation process and outputs of WFP activities, the operational environment and the changes observed at the outcome level, including unintended positive or negative consequences. This entailed analysis of the effectiveness and sustainability of the strategic shift by WFP away from direct implementation to a prime focus on country capacity strengthening activities, including WFP strategic positioning through operational partnerships, coordination and knowledge sharing. Also, the CSPE assessed how relevant and effective WFP has been in relation to integrating COVID-19 response actions, and their consequences for other interventions under the CSP. Finally, the CSPE assessed how efficiently resources were used in producing CSP results, as well as the role of internal and external factors in the performance of the CSP.

5. Cross-cutting dimensions and principles such as humanitarian principles; protection; accountability to affected populations (AAP); gender, equity, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI); and environment and climate change have also been focused in this evaluation.

6. The Bhutan CSPE builds on the results of the decentralized evaluation (DE) on WFP support to national policy development and pilot agriculture and food systems activities (SO1/Act1),¹⁹ and complemented those with findings for the period after the decentralized evaluation. Also, the CSPE integrates the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the mid-term review (MTR) of the Bhutan CSP²⁰ undertaken in the second half of 2021.

¹⁶ WFP. 2016. Policy on Country Strategic Plans.

¹⁷ WFP. 2022. Evaluation Policy 2022.

¹⁸ WFP. 2022. Evaluation of Bhutan WFP Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023), ToR.

¹⁹ WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

²⁰ Choden, T. 2021. Mid-Term Review of WFP Bhutan Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023), Final Report, December 2021.

7. The main users of the CSPE findings, conclusions and recommendations are expected to be the following direct stakeholders in the CSP, among others, as it feeds in to the next CSP design: WFP country office (CO), the regional bureau in Bangkok (RBB), headquarters (HQ) technical units including the Office of Evaluation, senior management, and the Executive Board (EB); the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB); the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) and United Nations agencies in Bhutan; civil society organizations (CSOs); knowledge institutes; and donor agencies. Annex II has a detailed overview of stakeholders.

8. The CSPE report has the following structure: an introductory chapter (evaluation features, country context, description of the CSP, evaluation methodology); Chapter 2 with findings structured around the main evaluation questions (EQs) (EQ1 on relevance and coherence, EQ2 on effectiveness, sustainability and connectedness, EQ3 on timeliness, coverage and efficiency, and EQ4 on explanatory factors); and Chapter 3 presenting conclusions and recommendations. The WFP Office of Evaluation will make the CSPE report available online, and the WFP Bhutan country office will inform final beneficiaries from supported government services or other activities under the CSP and their communities on key CSPE results.

1.2. Context²¹

General overview

9. The Kingdom of Bhutan is a landlocked country in the Eastern Himalayas (Annex III). The country has a population of over 650,118, of which 51.2 percent are women²² and 24 percent are under the age of 15.²³ It is estimated that around 43 percent of the population live in urban areas.²⁴ In 2020, the overall life expectancy was 71.6 years for men and 72.5 years for women.²⁵ The fertility rate is 1.9 and adolescent fertility rate is 16.²⁶

10. In 2008, Bhutan became a democratic constitutional monarchy²⁷ and since then it has conducted three national elections. Guided by the concept of “gross national happiness”, Bhutan’s strong economic growth and social sector investments have resulted in a reduction in poverty rates from 23 percent (2007) to 8 percent (2017), although variations in multidimensional poverty across *Dzongkhags* (districts)²⁸ and between rural and urban populations remain.²⁹ The poverty rate increased in 2022 to 12.4 percent.³⁰ Bhutan is set to graduate to lower middle-income country status in December 2023.³¹

11. Thanks to stringent containment measures and speedy vaccinations, Bhutan has been somewhat less affected than other countries by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the border closure (for in total 32 months) has had important negative consequences for the economy, especially the tourism sector. Non-hydro industrial activities were adversely impacted by foreign labour shortages and trade disruptions with India, Bhutan’s largest trading partner.^{32,33} The Government launched a significant social programme (Relief Kidu), the equivalent of a stimulus package, for struggling businesses and individual citizens. The United Nations country team (UNCT) developed the United Nations Bhutan COVID-19 Socioeconomic Response Plan (SERP) to complement and support the government response plans. Youth unemployment, which is a long-standing concern in Bhutan, was 20.9 percent in 2021.³⁴

²¹ Additional sectoral information is presented in Annex IV.

²² National Statistics Bureau, 2022. [Bhutan Living Standards Survey Report](#).

²³ UNFPA. 2022. World population Dashboard Bhutan. Accessed 11/2022.

²⁴ WB. 2021. WB Open Data. Accessed 09/2022.

²⁵ WB. 2020. WB Open Data. Accessed 09/2022.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB). 2008. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

²⁸ Dzongkhag refers to districts of which there are 20 in Bhutan.

²⁹ WB. 2020. Bhutan Development Update. Recent Trends in Poverty and Shared Prosperity: Progress and Challenges.

³⁰ RGoB. National Statistics Bureau. 2022. [Poverty Analysis Report](#)

³¹ ESCAP. 2020. MPFD Working Paper on Graduation of Bhutan from the group of least developed countries: Potential implication and policy imperatives.

³² UN System in Bhutan. 2020. UN Socioeconomic Response Plan 2020.

³³ UNDP in Bhutan. 2020. Rapid Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Bhutan's Tourism Sector.

³⁴ RGoB NSB. 2022. Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan 2021.

Food and nutrition security

12. Bhutan faces the triple burden of malnutrition with co-existence of undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies and overnutrition. While the nutritional status of children has improved over the years with wasting and being underweight prevalence reduced to 4 percent and 9 percent respectively, stunting has remained persistent at 21 percent and is at its highest (29 percent) in eastern Bhutan.³⁵ The number of people who are overweight/obese has been increasing among Bhutan's population (in 2019, 11 percent of Bhutanese were obese and 34 percent overweight), and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) linked to the rise in overnutrition and unhealthy consumption behaviours have rapidly increased.³⁶

13. Micronutrient deficiencies remain a major public health concern even although anaemia, a proxy indicator for micronutrient deficiencies, significantly dropped among children aged 6-59 months and among women of reproductive age (81 and 55 percent in 2003 to 44 and 35 percent in 2015 respectively).³⁷ More than 1 in 5 preschool-aged children (12–59 months) and 17 percent of pregnant women are deficient in vitamin A³⁸ and several outbreaks of vitamin B deficiencies have been reported among school-aged children (5-19 years).³⁹

14. In Bhutan, food insecurity affects rural households more than urban ones and varies among geographic locations depending on remoteness, economic activities, landholdings and productivity.⁴⁰ Rural households have considerably less diverse and less nutritious diets than urban households, and dietary diversity correlates with wealth status. In 2015, 8 percent of households in Bhutan had “poor” or “borderline” diets measured by the food consumption score (FCS).⁴¹

15. Bhutan is a food-deficit country and highly dependent on food imports, especially from neighbouring countries.⁴² According to the 2017 Bhutan Living Standards Survey, purchased food items, whether imported or domestically produced, account for at least two thirds of the total consumption expenditure of households in Bhutan in each major food category.⁴³ Recent price hikes are mainly associated with fuel price increases due to the conflict in Ukraine.⁴⁴

Agriculture

16. Bhutan's Second Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report (2021) highlights as a key concern the need to increase the currently 3 percent of total land area that is utilized for agriculture, considering that the sector supports the food security and livelihoods of more than half the population.⁴⁵ Agricultural production is low and primarily based on subsistence agriculture. Agriculture, forestry and fishing contributed 19.2 percent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020.⁴⁶

17. Challenges that affect agricultural production include: natural hazards, declining productivity, human-wildlife conflict, insufficient irrigation and farm labour shortages, as well as lack of access to technology and suitable financial products. Climate change is expected to hit agricultural productivity hard, leading to changes in both water availability and soil fertility and an increased incidence of pests and disease.⁴⁷ Marketing agriculture produce remains a challenge in terms of aggregation, quality control, post-

³⁵ RGoB MoH. 2015. Bhutan National Nutrition Survey.

³⁶ WHO/MoH. 2019. Noncommunicable Disease Risk Factors: Bhutan STEPS Survey Report, 2019.

³⁷ RGoB MoH. 2015. Bhutan National Nutrition Survey.

³⁸ WHO. 2009. Global Prevalence of Vitamin A Deficiency in Populations at Risk 1995–2005. WHO Global Database on Vitamin A Deficiency.

³⁹ WFP. 2021. WFP's Assistance to Nutrition in Bhutan (2019-2023).

⁴⁰ Royal University of Bhutan, College of Natural Resources. 2018. Literature Review on Food and Nutrition Security in Bhutan (not available online).

⁴¹ RGoB, MoH / UNICEF. 2015. National Nutrition Survey 2015.

⁴² UN System in Bhutan. 2018. Common Country Analysis (Bhutan).

⁴³ RGoB, NSB. 2017. Bhutan Living Standards Survey Report.

⁴⁴ Consumer Price Index in July increased to 6.61 percent from a year ago in July 2021, with a 0.08 percentage point increase in the rate compared to the previous month. Ref: RGoB, NSB. 2022. Consumer Price Index, August 2022.

⁴⁵ RGoB, GNHC. 2021. Transformations for Sustainable Development in the 21st Century - Bhutan's Second Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations High-Level Political Forum 2021.

⁴⁶ WB 2020. WB Open Data. Accessed 09/2022.

⁴⁷ IFAD in Bhutan.

harvest handling and packaging, storage and transportation to viable markets. Risks from heavy rainfall and landslides to infrastructure connecting farmers to markets and supply chains are commonplace and exacerbated by regular seismic events.⁴⁸

Climate change and vulnerability

18. Bhutan is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. Forecasters expect temperatures in the Himalayan region to increase by three times as much as the global average. Changing precipitation patterns and an accelerated rate of snow and glacier melts can have significant impacts on local livelihoods and infrastructure such as hydropower turbines, roads and irrigation systems.⁴⁹ Given the country's socioeconomic dependence on agriculture, water resources and forests, the impacts of climate change have the potential to undermine development efforts and threaten Bhutan's overall poverty reduction efforts.⁵⁰

19. Bhutan is vulnerable to various types of natural disasters:

- Around 18 earthquakes⁵¹ have hit Bhutan over the past 120 years, with an average magnitude of 6.3 on the Richter scale. While casualties have been few, there has been considerable material damage. The 2015 earthquake in Nepal has further raised awareness of potential impacts of earthquakes and the need for enhanced emergency preparedness and response (EPR).⁵²
- Glacial lake outburst flooding (GLOF), a consequence of global warming, has become a common phenomenon in the Punakha-Wangdi valley, where houses and bridges were on several occasions swept away, and pasture land was damaged. Flash flooding has also been a common consequence of heavy rainfalls. In 2004, nine lives were lost due to flooding and many houses washed away, affecting about 1,400 families.⁵³
- Landslides are a consequence of seasonal monsoons with material damages in villages and highways disrupted. One major landslide, resulting from an earthquake in the neighbouring Indian state of Sikkim, caused a loss of life in September 2011.
- Windstorms are also common in Bhutan, and their impact on roofs and crops, as well as schools and health centres, has affected thousands of households in more than 20 districts of the country.⁵⁴

Education

20. Bhutan has made remarkable progress in achieving the target of universal primary education. This is illustrated by statistics for 2021, with net enrolment rate in primary school of 93.5 percent (boys 92.2 percent, girls 94.9 percent); and secondary school of 75.3 percent (boys 70.7 percent, girls 79.8 percent).⁵⁵ Of the children out of school, a significant percentage are with disability.⁵⁶ However, while access to education has improved, there are still issues in terms of education quality and there is a need for fundamental reforms of the education system.⁵⁷ The adult literacy rate among the population 15 years and above was 66.6 percent in 2017 (women 57.1 percent, men 75.0 percent).⁵⁸

⁴⁸ RGoB, MoAF. 2013. Agricultural Marketing Policy of Bhutan.

⁴⁹ WFP. 2019. Bhutan Country Strategic Plan (2019–2023).

⁵⁰ IFAD in Bhutan.

⁵¹ Ten of the epicentres were in Bhutan, six in India, and two in Nepal.

⁵² WFP Bhutan. 2020. Bhutan Earthquake Impact Planning (Equip). Modelling the impacts from potential future earthquakes.

⁵³ RGoB. National Center for Hydrology and Meteorology.

⁵⁴ RGoB, MoHCA, Department of Disaster Management.

⁵⁵ RGoB MoE/PPD. 2021. Annual Education Statistics 2021.

⁵⁶ UNICEF Bhutan. Every Child Learns <https://www.unicef.org/bhutan/every-child-learns>

⁵⁷ RGoB, GNHC. 2021. [Transformations for Sustainable Development in the 21st Century - Bhutan's Second Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations High-Level Political Forum 2021.](#)

⁵⁸ RGoB MoE/PPD. 2021. Annual Education Statistics 2021.

Gender, inclusion and disability

21. In 2021 the female Human Development Index (HDI) value for Bhutan was 0.641 in contrast with 0.684 for males, resulting in a value of 0.937 on the Gender Development Index, placing the country in group 4 (medium to low equality). Bhutan has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.415, ranking it 98 out of 162 countries in the 2021 index.⁵⁹

22. Women's representation in the political and decision making spheres is very low: in 2019 only 16.7 percent of parliamentary seats were held by women.⁶⁰ The gender disparity at executive levels in government is often explained by the fact that the first cohort of Bhutanese sent to school five decades ago were mostly boys.⁶¹

23. Bhutan integrated the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS)⁶² into the 2017 Population and Housing Census of Bhutan. It reported a disability prevalence rate of 2.1 percent, corresponding to 15,567 persons. Results are significantly lower than global estimates, which indicate that about 15 percent of a population live with a disability. Disability in children 2-9 years of age is reported as 21 percent where 19 percent were reported to have mild, 2 percent moderate and 1 percent severe disabilities.⁶³

National policies and the SDGs and overview of national voluntary reporting on SDGs

24. When the international community adopted the SDGs in September 2015, Bhutan was identified as a priority country, or an "early mover" for the implementation of the SDGs together with several other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The 11th five-year plan (FYP) (2013-2018) provided a strong foundation for integration and implementation of the SDGs.^{64, 65}

25. In November 2018, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) embarked on its 12th five-year plan with the objective of "Just, Harmonious and Sustainable Society through Enhanced Decentralization". Scheduled to end in October 2023, the 12th five-year plan is also Bhutan's transition strategy for graduation from the group of least developed countries (LDCs).⁶⁶ The nine domains and 17 national key result areas (NRKA) in the 12th five-year plan are closely aligned with the SDGs.⁶⁷

26. In the first voluntary national review on implementation of the SDGs produced in 2018, Bhutan reported being well on track on all SDGs, highlighting economic growth and significant reductions in poverty rates, as well as progress on education and health outcomes. The second voluntary national review in 2021 focused on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Bhutan's progress towards implementing the SDGs, and learning lessons from the pandemic, which include the need for long-term, transformative and green solutions for its food system and preparedness for disasters and future pandemics.^{68,69}

United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework

⁵⁹ UNDP. 2022. Human Development Report 2021-22: Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World. New York.

⁶⁰ Idem.

⁶¹ RGoB, NSB. 2011. Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey 2010.

⁶² Washington Group on Disability Statistics. The WG Short Set of six questions on functioning for use on national censuses and surveys was developed, tested and adopted by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) reflecting advances in the conceptualization of disability.

⁶³ WHO and WB. 2011. World Report on Disability, Geneva, 2011. Quoted in: UNICEF. 2021. Disability-inclusive education practices in Bhutan.

⁶⁴ Bhutan's development framework as implemented through its five-year plans is based on the principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH).

⁶⁵ RGOB GNHC. 2021. Transformations for Sustainable Development in the 21st Century - Bhutan's Second Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations High-Level Political Forum 2021.

⁶⁶ RGoB. 2021. 12th Plan Mid-Term Review Report.

⁶⁷ Among others the following policies were approved in the 12th plan: The National Gender Equality Policy 2019, the Climate Change Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2020, and the Policy to Accelerate Mother and Child Health Outcome - 1000 Days Plus 2020 with the National Education Policy among the major draft policies under review.

⁶⁸ RGoB. 2021. An integrated web-based dashboard to Enhance Wellbeing of All (DEWA), to monitor Bhutan's progress towards achieving SDGs target, GNH Index and 12th Plan targets.

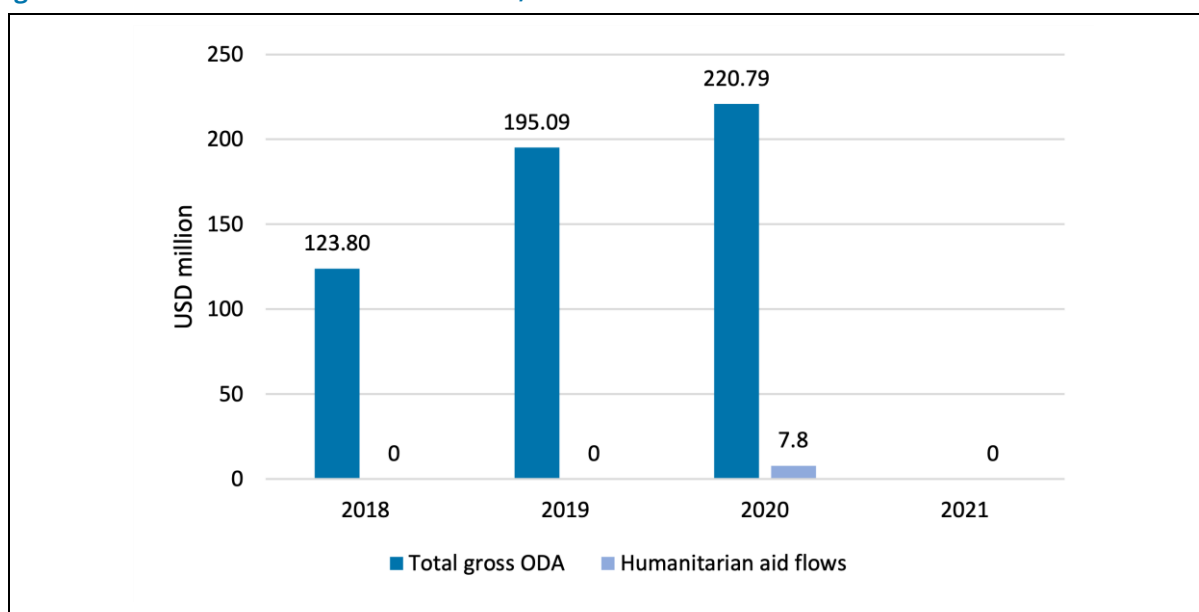
⁶⁹ RGoB. 2021. Summary of Key Messages from Bhutan's Second VNR Report on the SDGs.

27. The United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework for Bhutan (UNSDPF) covers the period 2019-2023 and leverages the expertise, capacity and resources of the United Nations to support the Government's priorities. The UNSDPF is aligned with national development priorities and has identified four outcome areas as pillars of the strategic framework for United Nations cooperation.

International development assistance to Bhutan

28. During the period 2018-2020, Bhutan received a yearly average of United States dollars (USD) 179.89 million gross official development assistance (ODA) (Figure 1). The proportion of net official development assistance per gross national income (GNI) increased from 4.8 to 9.2 percent.⁷⁰ The top five average official development assistance funding sources between 2019 and 2020 were the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Bank (International Development Association), Japan, European Union institutions and the Green Climate Fund (Figure 2). On average, 24.7 percent of official development assistance during 2019-2020 was allocated to multisector, followed by other social infrastructure and services (23.0 percent) and production (18.5 percent) (Figure 3).

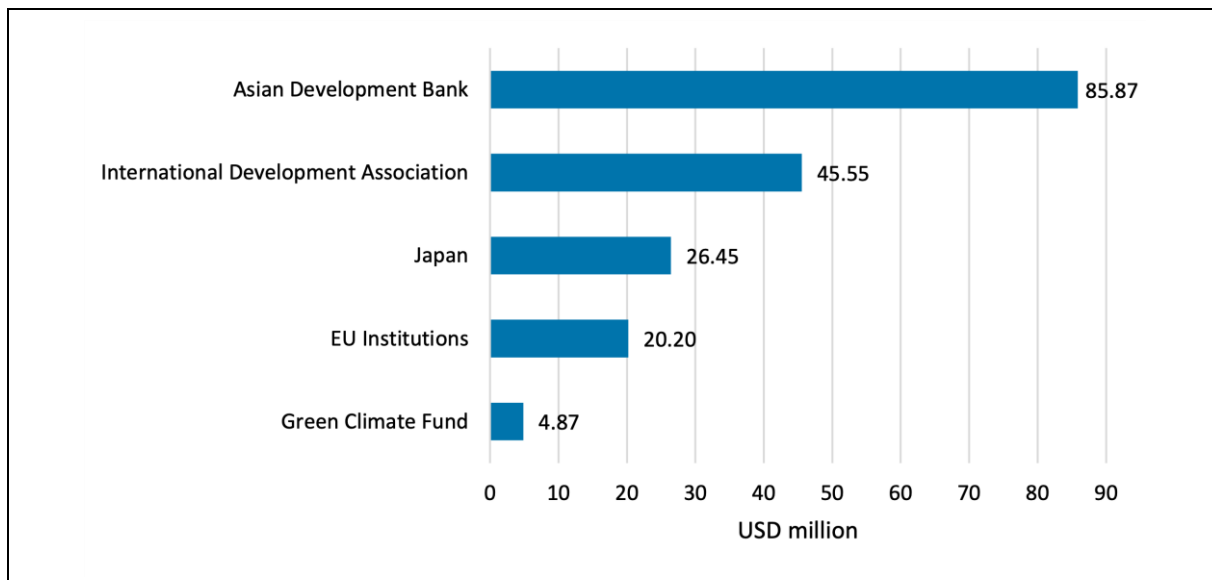
Figure 1: International assistance to Bhutan, 2018-2021



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) website, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) financial tracking service (FTS), data extracted 17.08.2022. Note: No ODA data available yet for 2021.

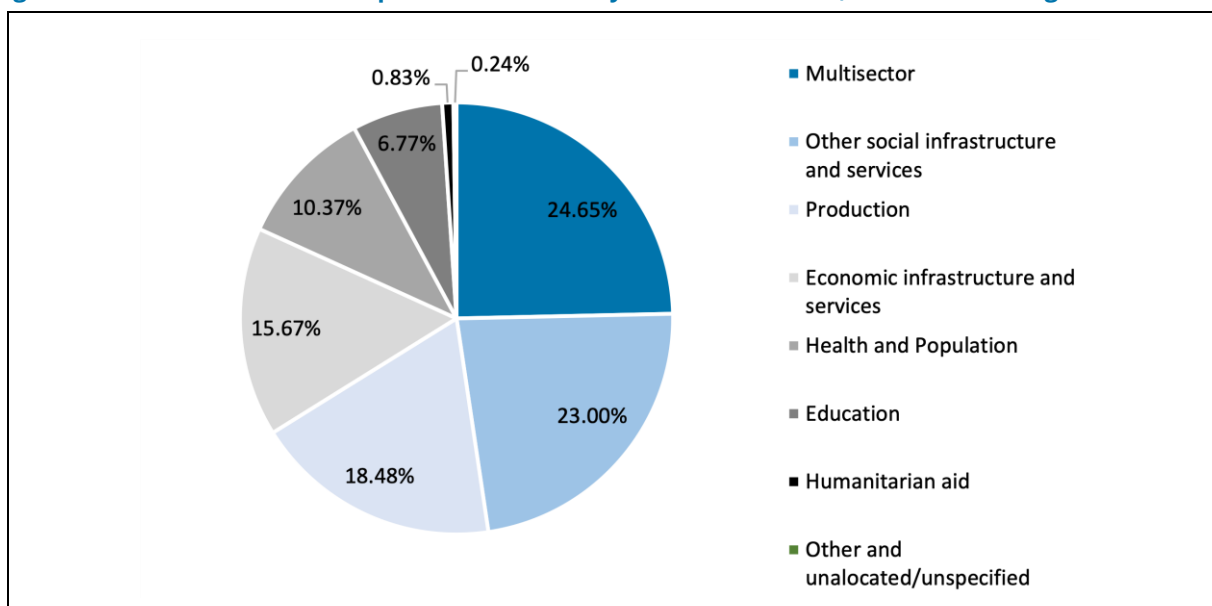
⁷⁰ OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Aid at a Glance, accessed 17.08.2022.

Figure 2: Top five donors of gross official development assistance for Bhutan, 2019-2020 average



Source: OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Aid at a Glance, accessed 17.08.2022.

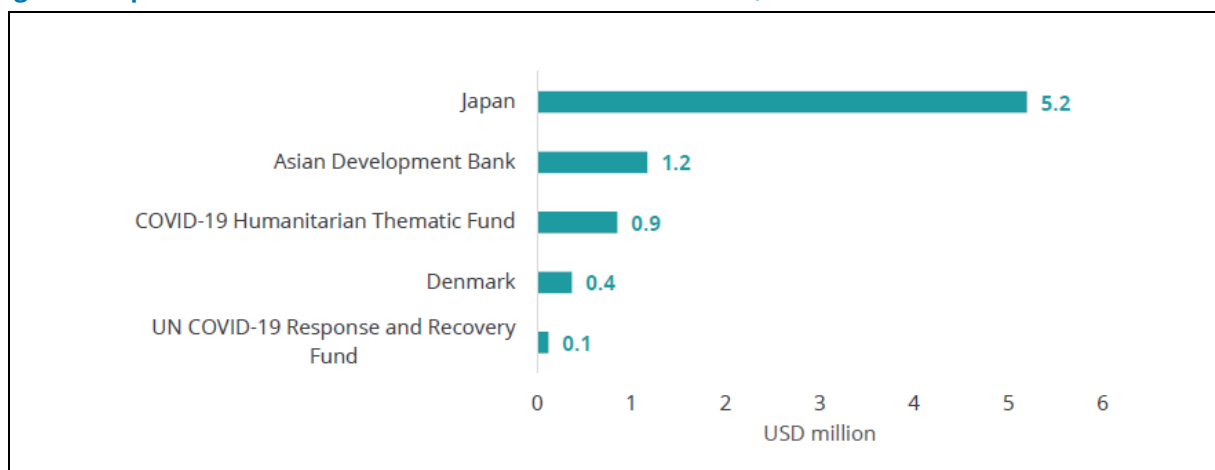
Figure 3: Bilateral official development assistance by sector for Bhutan, 2019-2020 average



Source: OECD DAC Aid at a Glance, accessed 17.08.2022.

29. In 2020, Bhutan received USD 7.8 million in humanitarian assistance. The main humanitarian donors were Japan, the ADB, the COVID-19 Humanitarian Thematic Fund, Denmark, and the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Top five donors of humanitarian assistance for Bhutan, 2020



Source: UN OCHA – FTS, accessed on 17.08.2022.

1.3. Subject being evaluated

30. Since 1974, WFP has been engaged in Bhutan, first solely focused on food for education activities targeted at boarding schools and later through maternal child health interventions and food-for-work, supporting maintenance of roads and rural mule tracks. The first five-year country plan was initiated in 2002.⁷¹ Up to the end of 2018, support to the national school feeding and nutrition programme (NSFNP) remained the main focus for WFP in Bhutan, evolving along with Ministry of Education (MoE) priorities towards a focus on increasing enrolment and attendance at primary and secondary schools, especially for girls.

31. After the 2014 school feeding (SABER-SF⁷²) review exercise, a school feeding technical committee was established to guide the implementation of a roadmap, which WFP supported through a development operation (DEV) in 2014-2018 that included capacity strengthening (on policy development, nutrition aspects, monitoring and evaluation, strengthening of the supply chain) of the School Health and Nutrition Division (SHND) within the Ministry of Education. In response to the emergence of several cases of beriberi, from 2017 onwards, WFP incorporated fortified rice⁷³ in the school meals food basket.⁷⁴ Additionally, a pilot was started in a few schools to integrate the school meals programme within the school agriculture programme (SAP) and insert elements of nutrition education in the school's science curriculum. Also, as part of the development operation (DEV), WFP Bhutan undertook a logistical capacity assessment in 2017 as input for a government emergency preparedness contingency plan.

32. The T-ICSP (January–December 2018)⁷⁵ to a large extent was a continuation of the development operation, with a strong focus on capacity development of the Government in support of Bhutan's 12th five-year development plan (2018-2023).⁷⁶ Specifically, this entailed support for the development of the national school feeding and nutrition programme and a school meals monitoring and reporting system, optimization of the supply chain for school meals, development of national standards and quality control

⁷¹ WFP Office of Evaluation. 2006. Summary report of the mid-term Evaluation Country Programme Bhutan (2002-2007).

⁷² SABER – Systems Approach for Better Educational Results. See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/systems-approach-for-better-education-results-saber>

⁷³ A private sector company in Bhutan was supported by WFP to produce fortified rice based on blending white rice with fortified rice kernels imported from Bangladesh or India.

⁷⁴ Beginning in 2017, WFP introduced fortified rice in the food basket of the school meals programme operated by WFP. By the 3rd quarter of 2017, the Government introduced fortified rice in all schools under the national school feeding and nutrition programme. The NSFNP at that time reached around 65,000 students, over one third of the students from pre-primary to Grade 12.

⁷⁵ WFP. 2018. Transitional Interim Country Strategic Plan (Year 2018). The Bhutan T-ICSP had a total budget of USD 1.2 million and aimed at reaching some 12,000 schoolchildren as Tier 1 beneficiaries, and 65,000 students as Tier 3 beneficiaries for the NSFNP. Tier 3 beneficiaries were also targeted under support on emergency preparedness.

⁷⁶ RGoB, GNHC. 2019. 12th Five-Year Plan, 2018-2023, Just, Harmonious and Sustainable Society through Enhanced Decentralisation.

systems for fortified rice, establishment of government capacity on production of fortified rice by Food Corporation of Bhutan Limited (FCBL), and collaboration with the Government on the introduction and testing of contingency plans for emergencies and setting up emergency simulation exercises. A key strategic change within the T-ICSP was the decision to phase out the WFP in-kind assistance for the school meals programme by the end of 2018.

33. In the Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023),⁷⁷ support to the national school meals programme further evolved, with the introduction of pilots on local purchases and local 'farm-to-school' linkages,⁷⁸ and new approaches for nutrition education (all under SO1/Activity 1). Capacity development continues to be the core focus in WFP assistance in Bhutan, in relation to both the national school meals programme's fortification of rice (SO1/Activity 2) and a range of emergency preparedness measures (SO2/Activity 3) implemented in partnership with the Department of Disaster Management within the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (MoHCA). The latter includes the introduction of the "72-hour rapid assessment approach" (RAA) to post-disaster assessments, and capacity development and coordination on emergency logistics and telecommunications.

34. For the school meals programme, responsibility for in-country logistics was handed over to the SHND with the FCBL as logistical partner. The discontinued in-kind food assistance was replaced by a multi-stakeholder, holistic, systems-oriented approach for strengthening institutional capacities, including support for finalizing the national school feeding and nutrition strategy, optimizing the supply chain for school feeding, developing a WFP tool for school menu optimization and design, introducing a digital data collection and reporting system, and support for school nutrition infrastructure optimization. Following the positive experiences in the pilot under the T-ICSP, the support to smallholder farmers in relation to farm-to-school linkages was geographically expanded. From 2020 onwards, this further evolved into support for agricultural value chain development which included several sub-activities (partially but not exclusively related to COVID-19) not planned in the original CSP.

35. Annex V shows the reconstructed theory of change and key assumptions for the Bhutan CSP, which have been validated by the country office through a workshop held on 24 May 2022. The reconstructed theory of change diagram in Annex V encompasses both the activities that are mentioned in the CSP document plus the additional ones that have been added in the course of the implementation period, with the corresponding outcomes and impact. The diagram emphasises the links and synergies between a set of blocks of WFP support that are structured by sector. The reconstructed theory of change indicates how activities, outputs and outcomes are linked, with differentiation for the latter into changes brought about in relation to government policies and systems, and at the household/individual level.⁷⁹ Within the set of key assumptions accompanying the reconstructed theory of change, the part at activity-specific level focuses mainly on the availability of resources and capacities within the targeted sectors. The part at the more general level is primarily focusing on overall government commitment and engagement, among other things. It deals with the adequacy of financial and human resources and other major external disruptions like political and economic instabilities or natural disasters.

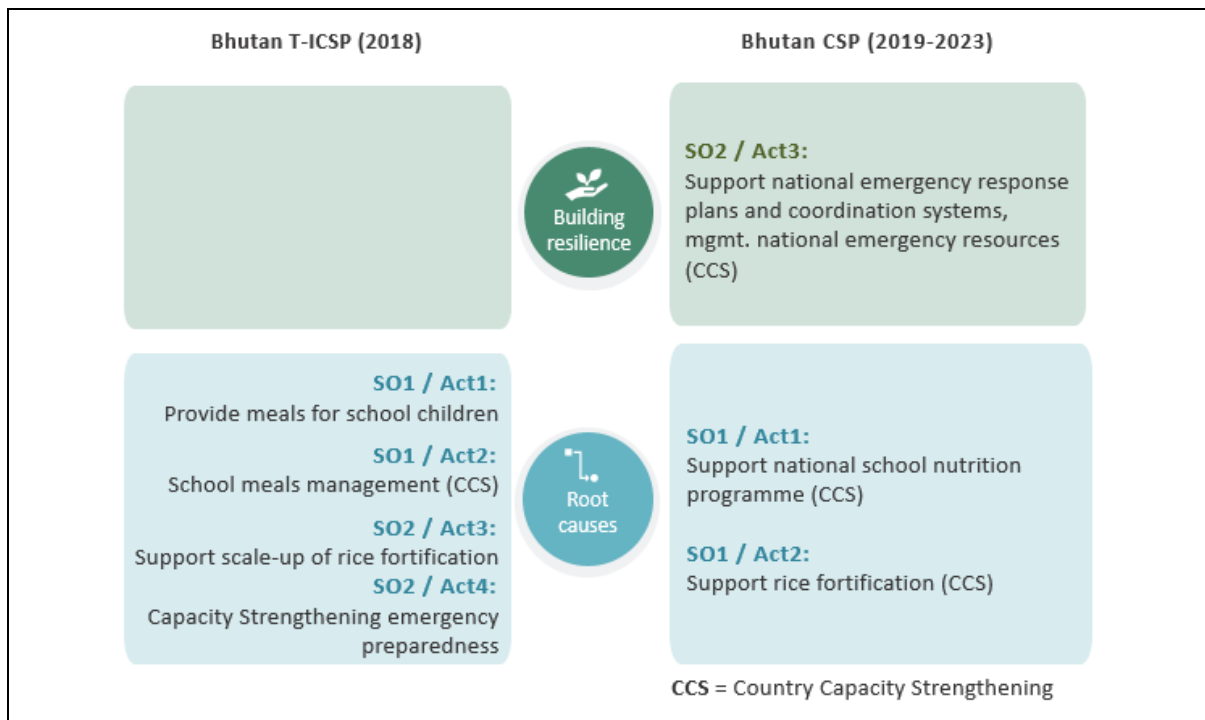
36. Figure 5 compares activities under the CSP and T-ICSP, structured along the two focus areas in the CSP line of sight (Annex VI): a) resilience building; and b) root causes. The main changes in the shift from the T-ICSP to the CSP are the placement of support on emergency preparedness and response in the resilience building category, and aggregation of support actions in relation to the national school feeding and nutrition programme (NSFNP) into one activity line. Support on rice fortification was maintained as a separate activity line.

⁷⁷ WFP. 2019. Bhutan Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023).

⁷⁸ The CSP document explains that school feeding was originally intended to increase enrolment and attendance in primary and secondary schools. In 2017, the achieved enrolment rate in primary schools was 95 percent and attendance rates had also increased dramatically. Lessons from the mid-term evaluation of the DEV and a regional synthesis of operation evaluations in Asia and the Pacific, plus consultations with the Government, other United Nations agencies and CSOs led to the idea for a pilot (seven schools near Thimphu) on local purchases and local 'farm-to-school' linkages, building on the WFP home grown school feeding (HGSF) model.

⁷⁹ The building resilient commercial smallholder agriculture (BRECSA) project will only start in January 2023 but for completeness has been incorporated in the ToC.

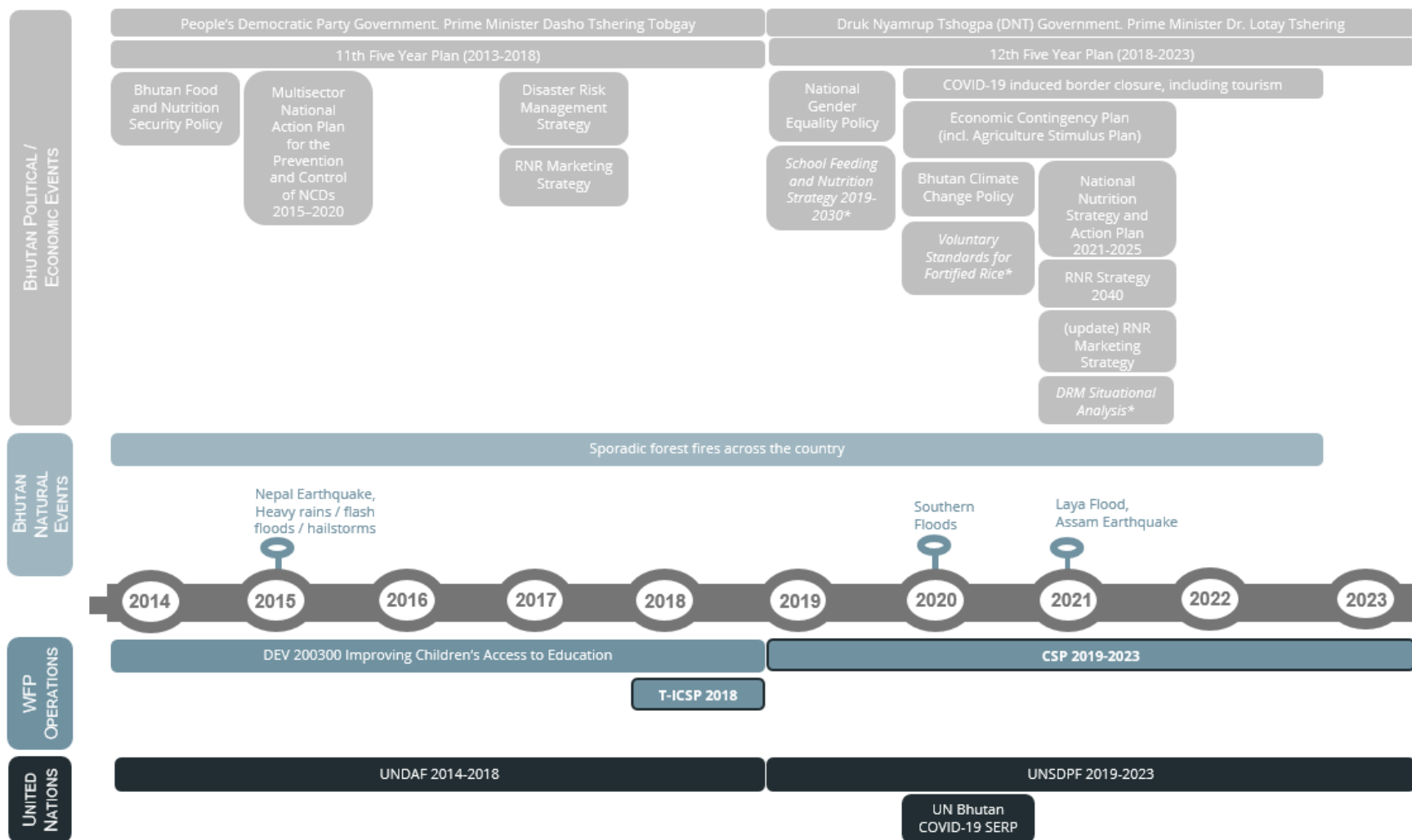
Figure 5: Comparison T-ICSP and CSP activities



Source: Evaluation team.

37. Figure 6 presents a general overview of WFP operations in Bhutan and key events that occurred in the country prior to and during the evaluation period.

Figure 6: Timeline of major external events in Bhutan and WFP operations



Source: Evaluation team. Note: Boxes in italics with an asterisk indicate policies or official documents that have not yet been endorsed. Note: RNR – renewable natural resources and DRM – disaster risk management.

38. The Bhutan CSP has a total budget of USD 8.4 million (excluding indirect support costs (ISC)), with the allocation to SO1 amounting to 82.4 percent, and to SO2 to 17.6 percent (Table 1).

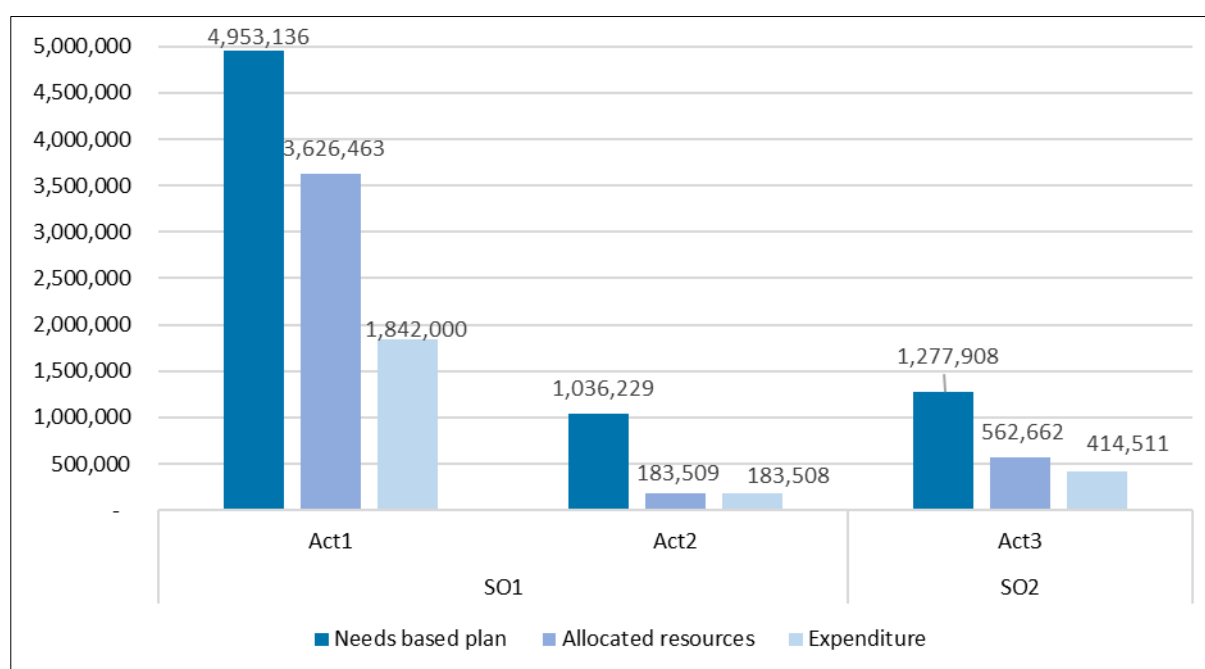
Table 1: Bhutan CSP budget by focus area and strategic outcome (USD)

Focus area	SO1	SO2	Total
	Root causes	Resilience building	
Transfer	5 150,281	993 801	6 144 082
Implementation	839 084	284 107	1 123 191
Adjusted direct support costs	931 002	198 018	1 129 020
Total	6 920 367	1 475 926	8 396 293
Share total CSP budget	82.42%	17.58%	100%

Source: WFP. (n.d.). Bhutan CSP. Note: ISC are excluded.

39. By 1 August 2022, the resources level for the Bhutan CSP (excluding indirect support costs) amounted to USD 5.43 million, 65 percent of the needs-based plan (NBP). Expenditures totalled USD 2.99 million (36 percent of the needs-based plan, 55 percent of total allocated resources). Resourcing and expenditure levels vary considerably between the three activities in the CSP (Figure 7). There was substantial underspending on Activity 1 while the level resourced was adequate, while for Activity 2 the situation was the opposite, with low resourced level but 100 percent spending rate. For a detailed comparison between activities, see Table 2.

Figure 7: Bhutan CSP cumulative financial overview (USD)



Source: WFP Bhutan CPB Resources Overview Report_EV, data extracted on 1 Aug 2022. Note: NBP for full CSP cycle, allocated resources until Dec 2022, expenditures until date of extraction. Note: direct support costs (DSC) and indirect support costs (ISC) are excluded.

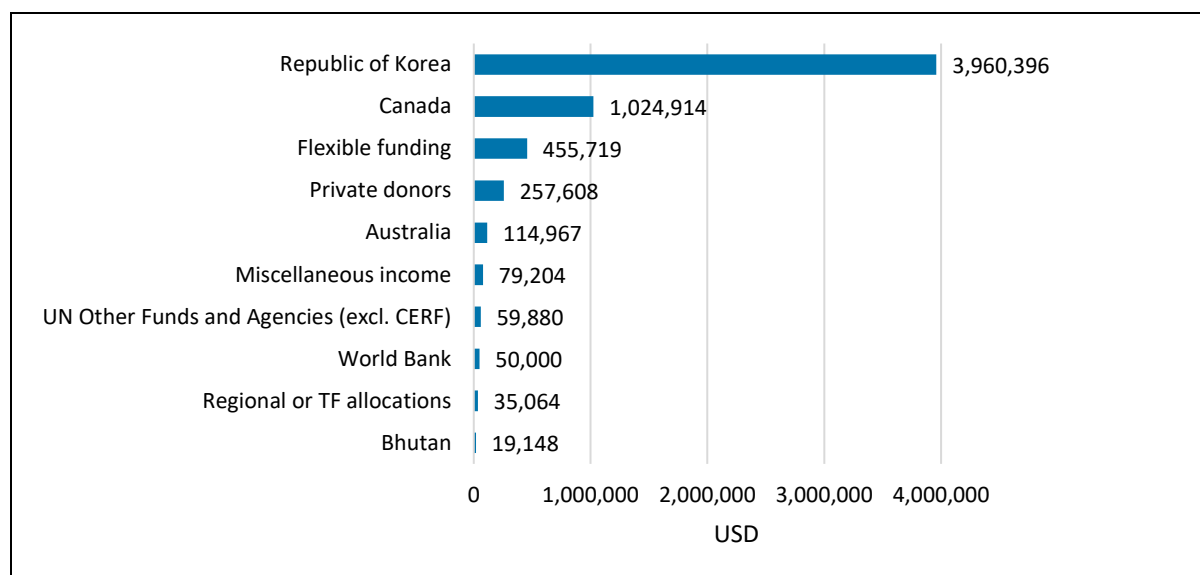
Table 2: Bhutan CSP cumulative financial overview (USD) – detailed breakdown

Activity	NBP	Allocated resources	% allocated resources against NBP	Expenditures	% expenditures against allocated resources
Act1	4 953 136	3 626 463	73%	1 842 000	51%
Act2	1 036 229	183 509	18%	183 508	100%
Act3	1 277 908	562 662	44%	414 511	74%
Non-SO/Non-Act specific	-	111 804	-	-	-
Total DSC	1 129 020	945 485	-	551 734	-
Grand total	8 396 293	5 429 924	65%	2 991 753	55%

Source: WFP Bhutan CPB Resources Overview Report_EV, data extracted on 1 Aug 2022. Note: NBP for full CSP cycle, allocated resources until Dec 2022, expenditures until date of extraction. Note: ISC are excluded.

40. While for the T-ICSP there were three bilateral donors (the McGovern-Dole Fund for food-based assistance to school meals from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Australia and Canada⁸⁰), the CSP funding base consisted of a relatively large contribution from the Republic of Korea (65.4 percent of total allocated contributions), followed by Canada⁸¹ (16.9 percent). The remainder consisted of various smaller allocations from internal sources within WFP and a combination of bilateral, private donors and the Government (Figure 8). CSP earmarked contributions amounted to USD 4.2 million, primarily earmarked at the activity level (Table 3).

Figure 8: WFP Bhutan donors under the CSP, 2019-2023



Source: WFP Bhutan CPB Resource Situation from FACTory, 2 Aug 2022.

⁸⁰ The support from Canada and Australia consisted of carry-over funds from the DEV (2014-2017).

⁸¹ Carry-over funds from the DEV.

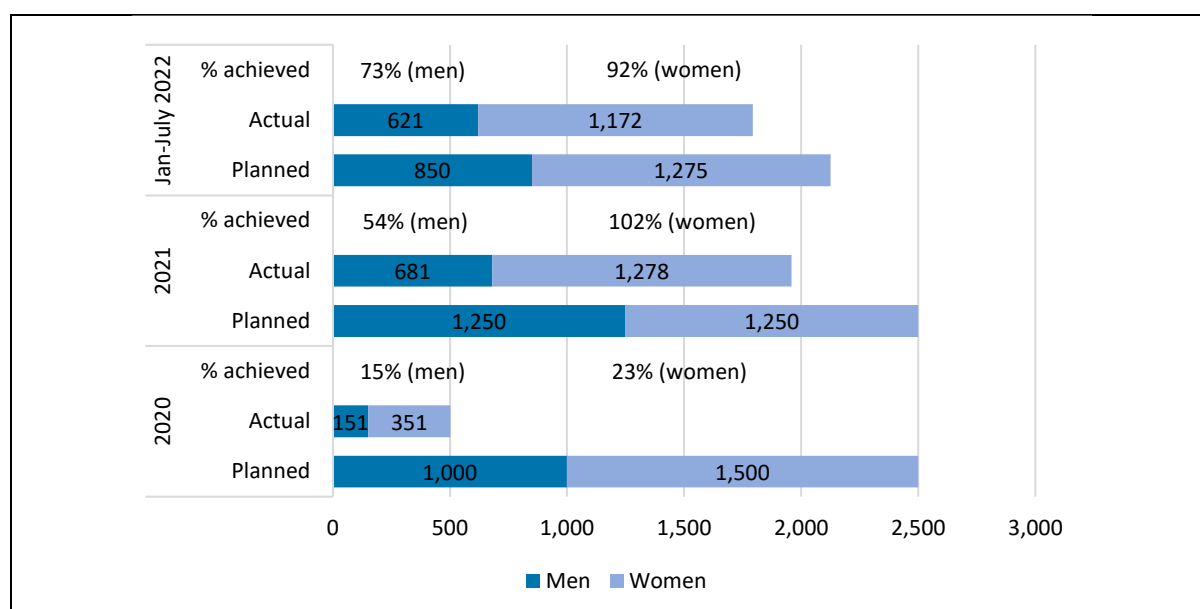
Table 3: Bhutan CSP budget earmarking level

	Contributions (USD)	Percentage of total contributions
Activity level	4 074 276	97%
Country level	111 158	3%
Grand total	4 185 434	100%

Source: WFP Bhutan Earmarking Level for Multilateral Directed Contributions, FACTory Weekly Distribution Contribution Forecast extracted on 3 Aug 2022 updated by country office.

41. Regarding beneficiaries, the farm-to-school/agriculture value chain activity (added during the CSP implementation period under SO1/Activity 1) in 2020 reached 502 smallholder farmers through capacity strengthening (reported as Tier 2 beneficiaries), 1,959 farmers in 2021 (in line with changes in WFP corporate guidance reported as Tier 1 beneficiaries), and 1,793 farmers in the period January-July 2022 (Figure 9).⁸²

Figure 9: CSP smallholder farmer beneficiaries receiving capacity strengthening transfers, 2020-2022



Source: 2020-2021 Annual country report (ACR). 2020 gender breakdown and 2022 data provided by country office Bhutan, shared 12 Aug 2022.

42. The CSP contains a Gender and Age Marker rating of 3.⁸³ Within the CSP document, the considerations for gender issues are reflected as part of the focus on achieving gender equality within capacity development; in the support to school meals, which fosters the prevention of early marriage of girls and an increase in schooling and livelihood opportunities for girls, together with a focus on gender-transformative nutrition education for both boys and girls; efforts to establish systems that disaggregate all data by sex, age and disability and facilitate the integration of gender considerations into analyses,

⁸² Tier 1 direct beneficiaries are “identifiable and recorded individuals who receive direct transfers from WFP or from a cooperating partner (CP), to improve their food security and nutrition status.” Tiers 2 and 3 are indirect beneficiaries; Tier 2 refers to “individuals who have access to assets, knowledge and capacity, commodities and services delivered or transferred in their communities or catchment area as a result of, but not directly through, WFP support”. Tier 3 “covers the wider population impacted that could indirectly and potentially benefit from WFP’s technical assistance and support to Government policies, systems and national programmes”. Source: WFP. 2020. *Interim Guidance on Tier 2 and Tier 3 Beneficiaries*.

⁸³ The WFP Gender and Age Marker is a corporate tool that codes – on a 0 to 4 scale – the extent to which gender and age are integrated into the design and monitoring of a WFP programme (primarily a country strategic plan).

assessments, research and related work; and consideration of the need for gender parity and competencies in gender work among country office staff.

1.4. Evaluation methodology, limitations and ethical considerations

43. This evaluation employed a theory-based approach using mixed methods. Annex V presents the reconstructed theory of change of the CSP. The detailed evaluation matrix in Annex VII built on this theory of change and operationalized the analytical framework for the four main evaluation questions:

- **EQ1** – To what extent is the CSP evidence based and strategically focused to address the needs of the most vulnerable?
- **EQ2** – What is the extent and quality of WFP’s specific contribution to CSP strategic outcomes in Bhutan?
- **EQ3** – To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to CSP outputs and strategic outcomes?
- **EQ4** – What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP?

44. Within the overarching evaluation approach, the evaluation team used different analytical lenses to answer the evaluation questions. These evaluation methodologies are described in Annex VIII.

45. The evaluation combined qualitative primary data collection with a comprehensive review of documents and existing quantitative data. The mix of data collection methods and sources, and their links with the evaluation questions, are summarized in Table 3 of Annex VIII. Full details on the data collection methods and sources of each evaluation question, sub-evaluation question, and dimension of analysis are given in the evaluation matrix in Annex VII.

46. Figure 5 in Annex VIII provides an overview of the type of information sources reviewed.

47. Primary data were collected through remote interviews and a field mission in Bhutan from 18 to 29 July 2022. In total, the evaluation team conducted more than 60 interviews with representatives of WFP country office and the regional bureau in Bangkok, government agencies, United Nations agencies, donor agencies, cooperating partners, civil society organizations, and local government staff. The list of interviewees is included in Annex IX, and the interview guides are presented in Annex X. “Mess hall” committees in schools, farmer groups, and social behaviour change communication (SBCC) communities participated in focus group discussions (FGDs). Focus group discussions in schools included both women/girls and men/boys while the other focus group discussions were composed of women only. The list of focus group discussions is presented in Annex IX (Table 8), and the focus group discussion thematic guides in Annex X. In addition to the interviews and focus group discussions, the evaluation team directly observed, at local and national levels, the status of infrastructure and facilities (for example, school kitchens and the rice blending facility in Phuntsholing).

48. The geographic sample for the mission in Bhutan included:

- The capital (Thimphu)
- Phuntsholing in South Bhutan (visit to FCBL)
- The two districts with the highest concentration and diversity of CSP activities (Trongsa and Zhemgang, both located in east-central Bhutan).

49. The mission visited the district offices in Trongsa and Zhemgang to meet various local government staff (see details in the field mission schedule in Annex XI). Within each district, a few communities were selected in consultation with WFP, local government, and Tarayana Foundation⁸⁴ with the aim to cover schools of different types (two central schools and one community school), and a mix of rural and peri-urban communities (purposive sampling).

⁸⁴ The Tarayana Foundation is a CSO and implementing partner of WFP Bhutan on SBCC on nutrition at the community level.

50. The evaluation team ensured that evidence was triangulated across different data sources and team members wherever possible. The preliminary findings were also triangulated and validated with WFP country office staff during a participatory session.

51. Cross-cutting themes (in particular gender) were considered and/or mainstreamed, and ethical issues taken into account, in the evaluation as outlined in Annex VIII.

Limitations

52. The limitations of the evaluation approach and mitigation strategies are described in detail in Annex VIII. Key challenges included difficulties in:

- measuring country capacity strengthening outcomes at the institutional level, which often only become visible in the long term (mitigated through a focus on emerging capacity strengthening outcomes and qualitative evidence);
- conducting quantitative cost efficiency analysis for country capacity strengthening results (mitigated through qualitative evidence on process and actions, and quantitative focus on overall economies of scale);
- dealing with limited institutional memory in some organizations (only partially mitigated, for example through existing reviews and evaluations).

53. Although the limitations were mitigated to some extent, they somewhat reduced the strength of evidence on country capacity strengthening outcomes and cost efficiency, as well as on CSP and government policy design and strategic choices in the early CSP period.

2. Evaluation findings

2.1. EQ1: To what extent is WFP's strategic position, role and specific contribution based on country priorities and people's needs as well as WFP's strengths?

EQ1.1 To what extent was the CSP informed by existing evidence on the hunger challenges, the food security and nutrition issues prevailing in the country as well as natural disasters and the effects of climate change to ensure its relevance at design stage?

54. The CSP appropriately responds to the need for healthier, more balanced diets and for the reduction of anaemia, in particular in rural areas. The CSP builds on the focus under the T-ICSP and the earlier development programme on ensuring/improving the dietary quality of school meals under the NSFNP. Support on this has continued, with increased focus on country capacity strengthening aspects and SBCC on nutrition, and agriculture value chain development for vegetables and fruits was added from 2020 onwards upon request by the Government.

55. There is no "zero hunger strategic review"⁸⁵ for Bhutan, but the choices underpinning the CSP design are consistent with, and build on studies by, international partners (for example, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank (WB) on nutrition), and some specific assessments by WFP (for example, on agriculture-school linkages). Bhutan faces the coexistence of undernutrition (stunting and wasting) and micronutrient deficiencies along with overnutrition and obesity or diet-related non-communicable diseases, within individuals, households and populations, and across the life-course.^{86,87} The CSP document refers to results of the 2015 National Nutrition Survey,⁸⁸ which highlights the need to address anaemia, especially among young children, and indicates that both stunting and wasting are still public health issues, especially among children from poorer households and in rural areas. Also, the CSP document points to the 2018 non-communicable disease country profile for Bhutan prepared by WHO,⁸⁹ indicating a lack of balanced diets, including micronutrient deficiencies, due to high consumption of carbohydrates, salt and animal fat, and very few fruits and vegetables.

56. The CSP document is consistent with the main conclusion in the 2014 Bhutan Food Nutrition Security Policy that there is a need for a shift from a focus on food to nutrition. The policy emphasises the need for higher dietary diversity, and the WFP support under the CSP on well-balanced school meals, including use of fortified rice to fill micronutrient gaps, and on promotion of a variety of horticultural value chains are in full concurrence with that.

57. Focus on rice fortification and SBCC in the CSP was informed by data in the 2014 World Bank situational analysis on nutrition in Bhutan.⁹⁰ The World Bank report indicated the need for a more evidence-based package of nutrition interventions rather than fragmented nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. WFP policy development support on nutrition is at the more overarching level, and WFP-supported activities in Bhutan on school nutrition and rice fortification are combining nutrition-

⁸⁵ Through zero hunger strategic reviews, national governments articulate how they can achieve the second SDG targets of zero hunger and zero malnutrition by 2030.

⁸⁶ WHO. 2017. The double burden of malnutrition. Policy Brief. WHO/NMH/NHD/17.3.

⁸⁷ It is sometimes described as the triple burden of malnutrition, depending on the author and reference, in order to highlight the issue of micronutrient deficiencies.

⁸⁸ Ministry of Health Bhutan. 2015. National Nutrition Survey, 2015.

⁸⁹ The link provided in the CSP document no longer works. For most recent findings, reference is made to the 2019 Bhutan NCD survey, which e.g. indicates that consumption of junk foods is high among schoolchildren with 40 percent drinking carbonated soft drinks at least once a day and 32 percent eating fast-food at least four times per week. MoH/DoPH. 2020. Non-communicable disease risk factors: Bhutan STEPS Survey 2019, Thimphu. <https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/searo/ncd/noncommunicable-disease-risk-factors-bhutan-steps-survey-report-2019.pdf>.

⁹⁰ WB. 2014. Nutrition in Bhutan: Situational Analysis and Policy Recommendations, Discussion Paper.

sensitive and nutrition-specific domains. The contribution to raising community awareness on nutrition within the CSP adopts an integrated approach.

58. As the agricultural focus of the CSP was only expanded during CSP implementation, agricultural assessments (besides a literature review on food and nutrition security (FNS) in 2018) were not a priority at the CSP design stage, however they were undertaken from 2021. The national context in agriculture was adequately studied by WFP. The CSP largely relied on existing food and nutrition security reviews of the Government – the 2018 Voluntary National Review⁹¹ and a literature review on food and nutrition security⁹² – that had identified key food and nutrition security challenges and vulnerable groups (for example, women and youth) in agriculture. These and other existing sources however did not provide WFP with more disaggregated data on farmers and farmer organizations for (or within) the target districts.⁹³ WFP instead applied a broad understanding of vulnerability at the district level in relation to community remoteness from administrative centres and national poverty incidences. Neither the 2021 WFP Bhutan decentralized evaluation on smallholder farmer support and the expanded agriculture portfolio (“decentralized evaluation” henceforth) nor the focus group discussions conducted for this CSPE found any evidence that WFP had systematically consulted farmers during the design stage. This is consistent however with the relatively stronger emphasis on the demand side of school feeding (the schools). In 2021, WFP initiated several assessments to identify the needs of food system stakeholders more systematically (for example, an assessment of post-harvest losses in the supply chains of perishable commodities in three districts⁹⁴ and the decentralized evaluation).

59. The CSP activities on country capacity strengthening for agriculture is broadly aligned with the national and local capacity gaps in agriculture that WFP identified in different ways. To identify capacity gaps in agriculture, the country office relied on informal exchanges with government entities, and from 2021 also on formal assessments (for example, of post-harvesting). Stakeholder interviews confirmed that the country capacity strengthening (CCS) activities generally corresponded to the Gross National Happiness Commission (GHNC) and Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) priorities – resource mobilization, information systems, logistics and farmer training.

60. The CSP activities on country capacity strengthening for disaster preparedness and response were informed by data on gaps in existing government capacities. These were assessed through the inter-agency workshop on contingency planning to earthquakes in 2017, the Government’s logistical capacity assessment to respond to emergencies (2017) and a disaster preparedness simulation exercise (2018). An inter-agency workshop on contingency planning for earthquakes (2017) and a simulation exercise jointly organized by UNCT and the Government revealed gaps in national disaster preparedness and the capacity to respond to large, high-intensity natural disasters. Similarly, an assessment of the Government’s logistical capacity to respond to emergencies based on an analysis of warehousing options, existing logistics infrastructure and standard operating procedures informed the continued focus of WFP on disaster risk management with an emphasis on strengthening government systems on data, information systems, response plans, and governance and coordination systems for disaster risk management.⁹⁵

⁹¹ RGoB, UN. 2018. Sustainable Development and Happiness: Bhutan’s Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

⁹² College of Natural Resources, Royal University of Bhutan. 2018. Literature Review on Food and Nutrition Security in Bhutan.

⁹³ WFP. 2022. Bhutan, Evaluation of WFP’s support to smallholder farmers and its expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain (2019-2021).

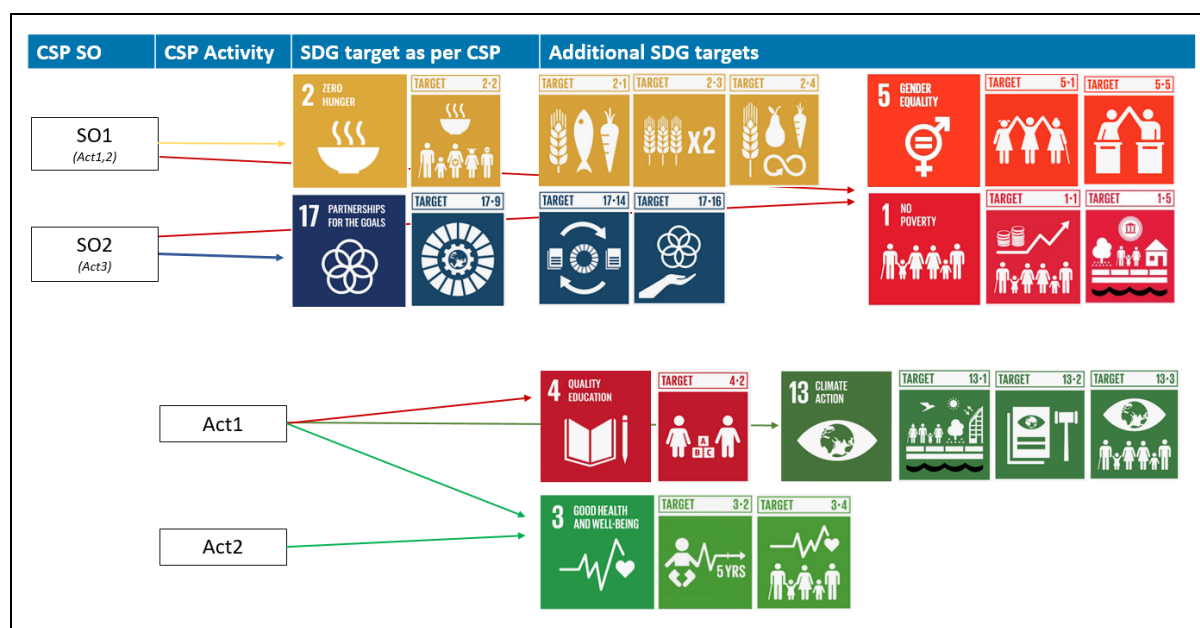
⁹⁴ WFP Bhutan. 2021. Agriculture post-harvest management and marketing assessment of fruits and vegetables in Trongsa and Zhemgang.

⁹⁵ WFP. 2019. Bhutan Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023).

EQ1.2 To what extent is the CSP aligned to national policies and plans and the SDGs?

61. The CSP is fully aligned to selected national key results areas (NKRAs) within Bhutan’s 12th five-year development plan (2018-2023),^{96,97} which in turn is fully aligned with the SDGs. The main NKRAs that the CSP contributes to are areas: 3 (reducing poverty and inequality), 6 (carbon neutrality, climate and disaster resilience), 7 (quality education and skills), and 8 (food and nutrition security), as well as 10 (gender equality) as a cross-cutting issue. All WFP support is aligned with Bhutan’s efforts to achieve the SDGs, particularly SDG 2, including support on nutrition and healthy diets for school-aged children through SBCC interventions (SDG 2.2 on ending malnutrition).⁹⁸ A key overarching characteristic of the Bhutan CSP is its strong focus on country capacity strengthening through partnerships with the Government and others (SDG 17). The CSP’s links to other SDGs are presented in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Contributions of the CSP to SDGs



Source: Evaluation team.

62. The CSP furthermore aligns with the main sectoral policy documents on school nutrition, nutrition, rice fortification, agriculture and disaster risk management. This includes the following policy documents and key areas of alignment. For each document, the key area(s) that strongly align with WFP support in the same area(s) are listed in parentheses.

- **School meals, nutrition and rice fortification:** The CSP is well aligned with the National School Feeding and Nutrition Strategy 2019-2030 (includes use of the school meals programme to improve dietary and health practices, and the use of fortified rice in school mea; and linkages with farmer groups), the Bhutan standards for fortified rice kernel(s) (not yet endorsed; includes strengthening of food safety and quality regulatory frameworks and compliance mechanisms).
- **Agriculture:** The CSP is well aligned with the Renewable Natural Resources (RNR) Strategy 2040 (includes self-reliant food systems); Renewable Natural Resources Marketing Strategy 2017 / Policy 2021 (includes more efficient value chains); the e-RNR masterplan 2016 (includes renewable natural resources monitoring and reporting (M&R) system).

⁹⁶ RGoB, GNHC. 2019. Twelfth Five-Year Plan, 2018-2023, Just, Harmonious and Sustainable Society through Enhanced Decentralisation.

⁹⁷ Among others the following policies were approved in the 12th plan: The National Gender Equality Policy 2019, the Climate Change Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2020, and the Policy to Accelerate Mother and Child Health Outcome - 1000 Days Plus 2020 with the National Education Policy among the major draft policies under review.

⁹⁸ Source: WFP. 2019. Bhutan Country Strategic Plan (2019-2023).

- **Disaster risk management:** the CSP takes the 2013 Disaster Management Act and the 2017 Disaster Risk Management Strategy as the basis for: support on understanding disaster risks (earthquake impact planning and planned glacial lake outburst flooding studies); strengthening the risk governance system (the 72-hour rapid assessment approach); and disaster management capabilities (various workshops).

63. Joint formulation of national plans for emergency logistics has ensured strong CSP alignment, but the emergency telecommunications cluster (ETC) requires revisiting in response to the Government's shifting priorities. The national policy framework for emergency logistics and telecommunications consists of action plans or "roadmaps" rather than specific strategies and policies. The formulation of these plans and their underlying capacity assessments (including the update of the 2017 Logistics Capacity Assessment) was led by the Government with WFP support, specifically through the National Logistics Preparedness Working Group (NLPWG). In the emergency telecommunications cluster, the formulation of the national road map and capacity assessments followed a very similar process, based on (so far) the only workshop held in late 2019. However, shifting priorities of the Ministry of Information and Communication indicate the need for realignment.

64. **The CSP is aligned with Bhutan's 12th five-year plan and national gender policy and action frameworks.** The CSP document refers to the National Plan of Action for Gender 2008-2013⁹⁹ and the 12th five-year plan's call for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (NKRA 10). Elements within the 2020 National Gender Equality Policy to which the CSP has direct relevance are the "mainstreaming of gender in all disaster and climate change-related initiatives" (presented under the social domain) and the "strengthening of a gender-friendly school environment, including infrastructure and facilities", and "enhancing women's access to finance and market opportunities, and providing capacity and skills development support, including rural and socio-economically disadvantaged women" (both in the economic domain).¹⁰⁰ See paragraph 42 on how the focus on gender has been conceptualized within the CSP.

EQ1.3 To what extent is the CSP coherent and aligned with the wider United Nations and includes appropriate strategic partnerships of WFP in the country?

65. **The Bhutan CSP is fully coherent with the UNSDPF 2019-2023.** The UNSDPF is in line with Bhutan's 12th five-year plan, the graduation of Bhutan from being a least developed country, and the achievement of the 2030 development goals.¹⁰¹ WFP is participating in three of the four outcomes areas: Outcome 1 on data for policy and decision making, Outcome 2 on access to social services, and Outcome 4 on resilience to climate-induced and other disasters and economic vulnerability. On the latter WFP is taking a lead role.

66. Under the UNSDPF, WFP Bhutan has undertaken joint work with UNICEF and UNDP on advocacy and policy development in respectively (school) nutrition and disaster risk management. Most other activities under the CSP were implemented in the form of unilateral support to the Government. Good strategic positioning exists in the school nutrition and rice fortification areas of work, but some overlap and competition are found in the disaster risk management sector. The CSP document indicates that WFP Bhutan is fully committed to working with the Government and other United Nations agencies in order to "deliver as one". WFP has indeed been collaborating with a range of United Nations and other agencies for advocacy and policy development support. However, it is not clear whether these can effectively be labelled as "partnerships" based on formal country-level inter-agency agreements / memorandums of understanding. WFP is found to provide most of its support to the Government in a unilateral way, complementing support provided by others.¹⁰² For the CSP, WFP is collaborating with the following United Nations agencies:

⁹⁹ GNHC/NCWC. National Plan of Action for Gender 2008-2013.

¹⁰⁰ National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC). 2020. National Gender Equality Policy.

¹⁰¹ UN System in Bhutan. 2018. UN Sustainable Development Partnership Framework for Bhutan 2019-2023.

¹⁰² E.g., UNICEF's areas of support on nutrition are focused on newborn health and nutrition including breastfeeding promotion, provision of micronutrient powders to MoH for distribution to children 6-23 months of age, and the support on education is about digitalization, new curriculum and teacher training. Ref: UNICEF. (n.d.). Our programmes in Bhutan. <https://www.unicef.org/bhutan/what-we-do>

- Rome-based agencies: In close collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), WFP successfully mobilized support and lobbied the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests to participate in the 2021 Food Systems Summit (FSS) dialogues, which formulated eight Bhutan national pathways¹⁰³ that were then translated into national renewable natural resources strategies. WFP, IFAD, and FAO each provided USD 10,000-25,000 to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests to support the series of Food Systems Summit dialogues and/or the reformulation of renewable natural resources national strategies. Moreover, on the initiative of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, IFAD and WFP formulated a concept note in 2021 and subsequently developed and won a full joint proposal for a total amount of USD 13 million to obtain funding from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) for the building resilient commercial smallholder agriculture (BRECSA) project. The seven-year project is planned to start in early 2023 and will target over 47,000 poor smallholder producers.¹⁰⁴ The inclusive value chain development approach is to address gaps among producers, traders and consumers. The roles of IFAD and WFP are to supervise respectively the investment and technical assistance project components. Besides these examples, collaboration has been limited. Documents and stakeholder interviews show that, in the evaluation period, complementarity among the Rome-based agencies has been mostly geographic – rather than technical or thematic – to ensure a fair distribution of Rome-based agency support across districts. Stakeholders interviewed and the decentralized evaluation highlighted the limited capacities of specific United Nations agencies (for example, to participate in joint funding proposals or in multiple UNSDPF outcome groups during implementation), the prioritization of bilateral negotiations with the GHNC, and a competition for funds as main reasons for the limited collaboration.¹⁰⁵
- WFP collaboration with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) on nutrition entailed joint support for development of the National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025, and a joint study on inclusion of monastic schools in the NSFNP. Additionally, both agencies are key participants in the working group on development of the national SBCC policy. Both WFP and UNICEF staff indicated seeing added value in the collaboration because together they have a louder voice (more influence) and can bundle technical expertise. For operational support the mandate has been divided, with UNICEF covering children under 5 years of age and adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women; and WFP covering school-age children 6-18 years of age and their households/communities. This reflects the lifecycle approach commonly used within the field of nutrition, but results in a rather limited focus on building connections and reaping synergies.
- Within the partnership section in the CSP document, there is no mention of UNDP. In practice, however, there has been very regular communication with UNDP as it is the lead agency within the UNSDPF on Outcome 4 (resilience building), and there is a track record of joint leadership/engagement in the United Nations (and earlier on the development partners) working group for disaster risk management and the national coalition of disaster risk management partners. Also, there has been a close connection with UNDP for coordination of the support to food security as part of the COVID-19 response. From the stakeholder interviews it emerged that UNDP finds it challenging that WFP (still) has a rather sectoral focus while they are primarily looking at systems change at the level of root causes, which overrides sector thinking. From the WFP country office side it has been stressed that the demarcation is clear in principle, with UNDP covering mitigation and WFP covering preparedness and response. In agriculture, WFP support to the economic contingency plan was formally part of a Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF)-financed

¹⁰³ (1) Secure Production and Smallholder Livelihoods, (2) Enhance Value, Standards, and Markets, (3) Unleash the Power of Digital Tools, (4) Secure Financing and De-Risk the Agri-Food Sector, (5) Accelerate Science and Technology, (6) Boost Nutrition Positive Initiatives, (7) Sustain Nature First Approaches, (8) Build Capacity, Strengthen Coordination and Partnerships.

¹⁰⁴ WFP Bhutan. 2022. Building Resilient Commercial Smallholder Agriculture (BRECSA) Project Design Report.

¹⁰⁵ In agriculture, WFP also collaborated informally at a small scale with the International Trade Centre (ITC) in 2019 to provide diagnosis and capacity building for the agriculture market information system (AMIS). This collaboration did not continue since the WFP Bhutan subsequently began to support the development and use of its own mobile operational data acquisition (MODA) platform.

joint project with UNDP.¹⁰⁶ WFP stakeholders confirmed that the two agencies implemented the agriculture (WFP) and tourism (UNDP) components of the project completely separately as anticipated in the financing proposal and results framework.¹⁰⁷ While there were no synergies in implementation, the collaboration with UNDP in the proposal stage facilitated access to MPTF funding for WFP.

- Coordination with the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) and UN-Women on girls' education, eliminating violence against women and girls and other work on gender equality promotion was part of the CSP but in practice this has not been an area on which WFP put emphasis.

EQ1.4 To what extent is the CSP design internally coherent and based on a clear theory of change articulating WFP role and contributions in a realistic manner and based on its comparative advantages as defined in the WFP strategic plan?

67. The line of sight for the Bhutan CSP provides a clear overview of the two formulated strategic outcomes but is based on a rather vertical approach. While there are interconnections for the activities under Strategic Outcome one and two, there is hardly any connection between the two strategic outcomes. However, there is potential for more linkage by putting agriculture as the central element connecting school nutrition and disaster risk management. The Bhutan line of sight presents a division (without crosslinks) into two separate vertical blocks of work: a strategic outcome on school nutrition and fortified foods, which addresses root causes and contributes to SDG 2.2 (ending malnutrition), and a strategic outcome on country capacity strengthening on addressing food and nutrition security challenges and preparedness and response to crises, which aims at resilience building and contributes to SDG 17.9 (capacity strengthening), more details on which can be found in Annex VI. This structure fully reflects the corporate WFP Strategic Plan (SP) 2017-2021,¹⁰⁸ which is meant to leverage the primary strengths and capacities of WFP in humanitarian response and recovery and to identify how these can be applied in the continuum from emergency relief to development to achieve the SDGs in partnership with governments, other United Nations agencies, the private sector and civil society.

68. The theory of change diagram (Annex V) was developed by the evaluation team with the aim of identifying existing and potential links and synergies across the blocks of WFP support structured by sector, with a central position for agricultural value chain activities. Local farmers supply fresh food under the NSFNP (link to school nutrition); the upcoming BRECSA project aims to foster nutrition-sensitive, climate-resilient agricultural value chains¹⁰⁹ (links to nutrition work and disaster risk management), building on WFP support to the Government's Agriculture Stimulus Plan (part of the Economic Contingency Plan) in response to the pandemic (link to disaster risk management).

69. Within the set of key assumptions accompanying the reconstructed theory of change, government commitment and engagement and the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic appear to have been the main factors influencing CSP results. The key assumptions that were formulated by the evaluation team as part of the theory of change reconstruction process highlight at the general level the need for overall government commitment and engagement and the absence of major disruptions, while for the sectoral interventions the main assumptions are about availability of resources and capacities within the targeted sector bodies. The general-level assumptions appear to have been the main ones that influenced CSP results, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic (see under EQ1.5). For the disaster risk management area of work, there was an assumption that, following the 2015 Nepal earthquake, disaster risk management would be a government priority, but this assumption has not been fulfilled. As a result, there has been a lack of human and financial resources for the disaster risk management-related government agencies, and little progress at policy level. Another factor that influenced the level of results in this area has been that GHNC

¹⁰⁶ "Protecting livelihoods and reinforcing the tourism and agriculture sectors in Bhutan".

¹⁰⁷ UNDP, WFP. 2020. Proposal for the "Protecting livelihoods and reinforcing the tourism and agriculture sectors in Bhutan" project to the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund. The agriculture component (mainly production inputs) was implemented by WFP with MoAF as counterpart, and the tourism component (mainly cash-for-work) by UNDP with Tourism Council of Bhutan as counterpart.

¹⁰⁸ WFP. 2016. WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021). WFP/EB.2/2016/4-A/1/Rev.2

¹⁰⁹ WFP. 2022. Building Resilient Commercial Smallholder Agriculture (BRECSA) Project Design Report.

regards UNDP as the main agency in this field and sees a smaller role for WFP, primarily linked to its work in agriculture.

70. The areas of work within the Bhutan CSP all fit within the corporate WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021) and positively reflect many of the main comparative advantages and challenges of WFP as mentioned in the Strategic Plan. The Bhutan CSP also resonates rather well with the new WFP Corporate Strategic Plan (2022-2025). Many of the main WFP comparative advantages and challenges at the country level that are mentioned in the corporate WFP Strategic Plan (2017-2021) appear in the design and implementation of the Bhutan CSP, in particular the leadership role of WFP on emergency logistics and telecommunications, various activities and material support around emergency response and recovery in relation to COVID-19, expertise on needs assessments (the 72-hour rapid assessment approach), strong focus on country capacity strengthening and systemic sectoral interventions (school nutrition, rice fortification, agriculture value chains, disaster risk management). At the time of the CSPE data collection phase, WFP Bhutan was in the process of aligning the CSP to the new Strategic Plan (2022-2025).¹¹⁰ The evaluation team notes that the current CSP reflects many elements of the new plan, in particular on ensuring national and local ownership and strategic collaboration with a range of ministries, the shift to a broader school health and nutrition approach, support to production and market access of farmers, the use of WFP advantages in supply chains, and support to the enhancement of resilience programming.

EQ1.5 To what extent has WFP's strategic positioning remained relevant throughout the implementation of the CSP considering changing context, national capacities and needs? – in particular in response to the COVID pandemic?

71. For most areas of work under the CSP, WFP Bhutan has managed to position itself as a key support agency and engage with the main sectoral government entities. Under the T-ICSP, WFP was already a main player in particular on school nutrition and rice fortification, and some elements within disaster risk management. Other areas are newer to WFP (agriculture, nutrition/SBCC). At a more sectoral level, observations on collaboration with the Government under the CSP are set out in paragraphs below.

72. WFP remains strategically relevant in the school feeding and nutrition programme even after successful transition to a fully government operated NSFNP. WFP support focuses on capacity strengthening the nutritional aspects of the feeding programme, including rice fortification and the fostering of connections with areas such as nutrition education (SBCC in school and at community level) and agriculture value chains.

73. In agriculture, the strategic positioning of WFP has remained relevant to the changing context and the Government's focus on food self-sufficiency as a priority triggered by the pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government carried out a reprioritization exercise and developed the Agricultural Stimulus Plan of the Economic Contingency Plan 2020, which emphasised food self-sufficiency and import substitution. WFP continued its support to farmer-school linkages to the extent possible during school closures and lockdowns, and also engaged on financing for agricultural inputs and equipment (modern variety seeds, drip irrigation kits, pipes, low-cost polyhouses, etc.). Government interviewees consistently indicated that this was in line with changed priorities during the pandemic. Additional funding received from the MPTF, technical expertise in the country office, and strong existing relationships with the Department of Agriculture and Department of Agriculture and Marketing Cooperatives (DAMC) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests facilitated these strategic adaptations by WFP.

74. WFP Bhutan was able to connect with a wide range of agencies that are active within the area of disaster risk management, both within the United Nations and beyond. However, WFP support in the disaster risk management area of work has been fragmented, without sufficient clarity on the priorities in alignment with the seven targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), 2015), which is the leading international framework for disaster risk management against which all national activities and achievements are measured.¹¹¹ Some activities, however, were more one-off in relation to the COVID-19 response.

110 WFP. 2021. WFP strategic plan (2022–2025). WFP/EB.2/2021/4-A/1/Rev.2.

111 WFP Bhutan. 2021. WFP's Disaster Risk Management Strategy, July 2021.

75. A more structural and strategic positioning for WFP is its lead role in the United Nations working group on disaster risk reduction, and in the national coalition of disaster risk management partners that was established in 2021. The development partner working group on disaster risk management that used to play a key coordination role became inactive in recent years. The COVID-19 response was fully managed by the Government (with a central role for the FCBL) and was supported by various agencies. WFP provided support in food security and logistics. This included assistance to develop a national food security emergency action plan for COVID-19, developing standard operating procedures for targeting and food distribution, and supporting the National Food Security Reserve in securing sufficient food stocks for six months for the whole population. The pandemic led to an intensification of efforts to work out how the WFP can expand its engagement with the 72-hour rapid assessment approach can be expanded and in the future be merge with the disaster management information system (DMIS), which in turn is managed by the Department of Disaster Management. This could then serve as a basis for the targeting of social protection in response to disasters or pandemics.¹¹² The pandemic has also prompted greater visibility of WFP corporate strength in logistic and supply chain management among partners involved in the COVID-19 response, but the strategic relevance of the CSP in the area of emergency telecommunications was (temporarily) reduced by and during the pandemic as it led to a shift in priorities for the Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC).^{113,114}

2.2. EQ2: What is the extent and quality of WFP'S specific contribution to country strategic plan strategic outcomes in Bhutan?¹¹⁵

EQ2.1 To what extent did WFP activities and outputs contribute to the expected outcomes of the CSP and to the UNSDPF? Were there any unintended outcomes, positive or negative?

SO1 – School-age children, women and vulnerable groups in Bhutan have improved nutrition in line with national targets by 2023

SO1 Overall achievement

Box 1: SO1 overall achievement

The CSP efforts under SO1 on strengthening of government capacities have been most effective in school nutrition and rice fortification, where WFP support has resulted in strong systems effectively managed by the Ministry of Education and FCBL. This has been achieved through a mix of support to policy and coordination processes, systems building, staff training and the improvement of school infrastructure (kitchens and stores). WFP provided support for the development of drafting the National School Feeding and Nutrition Strategy 2019-2030 and Bhutan standards for fortified rice kernel(s) drafted in 2020. Capacity strengthening on rice safety testing was provided by WFP as well as support to the building of a rice fortification plant. There is evidence of improved nutritional quality of school menus. WFP support on SBCC on nutrition is on the right track but in initial stages only.

The added value of the agriculture value chain work is high at the level of benefiting farmers/cooperatives. It has been accompanied by training of staff from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests on the use of mobile operational data acquisition (MODA) for tracking results, and support for development of the agricultural marketing policy.

¹¹² Taken from: CSP MTR.

¹¹³ CSP MTR, also backed by stakeholder interviews.

¹¹⁴ Examples mentioned by stakeholders included the logistic support to the National Food Security Reserve, mobile storage units, and training for De-Suung frontliners. In contrast, the pandemic caused the Department of IT and Telecom (DITT) of the Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC) to shift its short-term priorities towards supporting online connectivity of schools and other public service facilities – an area not supported by the CSP – while putting on hold much of its work related to telecommunications in natural disasters.

¹¹⁵ Unless stated otherwise, 2022 planning figures reflect the whole year while actual figures reflect January – July.

76. WFP has transitioned from providing food assistance for school meals to capacity strengthening support. Under this strategic outcome, WFP capacity strengthening activities aimed to ensure that children have access to quality meals in school, accompanied by a broader integrated package of health and nutrition services at a policy level and on the ground. Many of these initiatives used technology and innovation to improve nutrition outcomes, such as the roll-out of real-time monitoring and evaluation systems (the WFP MODA), and the introduction of a menu optimizer tool called School Menu Planner PLUS. WFP also supported the Ministry of Education on the development of the School Feeding and Nutrition Management Handbook.¹¹⁶

77. On rice fortification WFP adopted a systems-oriented approach to facilitate the institutionalization of sustainable regulatory, technical and infrastructural provisions in order to ensure that fortified rice delivered to schools and introduced into the supply chain is safe. Specifically, WFP provided: technical and financial assistance to FCBL to establish a rice fortification plant in Phuntsholing (ready to become operational); policy advice on the amended food act and for development of standards on rice fortification; and capacity strengthening for the Bhutan standards bureau and the Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA) on regulatory monitoring of fortified rice (training was provided in 2020/2021 but implementation of monitoring has not yet started).

78. In parallel, WFP engaged in initiatives to link local farmers to the school feeding programme, which not only enabled schoolchildren to consume local fresh food items, but also provided income to farmers in rural areas. From 2020 onwards, WFP support to farmer-school linkages further evolved into support for agricultural value chain development, which included several sub-activities (partially but not exclusively related to COVID-19) not planned in the original CSP.

79. Two main activities were focused on: 1) assisting the Government in its transition to a national school meals programme based on an integrated approach and embedding gender, environmental and social safeguards; and 2) providing technical assistance to ensure sound policies were in place and ensure the quality and safety of fortified foods, especially rice. Outputs identified were; 1) primary and secondary schoolchildren benefiting from healthy diets and 2) increased government capacity to monitor the safety and quality of fortified foods.

80. Activity 1 amounted to 68 percent of the total country portfolio budget and was reasonably funded at 73 percent of the required budget. Activity 2 represented 14 percent of the total budget and was funded only at 18 percent of the needs at the time of evaluation.

Overview of key outputs SO1/Activity 1 on NSFNP

81. The CSP planned to reach 160,000 schoolchildren with school meals, all with fortified rice (SO1/Activity 1) (SO1/Activity 2). The actual number of children benefiting from the NSFNP has been lower (around 65 percent),¹¹⁷ due to the COVID-19 lockdowns, access constraints and school closures and also as the programme has not (yet) been rolled out nationwide.

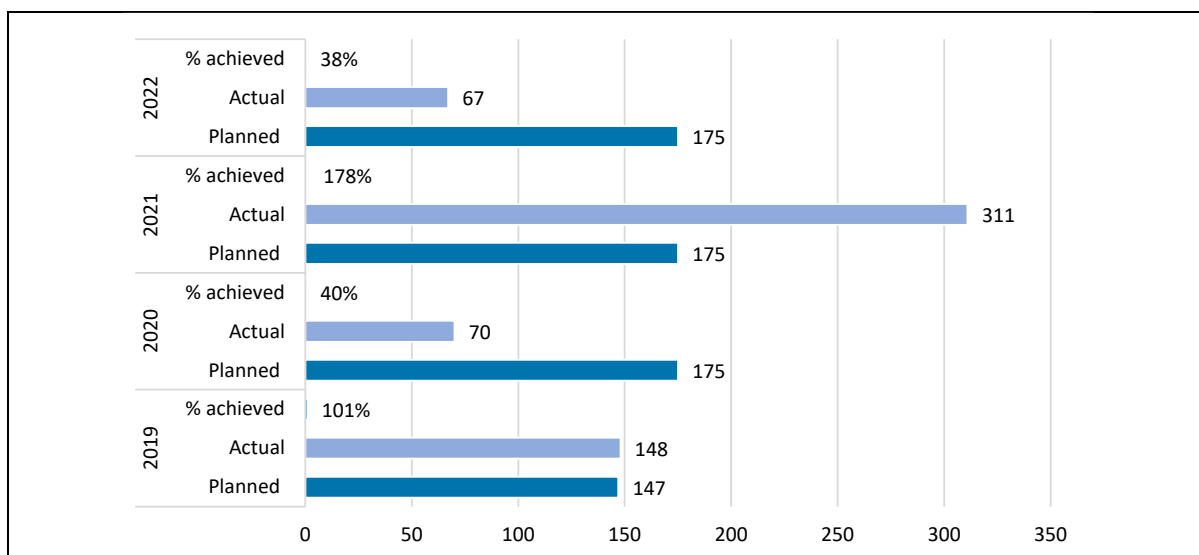
82. WFP provided training to teachers, cooks and mess hall committee members using corporate guidance on school nutrition.¹¹⁸ The results in terms of number of staff reached showed high variability between years: 148 staff received training in 2019, 70 in 2020 (school closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak), 311 in 2021, and 67 in the period Jan-July 2022 (see Figure 11). Further assessment of the outputs was hindered by the fact that pre- and post-testing was not done, and no training reports were prepared.

Figure 11: Number of government/national partner staff receiving technical assistance and training on food security and nutrition

¹¹⁶ SHND/MoE and WFP (n.d.), School Feeding and Nutrition Management Handbook.

¹¹⁷Ref: MoE/PPD. 2021. Annual Education Statistics 2021. http://www.education.gov.bt/?page_id=7583#.

¹¹⁸ WFP avails itself of a well-established corporate toolbox on school nutrition on logistics management, Mobile Operational Data Acquisition (MODA) platform for monitoring information, School Menu Planner PLUS, and the Home Grown School Feeding (HGSEF) model.



Source: 2019-2021 ACRs. 2022 data from Bhutan country office, shared on 26.08.2022.

83. Outputs on implemented infrastructure works for school nutrition through renovation of school kitchens and stores faced challenges owing to school closures as well as inflation. The renovations had to be halted when the schools were closed. When resumed, the planned number of schools supported had to be reduced due to lower availability and increased prices of construction materials caused by the COVID-19-related import limitations. Works were realized in 2021 and by July 2022 a total of 12 facilities were reported to be renovated against a plan of 44.

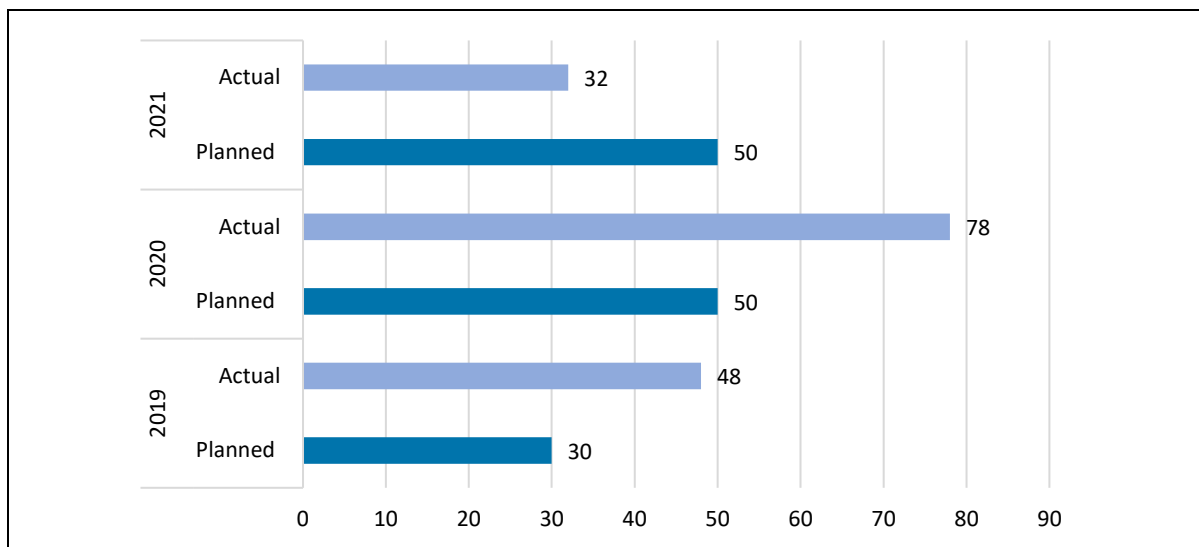
84. Support to smallholder farmers under the agricultural value chain interventions was only targeted from 2020 onwards. While the achievement against targets was low in 2020 on smallholders receiving training (20 percent achieved against planned) the activity picked up pace in 2021 achieving 78 percent of the target and had already assisted 84 percent of the planned farmers for 2022 by July 2022 (see Figure 9 in Section 1.3). The reason for the slow upstart was due to late disbursement of the first tranche by the donor in December 2019 and the recruitment of the country office policy and programme lead for agriculture in early 2020 overlapping with the start of COVID-19 pandemic. WFP also supported the Government's Agricultural Stimulus Plan (part of the Economic Contingency Plan) in the period June 2020 to May 2021 where farming inputs and equipment funded by WFP reached a total 5,557 beneficiary farmers (60 percent of which were women).¹¹⁹

Overview of key outputs SO1/Activity 2 on rice fortification

85. The performance in terms of producing intended outputs as per the annual plan for SO1/Activity 2 was very good in 2019 and 2020 (exceeding the plan), but the high level could not be maintained in 2021 as the contract of the country office fortification expert had to be ended due to lack of funds for this activity. The number of government/national partner staff who received technical assistance and training on food safety and quality of fortified foods was around 1.5 times the plan in both 2019 and 2020 but fell to two thirds of the plan in 2021.

¹¹⁹ WFP. 2021. Final Report of WFP Support to Agriculture Economic Contingency Plan.

Figure 12: Number of government/national partner staff receiving technical assistance and training on food safety and quality of fortified foods



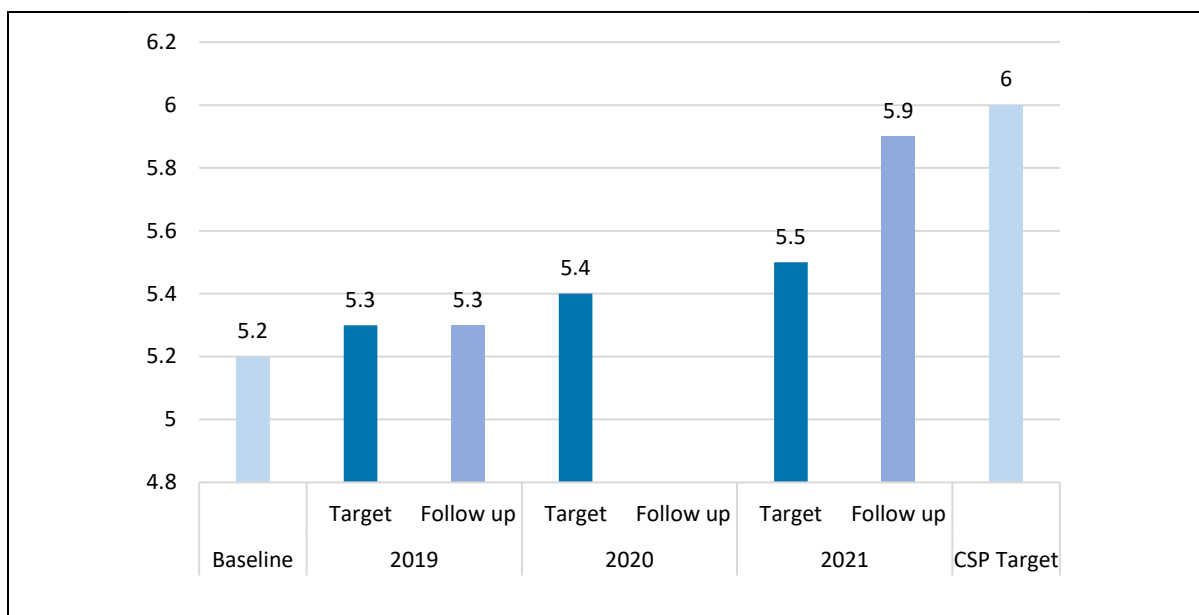
Source: 2019-2021 ACRs.

86. In terms of infrastructure for rice fortification, no outputs were reported for 2020 and 2021. In 2021 rapid food safety test kits were provided to Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority. WFP supported the establishment of a Food Corporation of Bhutan Ltd. rice fortification plant in Phuntsholing (at the border with India), which was completed in July 2022. It was originally planned to be completed in 2019. However, the start-up took more time than expected and then the Government deferred the construction works because of COVID-19-related reprioritization.

SO1 Outcomes

Dietary diversity improved considerably for children in boarding schools. By end of 2021 the dietary diversity score had already nearly reached the target values for the end of 2023. All school meals contain fortified rice.

Figure 13: School meals programme - dietary diversity



Note: In 2020, the majority of the schools remained closed throughout the year and the dietary diversity score for school

meals was not collected. Source: 2019-2021 ACRs.

87. Through its support to the NSFP and advocacy, WFP has successfully contributed to the policy decision to increase the school meals stipend from Nu. 1000 to Nu. 1500¹²⁰ per school child per month. In doing so it has responded to the 2017 dietary assessment survey. However, because of price inflation the stipend is still not enough to fully ensure the diversity of the menu required for balanced nutrition, which should also include dairy and eggs. The budget of the Ministry of Education however is limited due to COVID-19 imposed economic and financial challenges, which makes stipend increases not very likely. Parental contributions as a solution has not been systematically explored.

88. The School Menu Planner PLUS has contributed to an integrated approach to nutrition and helped reduce costs and create nutritious meals for schoolchildren. WFP launched the School Menu Planner PLUS¹²¹ tool, which is an online menu creation platform aimed to help create cost-efficient, nutritious and locally sourced menus.¹²² Preliminary findings indicated a 15 percent reduction in the costs of school meals, a 20 percent increase in school purchases of food produced by local smallholders and a 60 percent increase in the consumption of fresh, local produce by schoolchildren when attending school during the 2021 academic year.¹²³ The stipend allocated by the Government and the meal portions in the School Menu Planner PLUS are the same for all children regardless of age. It is assumed that quantities to meet dietary needs will balance out between the older and the younger children and between boys and girls, which is logical for simplicity of the stipend and to ease menu planning.¹²⁴ Moreover, the stipend does not at all times support the procurement of sufficient livestock products (meat, dairy, eggs) in line with the government guidelines, often due to seasonal shifts in availability. This in turn has led to smaller schools replacing meat and dairy products by vegetables for at least one meal a week.¹²⁵

89. **The School Menu Planner PLUS has contributed to a number of unintended positive results.** Firstly, the introduction of the School Menu Planner PLUS in association with wider assistance has improved coordination across ministries by bringing together stakeholders from education and the agriculture sector and ensuring coherent support. The menu optimiser supported an integrated farm-to-school approach that was highly appreciated by national, district and school-level education and the School and Hospital Feeding Programme (SHFP) decision makers as well as farmers and allowed WFP support to bridge institutional boundaries.¹²⁶ Secondly, the Ministry of Health (MoH) is currently planning to use the menu optimizer for hospital feeding.

90. **Farmer-to-school links improved but some gaps remain.** The proportion of perishable foods in the school meals that are produced by local farmers increased from 36 percent in 2019 to 64 percent in 2021.¹²⁷ However, despite the fact that agro-ecological production zones were taken into consideration, schools indicated that full use of the School Menu Planner PLUS has not been possible due to non-availability of required vegetables, partly as farmers may opt to grow different crops or sell to the market rather than to schools as prices that the schools negotiate on an annual basis are not always attractive.¹²⁸ Though the farmer group has the option to sell to the market in addition to the school, their production becomes inefficient and costly if their cropping choices are dependent upon what the school asks for. For example, the best product for the market might be to grow fields of cabbages whereas for the school, they need to grow a variety of vegetables and produce dairy and eggs. Some schools substituted certain unavailable vegetables with other locally available vegetables, but this may compromise nutritional value.

¹²⁰ From approximately 12 USD to 18 USD

¹²¹ WFP. 2022. Roll-Out of School Menu Planner PLUS in Bhutan: Perspectives and Lessons Learned from the Roll-Out in 5 Districts.

¹²² The tool has been created by the WFP Innovation Accelerator group based in Munich, Germany.

<https://innovation.wfp.org/project/smp-plus>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Also adolescent girls through the schools are receiving supplementation with iron and folic acid tablets.

¹²⁵ WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021. Corroborating information collected during the CSPE field mission.

¹²⁶ WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

¹²⁷ ACR 2021.

¹²⁸ Stakeholder interviews.

91. The contribution to raising community awareness on nutrition is at its initial stage but on the right track towards more integrated approaches. WFP has supported various activities to raise community awareness including disseminating SBCC messages through social media, reaching 260,000 people, and supporting nutrition research activities including the “Fill the Nutrient Gap Study”. An important activity has been the support to the National SBCC strategy (under development). In addition, nutrition education through the school curriculum was attempted through development of an interactive game called EduTriton for use at student level. The platform aims to educate students on nutrition while promoting physical activity through a game-based approach. By supporting these various efforts WFP is contributing to a more integrated approach to community awareness on nutrition, with community outreach in the pilot project implemented by the Tarayana Foundation and the dissemination of nutrition messages through mass and social media.

92. **WFP enhanced capacity strengthening on a number of policies and programmes in the area of food security and nutrition.** The outcome indicator used to measure progress against country capacity strengthening activities reported targeted and achieved numbers of policies, programmes or system components enhanced as a result of country office support, but the evaluation team could not verify what those numbers entailed. However, the evaluation confirmed country office’s contributions in the drafting of the National School Feeding and Nutrition Strategy (still in draft as it was decided by the Ministry of Education to halt until 2023 so that alignment can be sought with the 13th five-year plan), the National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan (adopted in 2021), the Bhutan standards for fortified rice kernel(s), the National SBCC strategy (under development), and the Renewable National Resources Strategy 2040.

93. The value and volume of smallholder farmers’ sales increased under the NSFNP. However, sales to schools are not always sufficiently profitable for the farmers. While the quantity of produce sold was still small in 2020, it greatly expanded in 2021 and 2022. This aligns to a sharp increase in the number of smallholder farmers supported (see Section 1.3) and was also helped by increased sales to schools that reopened late in 2020 after the pandemic-related closures. The value of sales in USD was approximately proportional to sales volumes. Women smallholder farmers accounted for about two thirds of total sales volumes and values, which matched their share in the overall beneficiary population (that is, per-beneficiary sales were similar for women and men farmers). A majority of farmers supported (60 percent) also reported an increased production of nutritious crops, but additional efforts are needed to meet the CSP target of 80 percent.

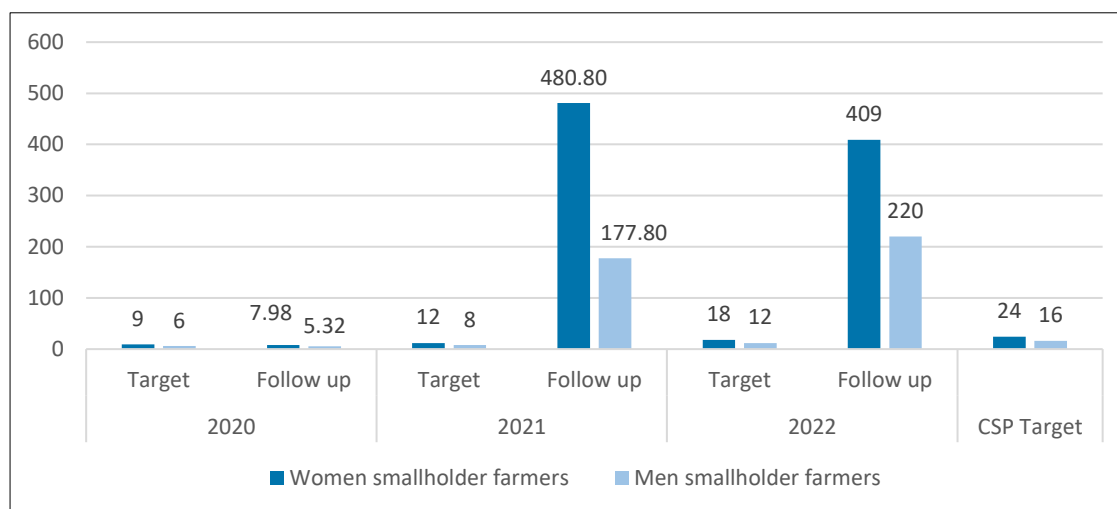
94. While WFP efforts in creating farmer-to-school linkages leading to increased farmer sales was well recognized, it was not the only factor in these contributions. Government stakeholders from district government offices and schools agreed that institutional capacity strengthening, especially on the School Menu Planner PLUS (that led to increased demand of local nutritious foods and support to farmers’ contract renewal consultations) had made an important contribution to procurement of fresh food from local farmers. At the same time, the sharp increase in sales to schools was also driven by efforts from the Government such as the initiative of regional agricultural marketing and cooperatives offices (RAMCOs) (the regional branches of DAMC) in setting up new farmer organizations and helping them to connect to schools independently of WFP support. However, district-level officers and farmer organizations, as well as the decentralized evaluation, highlighted the fact that farmers often struggled to achieve sufficient profitability (for example, due to price fluctuations over the one year duration of contracts, especially in relation to COVID-19; limited economies of scale; production only partially matching the fresh food basket of schools; and high post-harvest losses). A number of farmers also seemed to have difficulties in applying the financial literacy training for business development decisions (for example, understanding the cost of production).

95. The farmers supported as part of the Government’s Agriculture Stimulus Plan under the COVID-19 Economic Contingency Plan reported using the inputs and equipment financed by WFP to produce 1,176 mt of fresh food, half of which was sold to schools and other buyers.¹²⁹ This generated an additional income of USD 59 per beneficiary (June 2020–May 2021) alone.¹³⁰ Focus group discussion participants consistently reported that training received (especially on agricultural production) had been useful in the application of inputs and equipment received.

¹²⁹ WFP, 2021. Final Report of WFP Support to Agriculture Economic Contingency Plan.

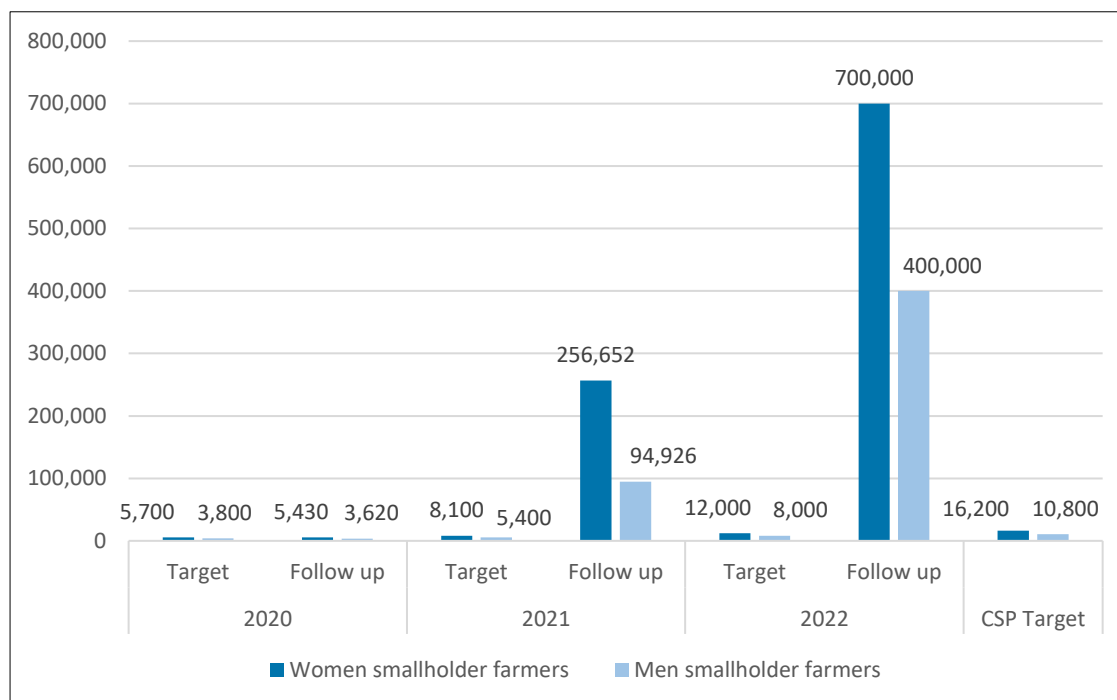
¹³⁰ WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP’s support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

Figure 14: Agricultural value chain – volume of smallholder sales (mt)



Source: 2020-2021 ACRs. 2022 data from Bhutan country office, shared on 26.08.2022.

Figure 15: Agricultural value chain - value of smallholder sales (USD)



Source: 2020-2021 ACRs. 2022 data from Bhutan country office, shared on 26.08.2022.

96. WFP capacity building at the institutional level helped the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests to strengthen its policies for agricultural marketing capacities (for example in DAMC), and systems (for renewable natural resources and statistical monitoring and reporting). Joint Rome-based agency support to the promotion and facilitation of government engagement in the Food Systems Summit process led to decentralized Food Systems Summit dialogues and was widely considered to have been successful in engaging local stakeholders and smallholder farmer representatives. It led to a significant shift in the renewable natural resources strategic priorities formulated under Food Systems Summit pathways that streamline national renewable natural resources policy arrangements, integrated the Renewable Natural Resources Strategy 2040 (2021) and the Renewable Natural Resources Marketing Strategy, and realign the

renewable natural resources timeline with the SDGs under Agenda 2030.¹³¹ The new Renewable Natural Resources Marketing Strategy 2021¹³² (an update and expansion of the Marketing Policy 2017)¹³³ put more emphasis on renewable natural resource enterprise development and smallholder market access, which led DAMC to recruit ten additional district marketing officers and create a new Renewable Natural Resources Enterprise Development and Coordination Unit, among other capacity investments.¹³⁴

97. WFP supported the digitalization of the renewable natural resources statistical monitoring and reporting system. Specifically, the renewable natural resources statistical division and WFP initiated a joint activity to provide sector-wide agriculture data for better production, planning and targeting of agriculture services and for stronger feedback and learning across the sector. WFP supported the RSD and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest's Policy and Planning Division (PPD) by leading three systems development workshops, providing technical support to set up the renewable natural resources monitoring and reporting on the WFP Mobile Operational Data Acquisition (MODA) platform, and training national and district stakeholders in system use. The setup by WFP of the renewable natural resources monitoring and reporting system and its training of users has laid the ground for enhanced monitoring and planning of policies and programmes in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. The system is expected to support the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in monitoring the impacts of national policies and programmes and in making informed planning decisions. So far, however, the data have not been systematically used by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests or WFP, mainly because it has not been completed yet but also due to remaining capacity gaps in the Policy and Planning Division and data gaps stemming from the still heavy workload of data entry by extension officers.¹³⁵

98. For school nutrition, WFP under the CSP has been supporting a shift from having Ministry of Education monitoring data within the WFP MODA system to integration within its own education management information system (EMIS). In agriculture, WFP has relied on the monitoring systems of government partners.

99. Since 2019 two different platforms have been introduced, which has caused some confusion. The WFP Mobile Data Collection and Analytics platform (introduced in 2019) was in 2020 replaced by MODA (Mobile Data Analytics) and has since been replaced with EMIS for the Ministry of Education with mixed results. For EMIS, both school principals and district education officers (DEOs) indicated they found the new approach useful, but the district education officers also shared the view that there are gaps in implementation at school level and that data is often not up to date. This is because school-level reporting is not regular and consistent due to lack of time and there are connectivity and information technology related issues, particularly in rural schools.

100. In agriculture, field-level monitoring of WFP agriculture support was done through subnational offices of the Department of Agriculture and DAMC.¹³⁶ The Department of Agriculture and DAMC provided detailed lists of farmers trained and schools connected to farmers, as well as various reports with aggregated numbers of activities/beneficiaries and narratives (such as training reports, economic contingency plan reports). The leverage of the country office over the monitoring systems in agriculture is somewhat limited, at least for the sub-activities with smaller budgets.¹³⁷ While the level of detail and reporting formats differ across sub-activities,¹³⁸ no significant issues in progress reporting were raised by stakeholders or in the CSP mid-term review. The data are generally adequate for monitoring purposes.

101. WFP helped to establish the regulatory framework for rice fortification, built capacity in rice fortification (support to FCBL to establish the rice fortification plant and to BAFRA on fortification level and overall food safety testing), and established a number of partnerships under South-South and triangular collaboration.

¹³¹ Ibid, Vol II, Annex 14

¹³² RGoB. 2021. RNR Marketing Strategy.

¹³³ RGoB. 2017. RNR Marketing Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Stakeholder interviews.

¹³⁶ District Agricultural Officers and agriculture extension officers, and Regional Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives Officers (RAMCOs), respectively.

¹³⁷ Stakeholder interviews.

¹³⁸ Review of monitoring data and reports by the ET, CSP MTR.

102. With the introduction of food fortification as a strategy to address micronutrient deficiencies in Bhutan in 2019, WFP supported the multi-sectoral Food Fortification Taskforce by starting the process of developing a regulatory and compliance framework for rice fortification. For smooth enforcement of the regulations, WFP strengthened the capacity of the relevant agencies on quality inspection services, focused on testing the right blending ratio.¹³⁹

103. WFP had established three partnerships by the end 2021, out of a total of five planned for the full CSP period.¹⁴⁰ Through the partnership with the Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, WFP strengthened Bhutan's food fortification programme with the national standards for fortified rice and rice kernels, a first step towards the development of a national regulatory and compliance system.¹⁴¹ Additionally, in 2021 WFP assisted BAFRA in the procurement of rapid food safety test kits. Particular efforts were made in establishing partnerships with counterpart organizations in India where this is more advanced. The partnership with the Association of Official Analytical Collaboration in India focused on building up Bhutan's own food analytical capacity. WFP also facilitated a linkage across the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industries to the Confederation of Indian Industries (and its Food and Agriculture Centre for Excellence) and industry experts from some multinational companies in the food sector. It also facilitated a dialogue between FCBL and an agritech company based in India. However, after having facilitated the link, WFP has not been further involved and has not followed up on results achieved from the cooperation fostered.

SO2 – 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

SO2 Overall achievement

Box 2: SO2 overall achievement

Under SO2, the focus has been on country capacity strengthening, with technical support and training on use of disaster impact assessment tools and studies as main outputs. Due to difficulties in accessing funding for this outcome, most of the activities have been discrete pieces of work supporting the Department of Disaster Management, with a need for follow-up support by WFP or others for further integration into the Government's systems and use. The latter will require an endorsed national disaster risk management roadmap and increased government commitment and financial resources. There have been ongoing WFP inputs to facilitate regular coordination among partners, including leading roles in a working group on emergency logistics and a workshop in the emergency telecommunications cluster. In response to requests from the Government, various infrastructure and equipment were provided for use in the national COVID-19 response.

104. Under SO2/Activity 3, WFP planned to focus on three main areas: emergency preparedness, disaster management and coordination, and data preparedness. Specifically, WFP, through its leadership of the emergency logistics working group and emergency telecommunications workshop, was to provide capacity strengthening for the management of national emergency resources, as well as for the enhancement and testing of national emergency plans and coordination systems.

105. One output was identified that focused on enhanced knowledge of vulnerability, emergency logistics and best practices for supply chains systems and an enhanced ability to minimize losses and improve food security.

106. Activity 3 amounted to 18 percent of the total country portfolio budget and was funded at 44 percent of the required budget.

Overview of key outputs SO2/Activity 3 on disaster risk management

107. The generation of outputs shows considerable variation across the years. From the start of the CSP, Activity 3 has been highly underfunded, which has had a bearing on what could be delivered. The number

¹³⁹ WFP ACR 2019.

¹⁴⁰ No results were achieved on this in 2022 while the target was set at four.

¹⁴¹ WFP ACR 2020.

of government/national staff trained on vulnerability to disasters and emergency logistics and supply chain systems was below the plan in both 2019 and 2020 (68 and 83 percent respectively), primarily because of the need for preparation time (especially in 2019) and as a result of shifting priorities on the Government's side in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, but by the end of the CSP period the target was greatly exceeded (total 577 staff trained against a target of 250) due to smaller pieces of, primarily, internal funding for discrete disaster risk management activities¹⁴² and switching to hybrid forms of training and meetings.

108. WFP contributed to the formulation of a joint five-year action plan¹⁴³ (emergency logistics) and national roadmap (ETC) for the Government, WFP, and other stakeholders¹⁴⁴ in the sectors. These were informed by a number of different capacity assessments including a logistics capacity assessment by WFP in 2021, a disaster risk management situational analysis by the Department of Disaster Management (still in draft form) and joint assessments by the emergency logistics working group. The implementation of the emergency telecommunications cluster roadmap has been slow, due, among other factors, to funding issues and shifting priorities of the Ministry of Information and Communication during the pandemic.

SO2 outcomes

109. There are successes in the support to disaster risk management, however overall efforts have been piecemeal and WFP has struggled to get buy-in from key stakeholders. WFP has almost reached its target for this outcome in terms of number of policies and systems supported (six against a target of seven). Specifically, on data preparedness for disaster risk reduction, WFP has supported the Government in implementing the 72-hour rapid assessment approach and building the digital vulnerability database, which should assist in estimating the likely impact of a disaster and enable a response within 72 hours. In its development, WFP supported the Department of Disaster Management in sensitizing stakeholders on data availability and gaps in disaster management; and facilitated a consultation workshop with the Government to select the vulnerability indicators to be used for this approach.¹⁴⁵ According to the mid-term review the 72-hour rapid assessment approach is a key example of a WFP contribution that is appreciated by partners, although stakeholders also cautioned on the need for proper customization of such prototype products to suit the local context.¹⁴⁶

110. The WFP contribution to earthquake impact assessment through the study on geospatial vulnerability patterns in Bhutan in relation to earthquakes has filled a gap in the Government's information base. The earthquake impact planning (EQUIP) study supported by WFP suggests a focus on urban areas in western Bhutan, particularly Paro, Thimphu, Punakha and Wangdue (high population and high earthquake risks), and on rural Wangdue (high food insecurity and high earthquake risks).¹⁴⁷ However, the mid-term review reported that WFP had not adequately engaged with some of the relevant local stakeholders in preparatory processes, for example it was highlighted that the Department of Geology and Mines was not engaged as a key stakeholder, owing to which its uptake by Government had been slow.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, the evaluation team learned that the WFP-proposed project to study the impact of GLOF has been put on hold due to a lack of consensus on the scope, project modalities and roles and responsibilities among the various government actors. This points to a need to work with technical agencies in addition to the Department of Disaster Management.¹⁴⁹

111. WFP also supported infrastructure,¹⁵⁰ recognizing the immediate needs in storage systems for food and emergency supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic. WFP has so far provided a total of five disaster risk management-related infrastructure works that have been implemented as per the CSP target.

¹⁴² Internal WFP funding was received from the Immediate Response Account for preparedness activities (IR-PREP), Critical Corporate Initiatives (CCI), and the South-South Opportunity Fund. Also, some funding was received from external sources like the SDG Fund.

¹⁴³ National Humanitarian Supply Chain Logistics Preparedness Working Group. (n.d.). Five-Year Action Plan (DRAFT).

¹⁴⁴ Both sectors were also covered in the disaster risk management situation analysis conducted by the Department of Disaster Management with WFP support in 2021.

¹⁴⁵ WFP MTR.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Robinson T. 2021. Earthquake Impact Planning for Bhutan, Newcastle University / Durham University.

¹⁴⁸ WFP MTR.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ WFP. 2022. WFP's Assistance to Disaster Risk Reduction in Bhutan (2019-2023).

Infrastructure was provided in the form of 13 pre-fabricated units (containers) for coordination hubs to be used by disaster frontlines, and eight mobile storage units for search and rescue teams. Complementary training was also provided to the Department of Disaster Management staff and De-Suung volunteers on handling and setting up the units during the pandemic

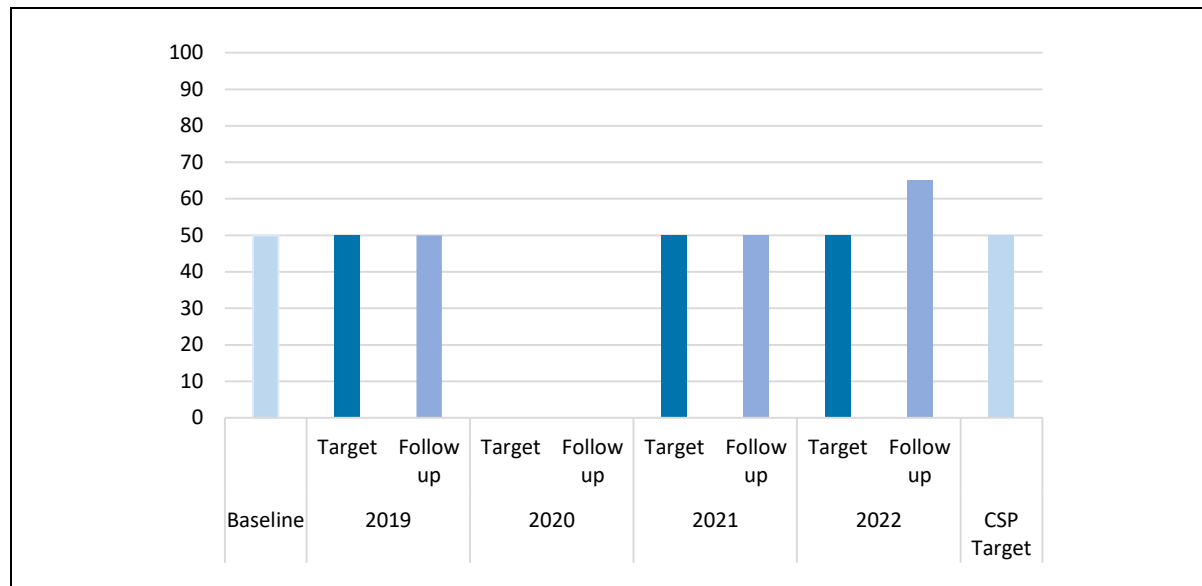
112. On governance and coordination, WFP in consultation with the Department of Disaster Management, completed the Roadmap for Disaster Risk Management 2022-2026. It covers the national hazard profile, national preparedness level and actions to strengthen the Government’s disaster risk reduction frameworks and systems. However, the roadmap has not yet been endorsed.

113. WFP also supported disaster risk management stakeholder mapping for increased synergies among disaster risk management agencies. While the country office has made significant headway in building a broad coalition of partners in the disaster risk management space, its efforts to support the strengthening of disaster risk management governance/coordination have faced difficulties. In this regard, the mid-term review noted the need for WFP to be mindful of not overstepping boundaries in relation to government-led platforms.¹⁵¹

EQ2.2 To what extent did WFP contribute to the achievement of cross-cutting aims (protection, accountability to affected populations, gender, equity and inclusion, environment, climate change and other issues as relevant)?

114. WFP under the CSP is contributing to gender as a cross-cutting aim through its support to school nutrition and agriculture value chain work. The CSP document had a score of “3” on the corporate WFP Gender and Age Marker, but the annual country reports (ACRs) for the period 2019-2022 all present a score of “4” (highest level). The target for the CSP indicator on gender equality (“proportion of food assistance decision making entity members who are women”) was 50 percent, which was met in both 2019 and 2021, and surpassed in 2022 (no data on 2020 when schools were closed for large part of the year).

Figure 16: Proportion of food assistance decision making entity members who are women



Source: 2019-2021 ACRs. 2022 data from Bhutan country office, shared on 26.08.2022.

115. As was also mentioned in the mid-term review, this evaluation found that although there is agreement with the principles of disability, gender and social inclusion, the focus in the disaster risk

¹⁵¹ WFP MTR.

management area of work on GEDSI aspects in actual work so far has been limited.¹⁵² GEDSI-relevant contributions¹⁵³ were made by the CSP elements on school nutrition and agricultural value chains.

116. WFP contributes to addressing nutrition challenges of school-age children in Bhutan in a gender- and social inclusion-sensitive way, although age- and sex-dependent dietary needs have not been taken into account. Given a high enrolment rate in primary and secondary schools, with higher figures for girls than boys,¹⁵⁴ school nutrition is reaching the majority of school-age children in Bhutan. The school meals programme stipends and meal planning are based on flat rates irrespective of age group or sex, which is logical for simplicity of the stipend and to ease menu planning, but can cause problems when schools have relatively more boys and/or older children. Because government policies determine which children receive school meals, WFP cannot directly influence targeting decisions. Nonetheless, it can strongly advocate for inclusion-related issues (“leave no one behind”), as, for example, is done through the study on expansion of the NSFNP to monastic schools¹⁵⁵ and nunneries that is supported jointly with UNICEF.¹⁵⁶

117. The support on agriculture value chains development mainly reaches women, but no broader transformative (or otherwise gender-differential) effects on women have been identified thus far. Until 2021, GEDSI was not visibly mainstreamed into WFP agriculture support. This was especially true for gender equality and the empowerment of women GEEW. The decentralized evaluation¹⁵⁷ found no evidence that a gender lens had been adopted in farmer-school linkages (for example, absence of gender capacity strengthening for extension agents, actions to enhance leadership in farmer organizations or access to credit for women). Gender-disaggregated beneficiary data reveal that approximately two thirds of the participating farmers are women, in line with rural demographic patterns,¹⁵⁸ but “no attempt was made to assess how WFP-supported activities impacted on women’s existing income generation or marketing activities, or the impacts of male out-migration on women’s position in the home” (p. 23).

118. Focus group discussions with women farmers corroborated the fact that training on agricultural practices (such as mulching, bio-fertilizer making, greenhouse use), and agricultural inputs and equipment (seed varieties, water tanks, greenhouses, etc.) had increased agricultural production for women. This additional production enabled women to diversify their households’ diet, and to increase their contribution to household income (and reduce income gaps with household members who are men) by selling surplus production to schools and in the market. However, while this may eventually contribute to women’s economic empowerment, neither this evaluation nor the decentralized evaluation found evidence that broader transformative (or otherwise gender-differential) effects on women had already materialized. In part this is due to the fact that these effects take time to materialize.

119. Focus group discussion participants in this evaluation and the decentralized evaluation highlighted the fact that that financial literacy training was not fully applied yet, that access to credit continued to be limited for women, and that the income from additional production had so far been mostly spent within the household but women were uncertain whether/how to invest it in productive activities. This may change as within more recent funding proposals there is increased inclusion of gender assessments and targeted actions. In the BRECSA project design report¹⁵⁹ (2022), IFAD and WFP put strong emphasis on women

¹⁵² The country office indicated that there is a need to study more how GEDSI, and also AAP and protection can best be mainstreamed into the DMCP, and that they are ready to provide inputs on this. Neither the NLPWG capacity gap analysis report nor the Five-Year Action Plan (2021) includes any reference to gender or protection issues. Ref: RGoB. 2021. Report on the National Logistics Preparedness Working Group Workshop on Preparedness Gap Analysis and Action Planning.

¹⁵³ The term GEDSI also includes disability, but this so far has received limited attention within the CSP.

¹⁵⁴ Ref: MoE/PPD. 2021. Annual Education Statistics 2021. http://www.education.gov.bt/?page_id=7583#.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. As of 2021, there are 184 government monastic schools in the country. There are also private monastic schools but data are unavailable. There were 7390 boys enrolled in monastic schools in 2021.

¹⁵⁶ In Bhutan the monastic schools are primarily attracting children from a lower socioeconomic background.

¹⁵⁷ WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP’s support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

¹⁵⁸ For example, in the district with the largest economic contingency plan beneficiary numbers (Trongsa), women represented 62 percent of the beneficiaries and 64 percent of the total farmer population. Sources: WFP. 2021. World Food Programme Support to Agriculture Economic Contingency Plan. Final Report, June 2021; and NSB. 2021. Labour Force Survey 2020.

¹⁵⁹ For the MoAF, WFP successfully mobilized support from FAO and IFAD for the 2021 FFS Dialogues, which formulated eight Bhutan national pathways that were translated into national RNR strategies. In 2021, IFAD and WFP formulated – and

farmers' opportunities in agriculture value chains, and proposed corresponding actions – such as a broader range of business development trainings, leadership training, matching grants and private-public partnerships to create jobs in rural enterprises particularly for youth and women, as well as time-efficient techniques and technologies to reduce women's workload – using a wider, updated and more specific evidence base than at the CSP design stage.

120. **WFP does not provide direct contributions to the outcome area in the UNSDPF on gender and social inclusion.** Under the UNSDPF, equal opportunities for women and vulnerable groups is captured as Outcome 3. In the plan, WFP is mentioned as one of the contributors to this area, but, although WFP is a member of the inter-agency United Nations Gender Working Group, no WFP activities/contributions in this outcome area have been planned and delivered previously.¹⁶⁰

121. Environmental sustainability has featured highly in the CSP, and most of the activities under SO2 are adequate and sufficiently contributing to climate change adaptation. Bhutan is the only carbon-neutral country in the world, and environmental sustainability is high up on the national agenda. In line with the WFP 2017 environmental policy, the Bhutan CSP committed to compliance with WFP environmental standards, including capacity strengthening of national stakeholders on the proper use and maintenance of infrastructure.¹⁶¹

122. Although neither the CSP document nor the project proposals (apart from the BRECSA one) make explicit reference to the WFP corporate 2017 climate change policy or its contents, and it was also not a key theme in the stakeholders response during the mission, WFP Bhutan's support in relation to climate change can safely be rated to have been a core element within the CSP. SO2 reflects most of the menu of WFP programme activities on climate change.¹⁶² For instance, WFP supported FCBL in the identification of the shortest routes for supplying schools with the dry foods for the school meals programme (through a supply chain efficiency study, although the results have not been taken up yet), and the connection of schools with local farmers (rather than procuring from more centralized sources) meant that transport distances for fresh food became shorter as well. In addition, smallholder farmers were provided with green technologies (for example, low-cost polyhouses and water harvesting equipment), and the country office has also reduced its carbon-footprint as part of the United Nations House's campaign on "greening the blue". Furthermore, the impact of climate change on children is an emerging area of work in Bhutan where WFP collaborates with UNICEF and UNDP.

EQ2.3 To what extent are the achievements of the CSP likely to be sustainable, in particular from a financial, social, institutional and environmental perspective?

123. The country capacity strengthening achievements on school nutrition and rice fortification are mostly sustainable. As most of the SBCC work is in rather early stages, sustainability will depend upon how the results and lessons will be used in advocacy and policy support, and the levels of adoption and integration into government systems, in particular in the education and health sectors. As the NSFNP is fully government owned, funded and operated, it is in principle sustainable from all perspectives: financial, social, institutional and environmental. However, further WFP support for improvement of the various elements within the NSFNP, for example, scaling up the School Menu Planner PLUS, upgrading the nutrition curriculum and establishing more SBCC in school activities, will all contribute to the sustainability of these interventions and will be of benefit to the nutritional and health status of children.

124. The need for further WFP support is also evidenced by the mixed level of progress on digitalization of the monitoring and reporting systems. When MODA was first introduced, WFP thoroughly trained involved Ministry of Education staff, district education officers and school-level stakeholders on its use. Building on

won – a joint proposal to obtain funding from the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP). WFP Bhutan. 2022. Building Resilient Commercial Smallholder Agriculture (BRECSA) Project Design Report.

¹⁶⁰ UN Bhutan. 2022. 2021 UN Country Annual Results Report. UN Bhutan. 2021. 2020 UN Country Annual Results Report.

¹⁶¹ Environmental standards include conservation of biodiversity, protection of natural habitats, including against desertification, sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, prevention and management of pollution, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Ref: WFP. 2017. Environmental Policy. WFP/EB.1/2017/4-B/Rev.1.

¹⁶² The WFP climate change policy list the following categories of programme activities: a) emergency preparedness and response; b) food security analysis, early warning and climate services; c) community resilience, risk reduction, social protection and adaptation; and d) policy support. Ref: WFP. 2017. Climate Change Policy. WFP/EB.1/2017/4-A/Rev.1.

these experiences with digitalized monitoring systems, from 2022 onwards, all statistics around the NSFNP have been integrated within the Ministry of Education's education management information system (EMIS). This ensures full government ownership and longer-term sustainability, although it was found by the evaluation mission to have some teething problems (incomplete data entries) despite the training sessions that were done.¹⁶³ Likewise, it was found that some continued WFP support on rice fortification will be useful in order to enhance the chances that good progress will be made in coming years in establishing effective regulatory frameworks, logistics, and marketing through commercial outlets.

125. For the support on nutrition within the curriculum, sustainability is essentially in-built because of its systems-approach and full ownership by the Ministry of Education. This is less the case however for the one-off initiatives on SBCC through mass or social media, and the pilot on community-level SBCC together with the Tarayana Foundation. However, on the positive side, the SBCC baseline study (and also the FNG study) are expected to generate important data that can feed into the development of a national SBCC strategy, which will enhance government ownership (with the Ministry of Health in the lead), and translate into concrete actions in this area by a variety of actors, including civil society organizations and even the private sector (for example, shopkeepers).

126. Results achieved in country capacity strengthening on agriculture exhibit relatively high institutional and financial sustainability. WFP activities are integrated within national and local Ministry of Agriculture and Forests structures, and the continuation of the ministry's operations does not depend much on financial contributions from WFP. The agriculture portfolio is underpinned by strong policy relevance and is institutionally firmly embedded within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests and the Ministry of Education.¹⁶⁴ In the annual country reports for 2019-2021, reference is made to: environmental sustainability through having a higher proportion of locally produced perishable foods within school meals (2019 ACR); the WFP strategy for climate-resilient food systems, which enhances food self-sufficiency and spurs renewable natural resources sector transformation while ensuring sustainable natural resources management (2020 ACR and 2021 ACR); and WFP support towards sustainable and resilient food systems, jointly with IFAD (2021 ACR). WFP support to farmers is delivered through existing national- and local-level administrative structures and arrangements, which minimizes sustainability risks related to handover processes. The decentralized model of procurement of fresh food from farmers is well established and can build on strong inter-ministerial and inter-departmental collaboration within the Government.¹⁶⁵

127. Some of the effects of country capacity strengthening in the individual domain (training) may weaken in the future due to the acceleration of staff turnover and organizational changes triggered by the ongoing civil service reform in Bhutan (announced in June 2022 by the Royal Civil Service Commission), which is expected to result in the restructuring of ministries and departments, and staff reduction.¹⁶⁶ In the organizational domain, the sustainability of the renewable natural resources monitoring and reporting system will depend on how both WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests plan to address the currently limited capacities (financial constraints and the lack of a platform of its own) for system management in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests' Policy and Planning Division (PPD) and limited use of the data for planning and monitoring. Financial sustainability of WFP support to agriculture is not a key concern. It was financed with a limited budget,¹⁶⁷ and only a small fraction of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) funding for agriculture went to supporting 'continuous' Ministry of Agriculture and Forests operations¹⁶⁸ (for example, travel costs for training by extension agents) that would eventually have to be replaced with funding from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in the future. The remaining

¹⁶³ The NSFNP monitoring system on the MODA platform facilitated by WFP was a legacy of the previous WFP DEV, and under the CSP the step has been made to further digitization and transition to EMIS. During the field visits, both school principals and DEOs indicated that they found the new approach useful, but the DEOs also indicated that there are gaps and that data is often not up to date. The reason for this is that school-level reporting is neither regular nor consistent due to a lack of time and connectivity and IT issues, particularly in rural schools.

¹⁶⁴ CSP MTR, interviews with national and district-level officials, WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Decentralized Evaluation, stakeholder interviews.

¹⁶⁶ RGoB. 2022. Re-organization of the Civil Service Agencies. Press Release, Royal Civil Service Commission, 10 June 2022.

¹⁶⁷ Allocations from the KOICA funding towards the CSP (USD 354,450 for agriculture area of work; forecast for the 2019-2023 period) and from the economic contingency plan (USD 200,000; received in 2020). Source: Decentralized Evaluation.

¹⁶⁸ WFP operational workplans with DoA and DAMC, 2020 and 2021.

budget went to one-time activities (country capacity strengthening and economic contingency plan support).

128. Remaining challenges at the farmer/cooperatives level may hinder a further scale-up of results on the value chain activities, although they do not substantially weaken the results achieved by current beneficiaries. Focus group discussions with farmers and the decentralized evaluation point towards several sustainability issues (in part already discussed in EQ 2.2). This includes: (i) limited economies of scale in farmer-school linkages for smaller schools, also because of the fixed school stipend per child;¹⁶⁹ and (ii) persistently high post-harvest losses (20-70 percent), and limited access to credit and technical capacities hindering farmer groups making and managing investments. These constraints do not pose a serious risk to the results already achieved but may prevent farmers from seizing existing or emerging business opportunities to scale up the benefits of WFP support.

129. For the CSP's area of work on disaster risk management in relation to earthquakes and other disasters, the prospects of institutional sustainability are not as good as for the other areas of work. While fully featured in the 12th five-year plan, the Government's commitment to effective policy development and implementation in this area seems to have decreased. After the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, there was increased commitment from the Government side to establish/improve systems on disaster management. But in recent years the progress on this at an upstream level has been slow, which is limiting sustainability of technical and other country capacity strengthening support. An example is the 72-hour rapid assessment approach system, which has been handed over to the Department of Disaster Management but the department has indicated that it cannot avail itself of means to keep the database updated, and that there is a need for integrating/merging within the disaster management information system in order to ensure sustainability. While WFP support activities on preparedness and response are based on a systems approach, for most of them, sustainability of results is hindered by inadequate levels of government commitment and engagement at present. Given the relatively early stage of capacity strengthening activities in emergency logistics and telecommunications, the sustainability of implemented or planned actions cannot be reliably assessed as yet. By having strongly enhanced sector coordination,¹⁷⁰ the National Logistics Preparedness Working Group seem to address a key bottleneck in the institutional sustainability of actions planned in the five-year action plan for emergency logistics. The implementation of the roadmap for the emergency telecommunications cluster, in contrast, is likely to be further slowed down by the lack of external funding for the Department for IT and Telecom and the shift in national priorities during the pandemic.¹⁷¹

2.3. EQ3: To what extent has WFP used its resources efficiently in contributing to country strategic plan outputs and strategic outcomes?

EQ3.1 To what extent were outputs delivered within the intended timeframe?

130. Apart from the delays due to the national COVID-19 response measures and restrictions from March 2020 onwards, the country office has managed to produce most of the outputs in time. The temporal patterns on generation of outputs show considerable variation though, both across the different areas of work and between activities within each area.

131. For the majority of the activities that had to be halted or reduced in scale after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP could resume implementation in 2021. For some of them, the country office has been able to make up for the lower output production level in 2020 by achieving higher output levels than originally planned for 2021. At the time of the country mission for the CSPE in July 2022, some activities were still on hold or otherwise not yet back to the implementation level as per the original CSP timeframe. The difficulty accessing financing for rice fortification and disaster risk management support activities is the main reason behind these delays in Activity 2 and 3. In Activity 1, the reprioritization exercises by GHNC and

¹⁶⁹ Smaller schools procure less food from farmers. Moreover, the stipend pays the same amount per child independently of the number of students in a school. Given the fixed costs of procuring food from local farmers – especially transaction costs of schools and farmer organizations, and transport costs – the average procurement costs per student are higher in smaller schools and may result in lower prices being offered to farmers.

¹⁷⁰ Stakeholder interviews.

¹⁷¹ Stakeholder interviews.

the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in response to the pandemic required significant time for negotiation, and annual realignment of work plans and budgets.¹⁷² Technical assessments, trainings and workshops were not encouraged and required lengthy and time-consuming approvals.¹⁷³ A detailed narrative description of output production achievement over time per activity area is provided in Annex XII.

132. Due to small sample size, it was not possible to underpin the previous finding with a meaningful quantitative analysis of the time elapsed between funding availability and first disbursement. This was because a high proportion of the grants were multi-year pledges indicating that they were tied to donor specifications on when a grant expenditure is to be conducted, which was thus not at the discretion of the country office. Only 11 percent of the total grants with a terminal disbursement date after 31 Dec 2018 were not tied to donor specifications on the timings of expenditures.¹⁷⁴

133. According to different government and local-level stakeholders interviewed, outputs (trainings, infrastructure, information systems, assessments, policy support, etc.) were delivered to the expected quality and they were generally delivered on time. No quality issues were raised by these stakeholders, documented in reports, or observed by the evaluation team in their visits to schools and farmer groups. Feedback of participants in trainings¹⁷⁵ and workshops¹⁷⁶ was very positive. In addition the timing of outputs generally did not affect their quality. Since delays in outputs resulted from either the pandemic and/or the reprioritization exercises of the Government, the content and timing continued to be aligned with the Government's needs. In some cases, changes to the original timeline improved the quality of outputs. For instance, postponing the installation of the rice blending facility in Phuntsholing allowed FCBL to adopt a more up-to-date blending technology (double paddle). The WFP decision to support the Government's COVID-19 response in agriculture accelerated both output achievements (including farmers' sales to schools and the market) and their quality (for example, through additional training on post-harvest management).

EQ3.2 To what extent does the depth and breadth of coverage ensure that the most vulnerable benefit from the programme?

134. WFP Bhutan has delivered services to all relevant sectoral government institutions as per the areas of work in the CSP, although with varying levels of depth.

135. Country capacity strengthening is the central theme within the CSP, and all key government agencies within the sectors in which support is provided are covered. The choice of national and district-level institutional partners for each of the areas of work within the CSP is considered adequate, although there has been more interaction with some agencies than with others:

- Within SO1 (Activity 1 and Activity 2), the focus is on education, agriculture, food and nutrition. WFP provided capacity strengthening support and/or technical services to, and coordinated with, all relevant government line ministries in these fields, and supported key sectoral programmes with national coverage (NSFNP, national Food Fortification Programme) targeted to both the broader population and the most vulnerable.¹⁷⁷ It is the evaluation team's observation that under SO1 the strongest connections as of mid-2022 are with SHND/Ministry of Education, Department of Agriculture/Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, and DAMC/Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.

172 Decentralized Evaluation and stakeholder interviews.

173 WFP. 2022. Annual report 2021 for the KOICA project 'The consolidating of a fully integrated universal National School Nutrition Programme in Bhutan'.

174 As per country portfolio budget (CPB) grant balances report extracted from IRM Analytics.

175 For example, according to FGDs with farmers conducted by the evaluation team, or: WFP. 2021. Training Participants' Evaluation Report of Humanitarian Supply Chain & Logistics Management Training (15 - 19 Nov 2021).

176 For example: WFP. 2021. Workshop Participants' Feedback Report of the National Logistics Preparedness Working Group Workshop on Capacity Gaps Analysis and Action Planning (18 - 22 Oct 2021).

177 The following agencies were supported: Ministry of Health (MoH), Department of Public Health (DoPH) and District Health Offices; Ministry of Education (MoE) including the School Health and Nutrition Division (SHND), Policy and Planning Division, School Health and Nutrition Steering Committee, and district education officers; MoAF including the Department of Agriculture (DoA), DAMC and district agriculture officers. Also, WFP supported various other government agencies: the Food Corporation of Bhutan Ltd. (FCBL), BAFRA, National Food Technology Laboratory, and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

- SO2 (Activity 3) focuses on disaster analysis and disaster risk management. In this area, the main government counterpart is the Department of Disaster Management under the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (MoHCA). The department is the focal agency for managing all natural disasters in Bhutan and coordinating service provision in disaster response. It is thus the adequate counterpart for WFP in terms of both coverage and targeting of the most vulnerable people and communities affected by natural disasters.

136. Decision making for the selection of final beneficiaries was done by government counterparts with generally limited influence of the country office. The NSFNP supported by WFP reached a large proportion of all schoolchildren in Bhutan (indirect beneficiaries). In agriculture, the country office focused on a smaller proportion of farmers (as direct beneficiaries) in districts not already covered by the other Rome-based agencies.

137. WFP support to the NSFNP is fully focused on country capacity strengthening, indirectly reaching all children who receive one, two or three meals per day under this programme. As per the CSP document, the individual /community-level beneficiaries of the support to be provided by WFP were envisaged to consist of the children reached by the school meals. More specifically, as of 2021, there were 101,762 students (52 percent girls, 48 percent boys) benefiting from the school feeding programme, 64.5 percent of all schoolchildren in Bhutan.¹⁷⁸ In order to identify options for improving the coverage of children from socioeconomically more disadvantaged households, WFP together with UNICEF are advocating for the inclusion of monastic institutions in the programme.¹⁷⁹

138. Between January 2020 and July 2022, the support to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests on agriculture has directly benefited 4,254 smallholder farmers (out of a target of 9,000 in the full CSP period) in five districts of the NSFNP (Bumthang, Samtse, Lhuentse, Trongsa, Zhemgang).¹⁸⁰ In addition, 5,557 farmers in the last four district also received economic contingency plan support between June 2020 and May 2021.¹⁸¹ The districts were mainly selected to close the gap in the geographic coverage of the flagship programmes of the other Rome-based agencies in Bhutan. As shown in Figure 17, the IFAD-led Commercial Agriculture and Resilient Livelihoods Enhancement Programme (CARLEP) covers six eastern districts, and the joint FAO-World Bank Food Security and Agriculture Productivity Project (FSAPP) runs in five south-western districts. Both programmes started before 2019. The 14 districts covered by all Rome-based agencies together represent 99 percent of the agricultural land used in Bhutan (see Annex XIII). The rationale of each Rome-based agency for the selection of districts is described in Box 3.

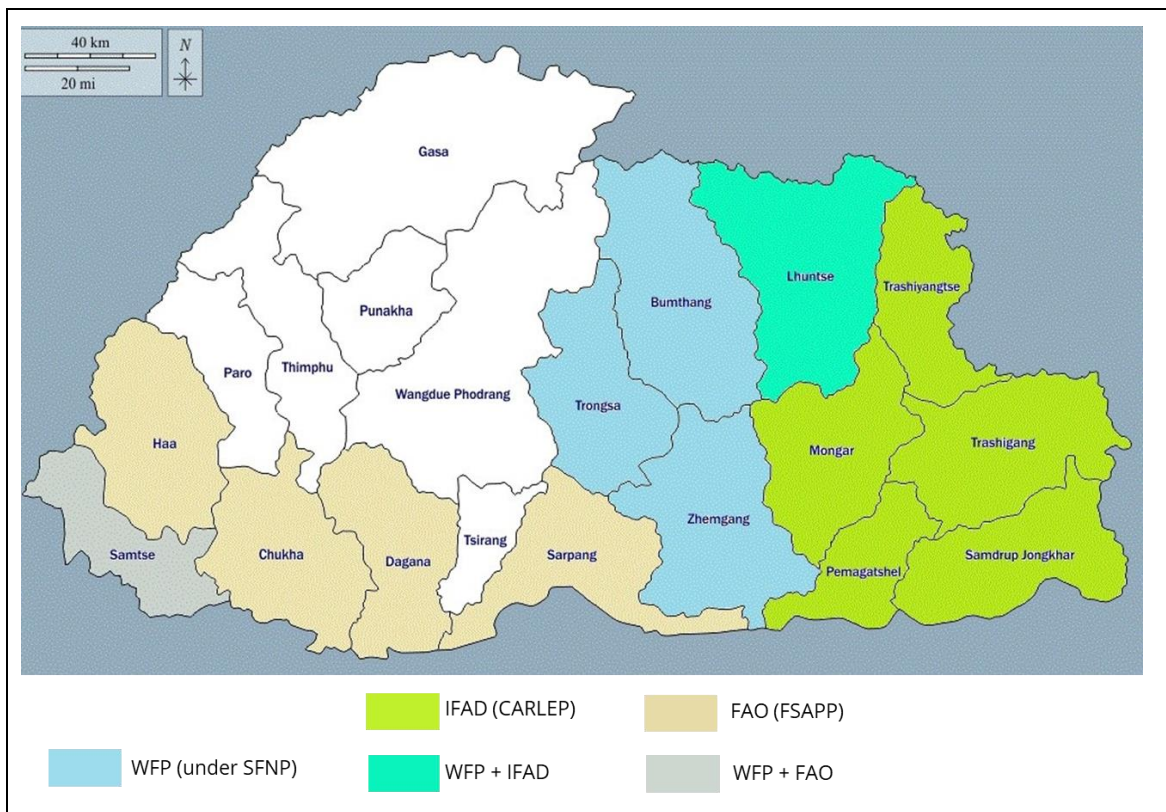
¹⁷⁸ In 2021, from among the 157,662 children in primary or secondary schools, school meals were provided to 101,762 children: 39,473 students in boarding schools were getting three meals per day, and 33,910 and 28,379 students respectively were provided with two meals and one meal per school day. The school meals programme in total covers 52,981 girl students and 48,781 boy students. Ref: MoE/PPD. 2021. Annual Education Statistics 2021. http://www.education.gov.bt/?page_id=7583#.

¹⁷⁹ Part of the National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025 study jointly supported by WFP and UNICEF.

¹⁸⁰ WFP. 2022. Annual report 2021 for the KOICA project 'The consolidating of a fully integrated universal National School Nutrition Programme in Bhutan'.

¹⁸¹ WFP. 2021. World Food Programme Support to Agriculture Economic Contingency Plan. Final Report, June 2021.

Figure 17: District coverage of main Rome-based agency programmes in CSP period



Notes: The IFAD and FAO programmes started before and are expected to continue until after the CSP period (2019-2023).

Sources: Map designed by the evaluation team based on:

- WFP. 2022. Annual report 2021 for the KOICA project 'The consolidating of a fully integrated universal National School Nutrition Programme in Bhutan'
- IFAD, RGoB. 2021. CARLEP Annual Progress Report FY2020-2021
- RGoB, WB. 2020. Bhutan Food Security and Agriculture Productivity Project (FSAPP) – proposal GAFSP Public Sector Window, COVID-19 Response Additional Funding.

Box 3: Selection of districts by Rome-based agencies

The three agencies selected their target districts based on poverty, presence of the other Rome-based agencies, and types of value chains. CARLEP (and other IFAD) investment in vegetable and dairy value chains had already been targeted to the poorest six eastern districts when FSAPP and WFP support to agriculture started. IFAD's rationale for selecting the six districts was to cover the largest number of poor people in the country and to spatially concentrate its poverty reduction efforts. Distances and communication issues were the main reasons why IFAD eventually dropped its plan to expand its vegetable value chain support to central-southern and west-southern districts.¹⁸² The joint FAO-World Bank FASSP, which started two years after CARLEP, sought to build on previous IFAD work and expand coverage of that work to selected west-southern districts.¹⁸³ Infrastructure investments under previous World Bank projects and the types of high value crops grown for commercialization (such as winter vegetables) also played a role in the district selection of FASSP.¹⁸⁴ Finally, WFP support to the economic contingency plan was based on poverty criteria at the district level, collaboration opportunities with FASSP in Samtse and CARLEP in Lhuntse districts respectively,¹⁸⁵ as well as gaps in district coverage by the other Rome-based agencies.¹⁸⁶

Sources: See footnotes in Box 3.

139. Box 3 summarizes the coverage of the Rome-based agency programmes in terms of beneficiaries and agricultural areas. The 9,000 smallholder farmers targeted by WFP under the NSFNP represent an estimated 5.7 percent of all persons employed in agriculture in Bhutan. The programmes are similar in the total numbers of smallholder farmers living in programme districts (approximately 40,000 to 60,000 per programme) and targeted as direct beneficiaries (7,115 to 13,400 per programme). The coverage ratios at district and country levels thus do not differ much across Rome-based agencies either – although the budget for WFP farmer support was substantially lower than the corresponding IFAD and FAO budgets,¹⁸⁷ due to differences in implementation modalities and assets/services supported. The key components of the three programmes have similar objectives in relation to farmers (support to production, market access and/or value chains to generate income for farmers) but differ in other components.

Table 4: Beneficiary coverage of main Rome-based agency programmes

	WFP (under NSFNP)	IFAD (CARLEP)	FAO (FSAPP)
Planned implementation period	Jan 2020 - Dec 2023	Dec 2015 - Dec 2025	Sep 2017 - Dec 2024
Smallholder farmers (direct beneficiaries) targeted in implementation period	9 000	7 115	13 400
Number of persons employed in agriculture in programme districts	39 667	47 210	59 032
Proportion of persons employed in agriculture targeted within programme districts	22.7%	15.1%	22.7%

¹⁸² IFAD. (n.d.). Kingdom of Bhutan Country Strategy Note Main report and appendices.

¹⁸³ WB. 2017. Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme Trust Fund. Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Grant in the Amount of USD 8.0 million to the Kingdom of Bhutan for a Food Security and Agriculture Productivity Project.

¹⁸⁴ Stakeholder interviews and GAFSP. 2017. Bhutan: Food Security and Agriculture Productivity Project (FSAPP) Operations Manual (Revised 2018).

¹⁸⁵ WFP. 2020. Proposal for the "Protecting livelihoods and reinforcing the tourism and agriculture sectors in Bhutan" project to the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund.

¹⁸⁶ Stakeholder interviews and WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

¹⁸⁷ WFP: USD 0.26 million until December 2021 for Output 2.1 ("Farmer-based organizations organize farmers to produce for the school meals market" of KOICA project linked to the NSFNP); CARLEP: USD 40.4 million for 2015-2025 for programme components, of which more than USD 25 million from IFAD; FSAPP: USD 9.3 million for all programme components in the first five years, of which USD 1.2 million for FAO technical assistance Sources: those given in Table 4, plus WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

Proportion of persons employed in agriculture targeted in Bhutan	5.7%	4.5%	8.5%
Land used for agriculture (acres) in programme districts	66 061	305 063	85 136

Sources:

Persons employed in, and land used for, agriculture: evaluation team calculations based on Annex XIII and the sources indicated therein.

Implementation periods and numbers of smallholder farmers from the same sources as figure 17

140. Due to the relatively small amounts of funding channelled to the Department of Agriculture and DAMC, the country office had little margin for imposing criteria for the selection of beneficiary farmers on these two Ministry of Agriculture and Forests departments. Farmers were selected by agricultural extension officers in coordination with district agricultural offices and regional agricultural marketing and cooperatives offices.¹⁸⁸ While the country office discussed some general selection criteria with its counterparts, it did not impose any selection criteria (for example, gender) or ask the counterparts to report on the criteria applied.¹⁸⁹ Some joint monitoring exercises of WFP and local government counterparts were conducted though. Similarly, the evaluation teams for the monitoring exercises and for the decentralized evaluations found no evidence of farmer groups being consulted for the targeting criteria.¹⁹⁰

141. The support on disaster risk management consists of assistance on disaster analysis and disaster risk management through generation of evidence and support to data systems; and on governance and coordination aspects. In principle the full population in the country is benefiting from such support in more indirect ways. The various disaster risk management-related infrastructure works that WFP supported (mobile storage units (MSUs), and the humanitarian hub units) were provided upon governmental request. They have been placed at locations as decided by the Government.

142. The CSP enhanced the data basis for, and the data generation capacity of, the Government to make more informed decisions about beneficiary targeting and for design/refinement of approaches and activities, even although the underlying data, tools and approaches have yet to be finalized or applied in practice.

143. A substantial part of the country office's country capacity strengthening activities explicitly aimed, or had the potential, to strengthen the Government's capacity for beneficiary targeting and refine approaches and activities in agriculture and disaster risk management. This includes a portfolio of tools, information systems, approaches and partnerships such as:

- In agriculture, support to the renewable natural resources monitoring and reporting system, which registered data on farmers' livelihoods, household characteristics, access to infrastructure, etc., and is expected to improve targeting of training and other government support activities to farmers. In the BRECSA project, which is not yet under implementation, the intention is to do a Consolidated Livelihoods Exercise for Analysing Resilience (CLEAR) analysis¹⁹¹ to assess the impacts of climate risk on food security and livelihoods and contribute to the targeting of climate change adaptation interventions.¹⁹²
- In disaster risk management, WFP supported a range of tools and assessments for vulnerability and post-disaster impact analysis, including drone training to visually assess disaster impacts (training organized together with De-Suung); the earthquake impact planning (EQUIP) study (with

¹⁸⁸ In the case of farmer organizations linked to schools, usually all members of the organizations received training, but in addition, individual farmers are selected for training as well (and for economic contingency plan support).

¹⁸⁹ Stakeholder interviews.

¹⁹⁰ Based on interviews with district officials, FGDs with farmers, and WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

¹⁹¹ CLEAR is an analytical approach developed by WFP to better understand how food security is affected by climate risks.

¹⁹² Such as: climate resilient spatial and temporal planning for placing commodities in their appropriate agro-ecological zone, block level agricultural resilience plans, and selection of target villages within blocks for production, marketing and other project interventions and block level agricultural resilience plans. Source: WFP. 2022. Building Resilient Commercial Smallholder Agriculture (BRECSA) Project Design Report.

Durham/Newcastle University), and the 72-hour rapid assessment approach for rapid post-disaster assessments (with the Department of Disaster Management).

144. It was not possible for the evaluation team to assess to what extent these efforts actually strengthened national and local capacities for beneficiary targeting. In agriculture, the information systems and assessments have not been (fully) implemented yet; and in disaster risk management, the tools and systems (72-hour rapid assessment approach) have not been applied/tested yet since there were no natural disasters in the evaluation period.

EQ3.3 To what extent were WFP activities cost-efficient in delivery of its assistance?

145. Given the strong focus of the CSP on country capacity strengthening, very few physical goods were directly procured by WFP. Nevertheless, the country office adopted a range – both standard and innovative – of measures and systems to maximize economy in the acquisition of inputs for its own country capacity strengthening activities, as well as for interventions implemented by national and local counterparts.

146. The country office typically assessed various options to deliver its country capacity strengthening expertise and services in a cost-efficient way although this was not supported by documentary evidence.¹⁹³ Given the highly specific expertise required from consultants, the country office had little margin in minimizing their costs but at least ensured with the regional bureau in Bangkok that consultant fees were within the maximum rates established by WFP. To minimize the costs of workshops and trainings, the country office rented venues and accommodation through its government partners, which would typically obtain lower rates than the country office directly.

147. The only physical goods delivered directly by WFP were the mobile storage units provided to the Department of Disaster Management. The country office requested that the international WFP procurement and logistics support office in Dubai procure the units on its behalf, which was expected to reduce transaction costs for the country office and tap the experience of, and contacts with, suppliers of the Dubai office. Costs minimization efforts were thus coordinated in Dubai rather than the country office, which had no influence on the procurement process. There are no comparison data on the hypothetical price of the units (and their transport costs to Bhutan) if they had been procured directly by the country office in the region.

148. WFP used an innovative approach to reduce the costs of new school kitchen and stores (under Activity 1), which were procured jointly by WFP and the Ministry of Education. The COVID-19 pandemic sharply increased the costs of construction materials in Bhutan by 30 to 80 percent.¹⁹⁴ In response to this cost increase, the country office, with technical support from the WFP Engineering Division in Rome, initiated a joint revision of the structural design of the kitchen and store while retaining their full functional capacity and respecting Ministry of Education guidelines. This reduced the base cost of a kitchen and store by 20 percent¹⁹⁵ and helped the country office to compensate for a large part of the pandemic-related increases in construction costs that were beyond its control.¹⁹⁶

149. In general, goods of government-implemented interventions supported by WFP were procured by the Government alone (such as agricultural inputs and equipment under the economic contingency plan) or by schools (fresh food produce from farmers). Yet, the country office had some influence in reducing the costs by monitoring or supporting the Government or local procurement. In all WFP-supported interventions, the Government followed its standard procurement rules, and WFP Bhutan joined the United

¹⁹³ Exploring options involved comparing the availability and qualifications, but also the costs, of CO staff, RBB support, external consultants, or partner organizations. In terms of costs, existing CO staff (already on payroll) was the most straightforward option for saving costs, followed by RBB staff (for which CO would only pay travel costs and daily subsistence allowance). If neither of the two was available, the CO resorted to external consultants or partner organizations. Source: interviews with various CO staff.

¹⁹⁴ Kuensel. 2021. Cost escalation and skilled labour shortage impede construction. 19 January 2021. <https://kuenselonline.com/cost-escalation-and-skilled-labour-shortage-impede-construction/>

¹⁹⁵ WFP. 2022. Annual report 2021 for the KOICA project 'The consolidating of a fully integrated universal National School Nutrition Programme in Bhutan'.

¹⁹⁶ Noting that construction materials are only a part of the total construction costs of a school kitchen. The cost increase of construction materials by 30-80 percent thus increased total construction costs by less.

Nations harmonized approach to cash transfers (HACT) system in 2021. Under the HACT, country office staff conducted spot checks to ensure that government counterparts had used WFP funds correctly in line with the Government procurement rules and standards. In schools, WFP's PLUS Menu Optimiser made an important contribution to reducing the cost of school meals. Preliminary findings suggested that, by helping schools to identify the most cost-efficient procurement options of fresh food from local farmers, the Menu Optimiser reduced the cost of school meals by 15 percent in the two pilot districts.¹⁹⁷

150. The economies of scale in CSP implementation were low in 2019 (reflecting setup costs for the new country capacity strengthening approach) and 2021 (when country office staffing grew while disaster risk management activities were reduced due to funding gaps). With most country office staff in long-term positions, the country office depends on additional funding in order to restore the balance between direct support costs and direct operational costs. Quantitative evidence on the cost efficiency of specific activities is limited.

151. Table 5 provides an estimate of the economies of scale in CSP implementation. For this purpose, it compares the annual direct support costs – a proxy for the fixed costs of implementing the CSP in Bhutan, largely associated with staff costs – to the total direct costs (the sum of direct support costs and total direct operational costs). While the planned annual direct support costs/total direct costs ratio as per needs-based plan was relatively stable in the range of 8-14 percent in the period 2019-2021, the actual ratio in expenditures fluctuated substantially over time. Only in 2020, did the direct support costs/total direct costs expenditure ratio not exceed the global average ratio for WFP operations (4 percent).¹⁹⁸ In the other two years, expenditures for both direct support costs and total direct costs fell short of the needs-based plan – but total direct costs much more so. In 2019, this was because the country office had just shifted its school feeding portfolio from direct implementation to country capacity strengthening and was starting to expand into rice fortification and disaster risk management. This required the country office to set up partnerships and coordinate assistance with the Government before implementing the CSP activities. In 2021, the country office increasingly resorted to direct support costs to finance its growing number of staff while headquarters funding from the programme support and administrative (PSA) budget was gradually running out.¹⁹⁹ At the same time, funding gaps in activities 2 and 3²⁰⁰ caused many activities to be put on hold, producing a sharp drop in economies of scale (increase in the direct support cost/total direct costs ratio).

Table 5: Direct support costs and total direct costs by year and activity (plan versus actual)

Year	DSC in percent of total direct costs		DSC in USD		Total direct costs in USD					
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Activity 1		Activity 2		Activity 3	
					Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
2019	9.43	16.11	194 767	84 001	1 227 507	312 942	341 233	42 275	301 972	82 165
2020	8.39	3.96	152 983	60 727	1 124 134	1 197 993	263 121	141 166	282 260	134 865
2021	14.06	42.66	229 112	160 436	1 043 794	191 462	130 028	68	226 634	24 114

The planned figures represent the needs-based plan.

Source : CSP Bhutan annual country reports ACR5 2019-2021 extracted on 23 May 22.

152. The country office quickly grew from eight staff members and consultants in 2018 (only four of them financed through direct support costs) to more than 20 in 2021 (all but two fully or co-financed through direct support costs). With most of the country office staff already in long-term positions by 2020, there was little the country office could do to reduce the overall payroll and contain the decline in economies of scale when funding gaps subsequently emerged. In 2021, the country office adequately adapted its strategy and filled most new positions through short-term consultants, which slightly reduced the proportion of long-

¹⁹⁷ WFP. 2022. Roll-out of School Menu Planner PLUS in Bhutan: Perspectives and Lessons Learned from the Roll-Out in 5 Districts.

¹⁹⁸ WFP 2021. WFP Management Plan (2022-2024). The document states that global DSC represented between 4.0 and 4.2 percent of global operational requirements (aggregated needs as expressed in approved CSPs) in each of the years 2019 to 2022.

¹⁹⁹ Sources: interviews with CO staff, and: WFP. Bhutan HR data compiled for the CSP evaluation.

²⁰⁰ See Figure 7 in Section 1.3.

term staff (on fixed-term assignment (FTA)), albeit not their total number, in the total number of staff (2019: 6 had fixed-term assignments out of 9 in total (6/9); 2020: had 11/18; 2021 had 12/23; and 2022 had 14/20).²⁰¹ While this did not enhance cost efficiency in the short run – so far the country office only reported one instance in which a short-term consultant was not replaced – it has provided the country office with more margin to control fixed costs in the long run.

153. The disbursement rates (expenditure as a percentage of allocated resources) provide no clear information on cost efficiency. The figures in Section 1.3 show that disbursement rates per activity are inverse to the shares of resources mobilised (Activity 1: 73 percent of the needs-based plan mobilized until December 2022, of which 51 percent spent until July 2022; Activity 3: 44 percent mobilized, of which 74 percent spent until July 2022; Activity 2: 18 percent mobilized, of which 100 percent spent until July 2022).

EQ3.4 To what extent were alternative, more cost-effective measures considered?

154. Given the CSP focus on country capacity strengthening, the country office's leeway to consider cost effectiveness measures was more limited than it would have been with direct implementation. Channelling WFP support through national and local administrative structures, although not a deliberate choice for the country office, was cost effective.

155. The reconstructed theory of change and CSP logframe include outcomes at both institutional and individual levels. Cost effectiveness (achieving a given outcome at the lowest costs) is assessed in relation to both types of outcomes. For the achievement of a specific outcome, the country office can in principle consider: (i) alternative types of interventions; and (ii) delivery modalities/channels, both associated with different costs.

156. The evaluation team found little evidence that sufficient information was available to the country office to systematically weigh the cost of alternative interventions against their effectiveness. Assessing the cost effectiveness in relation to country capacity strengthening outcomes is inherently challenging for the country office because the corresponding outcomes indicators are often not quantifiable or well defined. The alternative country capacity strengthening measures are not standardized either in a way that would allow the country office to systematically compare their costs.²⁰² Discussions with country office and government staff suggested that, unsurprisingly, country capacity strengthening activities were selected based on government requests for assistance, capacity gaps identified, funding constraints, etc., rather than on costs in relation to outcomes.

157. Delivery modalities and channels played a somewhat larger role in cost effectiveness considerations. Such considerations were implicit – but not decisive – in some country office engagement with partners for institutional-level (country capacity strengthening) outcomes.²⁰³ For example, the country office partnered with HELP Logistics Asia to deliver a training on humanitarian logistics and supply chains. HELP Logistics conducted some modules of the training and financially contributed to it. Likewise, the facilitation of Food Systems Summit dialogues in partnership with the other Rome-based agencies reduced the costs of strengthening national policy frameworks.

158. For the achievement of outcomes of indirect beneficiaries and their communities (children and their schools, farmers and their organizations, and individuals and communities affected by disasters), WFP relied on existing administrative structures at national and local levels. In Bhutan, GHNC requires international organizations to channel their technical and financial support through the Government. Although not a deliberate choice for the country office (and no cost effectiveness studies exist),

²⁰¹ WFP. Bhutan HR data compiled for the CSP evaluation.

²⁰² In contrast, it would in principle be feasible – albeit still complex – to assess the cost effectiveness for interventions that target outcomes of final beneficiaries (e.g. provisions of fortified rice vs. fresh food from local farmers to enhance the nutritional status of children, training vs. production support to farmers to improve their livelihoods). However, these interventions were not directly implemented by WFP Bhutan and therefore not considered in terms of cost effectiveness.

²⁰³ Interviews with CO staff.

interviewees suggested that this was cost effective because direct implementation by WFP would require the country office to set up its own implementation structures and face higher transaction costs.²⁰⁴

2.4. EQ4: What are the factors that explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the country strategic plan?

EQ4.1 To what extent has WFP been able to mobilize adequate, timely, predictable and flexible resources to finance the CSP?

159. The shift to a CSP model has not had the intended impact on resource mobilization as funding has remained earmarked at the activity level with considerable variation in adequacy vis-à-vis the plan. WFP Bhutan has managed to obtain relatively large funds for school nutrition and climate finance, but it should be noted that funding is always earmarked for specific activities and linked to the activity (or 'project' in the case of a set of activities) timeframes that makes medium- or longer-term planning hardly possible. Efforts to access financing for the CSP have proven to be time consuming and they are not always successful. In this respect, a key external factor is the limited donor interest/presence in Bhutan. Compared to other development partners, the ability of WFP to mobilize budgetary resources to support the Government's pandemic response was relatively low.²⁰⁵ Section 1.3 has an overview of the resourced level and the level of expenditures for the Bhutan CSP (per strategic outcome).

160. For SO1/Activity 1 (school nutrition, nutrition/SBCC, agriculture value chain), as of 1 August 2022 expenditures amounted to 51 percent of allocated resources (a rather low level given that there is less than 1.5 year to go until the end of this CSP), and the allocated resources represented a large proportion (73 percent) of the needs-based plan. The reasons for these low expenditure values include the halted school kitchen and store renovation work because of the school and border closures as part of the national COVID-19 measures, and the delays in hiring an SBCC specialist and in activity implementation due to the Government's annual workplan reprioritization during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is supported by 2021 financial data, which shows very low expenditure percentages at 15 percent for Activity 1 and 10 percent for Activity 3.²⁰⁶ For school nutrition WFP Bhutan was able to use carry-over funds from the development programme which was funded by Australia, Canada and River Star Foundation from Hong Kong, and under the CSP secured funds from KOICA. However the KOICA funds do not include funding for a much-needed repeat SABER exercise and getting this financed has appeared to be difficult so far.²⁰⁷

161. For SO1/Activity 2 (rice fortification), the allocations as of August 2022 amounted to only 18 percent of the needs-based plan, all carry-over funds and, because of a lack of funds (there was an unsuccessful joint proposal on rice fortification to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Development Fund), activities had to be scaled down in 2021 and completely halted by early 2022. However, as FCBL in the near future will be starting up the rice fortification plant in Phuntsholing, and WFP evidently has a strong profile in large-scale rice fortification programmes, it is worthwhile exploring options for government financing of further technical support and services.

162. The forecast with respect to future funding for WFP nutrition work in Bhutan is unclear given that KOICA indicated it will discontinue support post 2023 and that since 2019 there has not been any engagement with previous donors on school feeding support in Bhutan, such as Canada and Australia. In early 2022, the country office prepared a Bhutan school feeding donor mapping and drafted an internal memo on resource mobilization for the nutrition portfolio, which explores pathways for the following thematic areas: school feeding and nutrition, healthy diets, fortification and nutrition-sensitive social protection. The country office hopes this will lead to the identification of one or more new donors, through for example, the global School Meals Coalition and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It will be

²⁰⁴ The mid-term evaluation of the previous DEV school feeding programme (WFP. 2016. Bhutan DEV 200300 Improving Children's Access To Education: A Mid-Term Operation Evaluation) concludes that the efficiency of the handover to RGoB was low due to high transaction costs in communication and coordination. Interviews with CO and RGoB for the current CSP evaluation, in contrast, suggest that these transaction costs were substantially reduced since the handover.

²⁰⁵ MTR report.

²⁰⁶ WFP Bhutan, CSP Annual Country Report ACR5 2021 extracted on 23.05.2022.

²⁰⁷ The CO explained that the SABER index was in the CSP document in line with corporate guidance but that its use did not take place because of a lack of funds.

worthwhile also to explore options for (a certain level of) financial compensation from the Government for WFP services in relation to the NSFNP, a government flagship programme.

163. The agriculture area of work within the CSP is relatively well funded, mainly through KOICA but also through additional funding from the MPTF for agricultural inputs and equipment as a contribution to the Government's Agricultural Stimulus Plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the country office recently secured Global Agricultural and Food Security Programme funding for the BRECSA project from 2023, which will help the country office meet its strategic ambitions – and delivery expectations of GHNC and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests²⁰⁸ – for the expanded agriculture portfolio. The fact that WFP agriculture contributions (and ambitions) are clearly aligned with donor sector strategies²⁰⁹ is a favourable factor in this regard. Examples of potential financing opportunities include GAFSP (agricultural productivity, risk and vulnerability reduction, non-farm livelihoods); the European Union (market system development, climate sensitive production and conservation); and KOICA (climate proof food systems; youth entrepreneurship; digital support to market access). Proposals to the Adaption Fund together with WFP Nepal for a regional adaptation portfolio and national strategies for weather index insurance have recently been submitted.

164. SO2/Activity 3 (disaster risk management) is found to be substantially underfunded (44 percent of the needs-based plan by 1 August 2022). The resources that the country office managed to mobilize primarily are smaller pieces of WFP internal funding for discrete disaster risk management activities (from the immediate response account for preparedness (IR-PREP), critical corporate initiatives (CCI), and the South-South Opportunity Fund). Also, the country office was able to raise financing from the Global Logistics Cluster for part of WFP's international consultant for logistics, and from the SDG fund.²¹⁰ Pending activities requiring new funding are the support on introduction of the platform for real-time impact and situation monitoring (PRISM) as follow-up on the 72-hour rapid assessment approach, the roll-out of the disaster management contingency plan including at district level, and for implementation of the emergency telecommunications cluster roadmap.

165. To address the above limitations related to resource allocation and also provide the funding base for expansion/scale-up of the support within the nutrition and agriculture areas of work, the country office will need to attract additional resources, including from the Government and new donor partners. An integrated resource mobilization strategy is under preparation, to be ready by December 2022. The main challenges for resource mobilization for work in Bhutan are the lack of physical presence of bilateral donors in the country and the more limited donor interest because of the upcoming graduation to lower middle-income status. Another, more internal, factor is that worldwide WFP fundraising for country capacity strengthening activities appears to be more difficult than for direct food assistance.²¹¹

EQ4.2 To what extent were the monitoring and reporting systems useful to track and demonstrate progress towards expected outputs and outcomes and to inform management decisions?

166. The CSP logframe has a strong focus on country capacity strengthening results at the national level, based on indicators from the corporate compendium. This facilitates aggregation and comparison with WFP results in other countries, but has not provided more detailed information on programme performance. The outcome and outputs indicators in the CSP logframe have all been taken from the Indicator Compendium for the WFP Corporate Results Framework.²¹² Although the underlying logic per activity is clear enough, the CSP output and outcome indicators as a whole are not embedded in a clear overarching results chain. For instance, the current results framework does not help to explain how the outcome related to “number of national food security and nutrition policies, programmes and system components...” (outcome indicator under SO2/Activity 3) has been achieved through a combination of capacity

²⁰⁸ RGoB interviews and WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

²⁰⁹ See for a detailed analysis of donor strategies: WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

²¹⁰ CSP MTR.

²¹¹ The new Changing Lives Trust Fund, which WFP is putting in place, may help address this challenge in future.

²¹² WFP.2018. 2017-2021 Corporate Results Framework Outcome and Output Indicator Compendium.

strengthening support, development/revision of tools, secondment of expertise, WFP-led clusters, implementation of infrastructure works, and support to national coordination mechanisms (output indicators). In most cases, the indicators monitored in the context of the CSP logframe are difficult to interpret without additional narrative information.

167. In addition, selected outcome indicators under SO1 are a combination of indicators on changes at the national level (policies, programmes, system components) and indicators on changes at an individual level (schoolchildren, smallholder farmers). For SO2 the focus is on outcomes at the national level only.

168. The CSP contains a Gender and Age Marker rating. The logframe contains three indicators on cross-cutting issues (accountability to affected populations; protection; GEDSI). These are all at the level of directly assisted people and thus it seems less appropriate to assess such cross-cutting issues within country capacity strengthening support, the CSP's main focus.

169. **Key index indicators on capacity profiles have not been monitored in Bhutan.** Although they are part of the logframe, no information has been collected on two indexes: the SABER school feeding national capacity²¹³ (due to lack of funds) and the emergency preparedness capacity index (EPCI) on national emergency preparedness capacity (due to lack of interest from the Department of Disaster Management).

170. The expansion of the scope of work in the agriculture sector has been embedded in the CSP logframe by adding a related set of indicators. Although from 2020 onwards agriculture value chains were added as a new activity area, the CSP logframe is still composed of two main strategic outcome areas, but indicators (again from the compendium) were added. Monitoring systems in agriculture rely strongly on government resources at the local and field levels. Despite some limitations, they generally produce adequate data for accountability purposes (see Section 2.1).

171. The logframe does not contain customized indicators for (joint) process monitoring as input for (annual) review and decision making by the country office together with government partners on required adaptations. Some joint monitoring visits have been undertaken in the districts where the agriculture value chain work is undertaken. But overall, the opportunity to generate information streams on implementation processes as input for joint review and decision making and required adaptations (changes in type, intensity and targeting of the support activities) together with the Government seem to have been missed.

172. For the disaster risk management area of work no support was provided on implementation monitoring, for example, for the COVID-19 response this area of work was fully handled by the Government. Without any doubt, integration into nationally owned systems is the right thing to do from an ownership and sustainability perspective. Various issues have emerged however in the transfer to a new system which will need more time (and support) to be resolved. For more details on the integration of NSFNP monitoring within the EMIS see EQ 2.3.

173. Within the disaster risk management area of work in the CSP, the activities thus far have all been at the institutional level (policy/programme/system development), and on overall inter-agency coordination; as a result, WFP has not been engaged in any support on monitoring of activity implementation. It should be noted that WFP Bhutan does not have a system for monitoring of the results of the capacity strengthening efforts on disaster risk management.

EQ4.3 How did the partnerships and collaborations with other actors influence performance and results?

174. In line with the country capacity strengthening approach, government agencies are the main counterparts and effective partnerships have been built. Some interventions were more WFP-technology driven, supported by regular communication between the country office and government counterparts at the technical level. This is a continuation of the approach under the development operation and T-ICSP. Under the CSP the sectoral scope has broadened and the number of government partners has significantly increased. The selection of government partner agencies is largely in line with the content of the three

²¹³ SABER – Systems Approach for Better Educational Results. WB. 2016. School Feeding: Manual for SABER-SF- Exercise. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/26517> and WB. (n.d.). Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER). <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/systems-approach-for-better-education-results-saber>.

areas of work under the CSP. The main partner for WFP is the Government (GNHC, relevant line ministries, and district level administration -primarily on the agriculture value chain work). The country office does not have formal partnerships with the line ministries, the framework for the support to the Government is governed by a letter of understanding with the GNHC.

- School nutrition, rice fortification, SBCC on nutrition: There are longstanding close and effective partnerships with SHND/Ministry of Education and FCBL in relation to the school meals programme. In the first years of the CSP, up to early 2021, there had been active engagement with BAFRA for capacity development in relation to rice fortification. There has been little contact, however, after the departure of the WFP fortification expert, and the evaluation team noticed that there is a need for reengagement.²¹⁴ For SBCC, work is more at the initial stage; linkage with the Government and other partners is done through the technical working group on SBCC.
- Agriculture value chains: The country office's collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and DAMC has been crucial in the delivery of the activities and outputs of the agriculture portfolio. Simplified annual work plans were bilaterally developed with the Department of Agriculture and DAMC. This set-up facilitated the negotiation and reporting on specific projects and sub-activities.²¹⁵ Using the administrative structure of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests at national and local levels allowed WFP to build on existing country capacities and reach a large number of farmers with limited resources. Starting up the cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests under the NSFNP also ensured an adequate level of trust and engagement in capacity strengthening by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.²¹⁶
- Disaster risk management: With the Department of Disaster Management, there has been regular interaction on funding proposals and adequate coordination with other actors regarding activity planning and implementation, building on the relations that were already established under the T-ICSP. Initial contacts have also been made with National Centre for Hydrology and Meteorology in relation to intended work on GLOF modelling and a weather-based agricultural insurance index.²¹⁷ The provision of a drone to the National Land Commission Secretariat (NLCS) for land surveying purposes is meant for the generation of information to update the 72-hour rapid assessment approach database, but it is a rather isolated "one-off" type of support. The partnership with Department of Information Technology and Telecommunication within MOIC on emergency telecommunications has been newly established under this CSP but has not been actively pursued since 2020 due to changes in government priorities.

175. Collaboration with other United Nations agencies mainly consisted of joint advocacy and policy development support, and joint fundraising. While some good results have been obtained under the CSP through collaboration with UNICEF and UNDP, in particular for joint advocacy and policy development support, plus some joint studies, it is questionable whether these can be labelled as formal 'partnerships' as they are not based on specific country-level inter-agency agreements. The exception is the joint mobilization of GAFSP resources with IFAD (as donor partner, not present in Bhutan) for the BRECSA project. Further details are provided under EQ1.3 and EQ 3.2.

176. **Overall, most WFP support to the Government has been provided without involvement of other United Nations agencies.** WFP has not built up close working relations with FAO (despite WFP increasingly engaging on agricultural development in Bhutan), in part because of the small size of the FAO country office and its limited capacity for engagement in multiple UNSDPF outcome groups.²¹⁸ These observations for Bhutan coincide with the finding in a recent evaluation of collaboration among the Rome-based agencies that in some countries there is little evidence of strengthened collaboration and that

²¹⁴ Stakeholder interviews.

²¹⁵ WFP. 2022. Evaluation of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan January 2019 to June 2021.

²¹⁶ Stakeholder interviews.

²¹⁷ This component had not been materialized yet at the time of data collection (the concept note for the funding proposal to the Adaptation Fund Innovation Facility was still in preparation).

²¹⁸ Stakeholder interviews.

coordination is generally easier around thematic and advocacy work than in formal operational project settings.²¹⁹

177. As shown in Figure 18, within the Core Competences model by Hamel & Prahalad,²²⁰ most of the collaboration/ 'partnerships' within the Bhutan CSP lie in the "mega opportunities" box (new competences are developed and used in new markets). This encompasses, for example, the collaboration with a range of United Nations and other agencies on disaster risk management, which has helped the country office to access/expand into new sectors. The potential for expansion (growth in size/scale) in this category is high, but it comes with certain risks as to the quality of performance because it is basically unfamiliar territory for the country office. What attenuates the risks is that the activities are all part of the WFP corporate framework of action, so corporate guidance is available, and both the regional bureau in Bangkok and headquarters have provided important technical support in these new areas of work. However, while such internal support is important, it might not be a sufficient guarantee that the country office will be able to effectively take on the new thematic area.

178. The collaboration with UNICEF falls in the "fill in the blanks" box: work in existing markets (school nutrition/nutrition) using existing competencies (advocacy and policy development support). Through regular coordination, synergies and complementarities are ensured between WFP support to the Ministry of Education (school meals programme, EduTritition game, development of SBCC messages) and UNICEF's support to the Ministry of Education (teacher training, curriculum development, digital learning infrastructure). The joint study with UNICEF on inclusion of monastic schools and the Fill the Nutrient Gap study funded by the World Bank will provide the basis for joint advocacy on this matter.

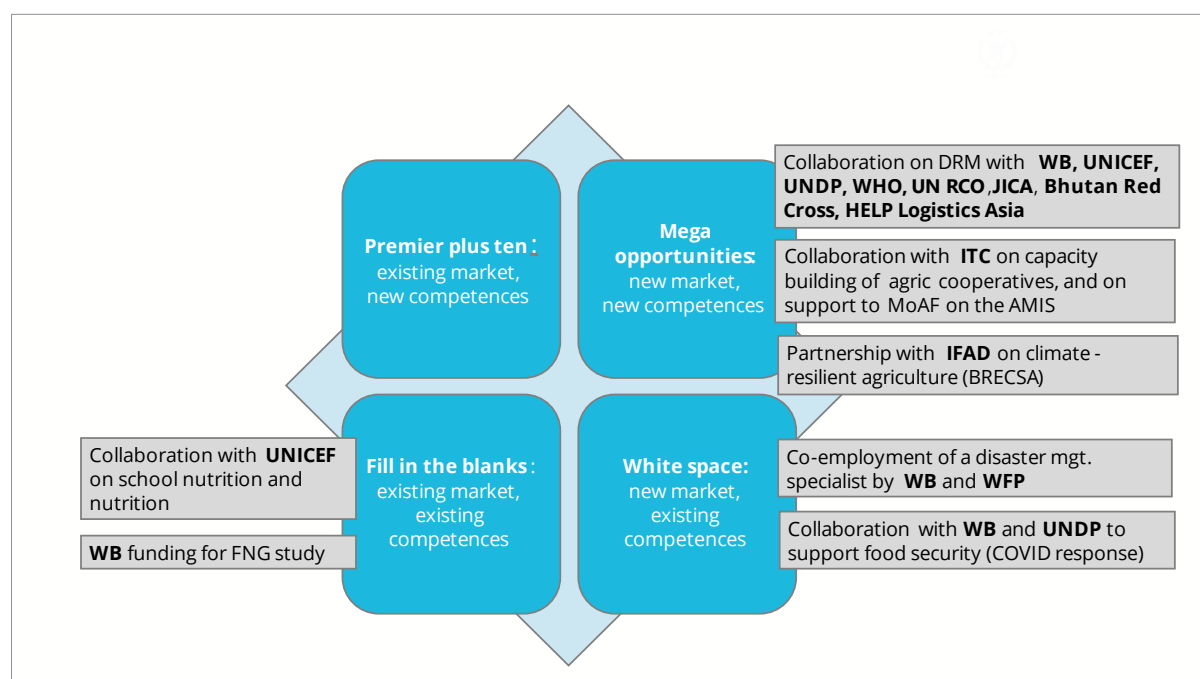
179. The CSP also has some smaller/more ad-hoc elements of collaboration/'partnership' within the "white space" box (existing capacities are used in new markets). The risk of this category is that the portfolio becomes too diversified, which can be avoided by staying close to the core business and this indeed is the case for WFP Bhutan in its support to food security as part of the COVID-19 response in 2020.

180. No collaboration/'partnerships' have been identified that fall within the "premium plus ten" box. According to the theory this option is of a longer-term nature, focused on deployment of new (high quality) core competences in existing markets in ten years' time. In line with what was said for the "mega opportunities" box, it would be logical to choose activities that are already part of the WFP corporate framework.

219 FAO, IFAD, WFP. 2021. Joint evaluation of collaboration among the United Nations Rome-Based Agencies. October 2021.

220 Van Vliet V. 2011. Core Competence Model. <https://www.toolshero.com/strategy/core-competence-model/>

Figure 18: CSP collaboration/partnerships fitted within Hamel & Prahalad’s Core Competence model



Source: Evaluation team.

181. It is too early to assess the results from the partnership with the only civil society organization partner. Other engagement with civil society organizations has primarily been on coordination and for training purposes. The CSP also entails a partnership with Tarayana Foundation as implementing partner for the pilot on community-level SBCC on nutrition, which among others, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has been slow to take off and as of yet is not advanced enough for assessing how this partnership contributes to achieving CSP results. Other civil society organizations that WFP engaged with were the Humanitarian and Emergency Logistics Project²²¹ (HELP Logistics Asia), which provided training in humanitarian logistics and supply chain, and the De-Suong, where training was received on the use of drones.

182. The support on South-South or triangular cooperation has linked government agencies with relevant sister agencies in India and some international companies in the agri-food sector. Some South-South and triangular cooperation is also part of the CSP, but the role of WFP, after having established the link seems, so far, to have been limited; it has been one-off rather than regular support and adequate data on results were not available.

EQ4.4 To what extent did the country office have appropriate human resources capacity to deliver on the CSP?

183. For support to the NSFNP, WFP Bhutan generally has appropriate human resources capacity to deliver. A summary of the human resources data of the country office is given in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Human resources data by year and disaggregated by gender, contract type and funding

Year	Total positions	Gender		Contract type		Position funded by		
		F	M	FTA	Other	DSC	PSA	Other sources

²²¹ The Humanitarian and Emergency Logistics Project (HELP) was initiated by The Kuehne Foundation in 2010 in response to the challenges facing humanitarian supply chain and logistics. HELP Logistics works with humanitarian partners to provide supply chain and logistics consulting services and capacity strengthening programmes so that they can deliver more effective and efficient assistance to affected populations in emergencies.

2018	8	3	5	6	2	4	4	0
2019	9	2	7	6	3	6	5	0
2020	18	7	11	11	7	15	9	2
2021	23	10	13	12	11	21	11	4
2022	20	10	10	14	6	19	1	3

Source: HR data for CSP evaluation.

Note: position funding can include one or more sources of funding.

184. Table 6 reflects the sharp growth in country office size from 2020 and shows that the gender balance has continuously improved since 2019. As noted in the cost efficiency analysis, there was a slight reduction in the proportion of fixed-term assignment staff during the peak of the pandemic, and an increasing tendency to fund new positions through direct support costs. Funding shortfalls in activities 2 and 3 did not visibly hamper the growth in country office size since few positions have been funded from activity-specific funds.

185. Given a history of 45 years of WFP support on school feeding in Bhutan, the “N-team” (country office staff on school nutrition, rice fortification and SBCC on nutrition) within the country office avails itself of experienced staff who have strong knowledge and competencies as required for WFP’s role in supporting the Ministry of Education on the NSFNP. The staff in this team have strong profiles on programme management, with enough content knowledge to coordinate, problem-solve and manage different stakeholders and programmes. Though the country office lacks deep technical expertise (such as a nutritionist), this does not seem to impede the performance and efficacy of the programme. A key factor here is the availability of support from the regional bureau in Bangkok, the involvement of technical consultants as and when needed,²²² and the technical support from the Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education’s experienced and efficient SHND staff. The basis for the infrastructure support was a needs assessment study undertaken in 2019 by WFP, with support from its corporate partner Sodexo, looking at school kitchens, stores and kitchen equipment. School kitchen and store standards layout were improved and finalized, and storage facilities were improved so that they could accommodate three months’ food stocks.²²³ Tendering and contracting of the works was done by the Ministry of Education without direct involvement from the country office.

186. The expertise and efforts (but not the number) of country office staff in agriculture were in line with WFP’s expanding role in agriculture. The country office’s human resources in logistics and supply chains were adequate as well. The available resources have so far only allowed for recruitment of one policy and programme lead for agriculture (from start-up phase on the agriculture area of work under the CSP in early 2020). Since then, the portfolio has expanded in multiple dimensions, requiring increasingly more time for liaison with government and United Nations partners, monitoring, and resource mobilization, among other duties, and the same has not been met with increased staffing. Partners nevertheless valued the country office’s efforts to engage on multiple levels. The absence in Bhutan of WFP field offices was not seen by country office staff or government counterparts to have limited the capacity of WFP for delivery in agriculture.

187. In logistics and supply chains, WFP partners credited the country office’s strong expertise and human resources. No major limitations in staffing or expertise were raised by external or internal stakeholders.

EQ4.5 What are the other factors that can explain WFP performance and the extent to which it has made the strategic shift expected by the CSP?

188. No additional factors have been identified beyond what has already been covered in the sections above (EQ4.1 up to EQ4.4).

²²² The MTR makes reference to a general sense among RGoB of ‘consultant fatigue’ where external technical experts are brought in even for smaller tasks.

²²³ Source: Choden, T. 2021. Mid-Term Review of WFP Bhutan Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023, Final Report, December 2021.

3. Conclusions and recommendations

3.1. Conclusions

Conclusion 1 (C1): Achievements

189. WFP assistance under the CSP has shown overall good performance. Across the CSP portfolio there has been adequate progress, both in terms of achieving intended changes at outcome level and for production of outputs in time and of sufficient quality for all three areas of work.

190. The CSP efforts in school nutrition and rice fortification have resulted in strong systems fully owned by national stakeholders (for example, the Ministry of Education, FCBL), which have contributed to improved nutritional quality of school menus. WFP support on SBCC on nutrition is on the right track, but in its initial stages only. The added value of the agriculture value chain work has proved to be high at the level of benefiting farmers/cooperatives and WFP assistance has integrated useful country capacity strengthening measures aimed at strengthening national stakeholders' (for example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests) capacity in policy design and monitoring in this area. Contributions to disaster risk management have been more scattered in nature, but the outputs delivered are likely to have positive effects on the strengthening of national capacities in this area.

191. Based on the strong profile of WFP on data systems, tools and approaches, systemized generation of reliable data feeding into strategic and operational government decision making processes has been a key element in WFP country capacity strengthening support across all sectors covered under the CSP. However, the underlying data, tools and approaches in most cases are still being developed/finalized or their application in practice has just started. There is, therefore, still room to further tailor the tools and approaches available from WFP corporate frameworks to the local country context.

192. The CSP has been paying adequate attention and contributing to environment mainstreaming across the full portfolio and also for country office management. A focus on climate change is not explicitly mentioned or monitored but it is present in the work on agriculture and disaster risk management.

193. Both the school nutrition and agriculture support are contributing to gender and social inclusion at the beneficiary level. Nutrition challenges of schoolchildren in Bhutan are addressed in a gender-sensitive and socially inclusive way. This includes advocacy together with UNICEF for expansion of the NSFNP to monastic schools (important in relation to the principle of "leaving no one behind"). WFP support on school nutrition has not yet focused on advocacy in relation to disability integration in the school meals programme. The support on agriculture value chains mainly reaches women, although broader transformative effects have not yet been identified. Focus on integrating the principles of disability, gender and social inclusion into the disaster risk management area of work so far has also been limited.

194. Due to the focus being on country capacity strengthening, most of the results achieved are sustainable although dependent on government priority-setting and availability of sectoral resources and capacities. The main internal factors identified that explain the high level of results are: a strong team of programme officers within the country office; WFP Bhutan's ability to effectively use and be supported by key corporate guidance and leadership, including on the country capacity strengthening approach; and the effective relationships that WFP has established and fostered with the Government, including the relevant line ministries.

C2: Strategic focus and alignment with national priorities and the SDGs

195. The CSP is adequately aligned with the priorities in Bhutan's 12th five-year plan and those SDGs it is intended to contribute to in relation to sectoral policy frameworks on school nutrition, nutrition, rice fortification, agriculture and disaster risk management. The same applies to the national plans for emergency logistics and telecommunication. This is key, as the CSP results level and sustainability of the changes brought about are dependent on overall government commitment and engagement, which determines the availability of resources and capacities at sectoral levels.

196. While school feeding is still seen by many people in Bhutan, including government staff, as WFP's main contribution to the country's priority needs, WFP has successfully responded to the request for providing support on agriculture value chains development when this was raised as a national priority following border closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The WFP strategic position in this new area has been rapidly increasing, although it still has to fully develop.

197. The CSP's engagement in the disaster risk management area of work has not been as impactful as hoped for, primarily due to reduced government commitment to this in recent years because other priorities emerged. However, the COVID-19 pandemic sparked the Government's interest in emergency logistics for which WFP is effectively the main supplier of support in Bhutan. The Government is also interested in WFP becoming the main provider of support on agriculture from a disaster risk management perspective.

C3: Harmonization with United Nations entities

198. Overall, there is good collaboration between WFP and other United Nations agencies under the UNSDPF 2019-2023, primarily consisting of a common engagement at the level of advocacy and policy development. The main connections for this have been with UNICEF (Outcome 2 on social services) and UNDP (Outcome 4 on resilience and disaster risk management), both of these are largely effective and result in a stronger United Nations voice. WFP actively participates in several sectoral technical working groups where other United Nations agencies are co-members/co-leads; these engagements have contributed to increased information exchange between agencies.

199. Despite being committed to the principle of "delivering as one", the existence of the UNSDPF, and most United Nations offices being situated together in the United Nations House, it is not common for United Nations agencies to implement joint programmes or activities. Most of WFP country capacity strengthening support to the Government was found to be of a unilateral nature, usually based on division of areas of work/tasks across United Nations agencies. This approach maximizes complementarities and is probably easier from an operational point of view, however, it diminishes the opportunities for synergies and the reduction of transaction costs.

200. There is, in principle, a clear division of work based on phases in the lifecycle between WFP and UNICEF on nutrition, and a clear division of work at the field level based on different geographical focus between WFP, FAO and other agencies on agriculture. No such arrangements exist in the disaster risk management area of work where "the domains" per agency are less clearly defined as yet.

201. WFP capacities to support agricultural value chain development, disaster risk management, and, more recently, SBCC on nutrition are gradually becoming more clearly articulated in Bhutan. In particular, in terms of both the form and content of the support provided to government systems (and how they match with evolving priorities), and how WFP support fits within the overall technical assistance provided in these sectors by other agencies.

C4: Management for development results, reporting and accountability, and flexibility to respond to a dynamic operational context

202. Although the underlying logic per activity has been clear enough for smooth implementation, the CSP outputs and outcomes as a whole are not embedded in a clear overarching results chain. The lack of a theory of change has resulted in a portfolio with some disconnected elements. The CSP has not been revised during the implementation and options for developing interconnections across the various areas of work (for example, between the activities in the agriculture sector and other activities) and adopting a truly integrated approach were not fully used.

203. The CSP logframe is fully based on corporate indicators that are standardized and well thought through, but sometimes performance is rather difficult to interpret without an accompanying narrative, which is not fully provided by the annual country reports. An important gap is that no information has been collected for indicators on outcomes in relation to capacity enhancement (SABER, EPCI). Another issue is that the level of detail and specificity in annual reporting is limited and there is hardly any systems or additional documentation of activities and results (apart from the donor reporting to KOICA).

C5: Transaction costs and human resources

204. In its country capacity strengthening approach, the country office has strengthened and used national and local administrative structures for service delivery to the target populations. Channelling WFP assistance through the Government is cost efficient since it drastically reduces the need for the country office to set up its own implementation structures. This is especially true for school feeding and farmer-linkages under Activity 1, an area of work that has been effectively and efficiently handed over to the Government and in which WFP and government partners have a long history of cooperation.

205. The country office, and the Government as its counterpart, have successfully applied some standard measures and systems to maximize economies for input acquisition.

206. The country office has shown a good capacity to engage in policy dialogue in key areas under the CSP, although this capacity remains to be confirmed with the recent expansion of the portfolio. The country office hired more long-term staff to ensure availability of expertise to assist the Government in a dynamic context. Although this was not an ideal approach from an efficiency perspective as this resulted in increased expenditures during funding shortfalls, it was considered important to align with the country office's shift towards country capacity strengthening that requires continuity in staff positions. The same was intended to save coordination and handover costs for replacing short-term recruitments.

C6: Financial resource mobilization

207. The shift to the CSP model has not yet had the intended effect on resource mobilization. Securing access to funding has proven to be very time-consuming for the country office. Funding has remained earmarked to the activity level with considerable variation in adequacy regarding the plan and the donor base still consists of traditional funding partners. A key external factor determining (limiting) the scope and scale of the CSP's actual activities has been the limited donor interest/presence in Bhutan.

208. The country office currently is preparing an integrated resource mobilization strategy for its country capacity strengthening activities across sectors, which is likely to make fundraising efforts become more strategic, effective and efficient, especially as Bhutan will attain lower middle-income country status in December 2023.

3.2. Recommendations

Table 7: Recommendations

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1	Optimal strategic focus and alignment with national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals					
1.1	<p>The new country strategic plan should build on WFP's internal capacity and competitive advantages and be aligned with changing government priorities and capacity. The following key issues should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP Bhutan should focus on selected services that are important in meeting the population's needs and that match the Government's priorities (taking into consideration ongoing government reforms, absorption capacity and the next five-year plan). • WFP Bhutan should strike a balance between consolidating its work and expanding the scope of the country strategic plan in terms of the sectors that it addresses. It seems logical to take the next steps to support school nutrition (including its expansion to monastic schools) and social and behaviour change communication on healthy diets (which is clearly a priority area of work). • Support for agriculture should be increased within a food systems approach, building on the value proposition developed in the decentralized evaluation. • Future support on disaster risk management needs to be less fragmented, combining a role in advocacy and partner coordination with selected areas of country 	Strategic	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau; headquarters	High	December 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
	capacity strengthening support, in line with government priorities.					

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.2	<p>Develop a theory of change together with the country strategic plan line of sight.</p> <p>WFP Bhutan has shown that it has the capacity to achieve results in terms of the quantity, timeliness and quality of its support. The challenge to be met for the next country strategic plan is to shift to a more integrated portfolio with maximized economies within the portfolio, as well as in relation to country office staffing (see recommendation 4). To adopt a more integrated country strategic plan, WFP Bhutan should develop a theory of change so as to better identify inter-sectoral connections (links between country strategic plan outcomes and synergies) and to provide insight into the institutional and individual/household-level outcomes and outputs.</p> <p>The theory of change should also identify the key assumptions and risks, in particular in relation to the ongoing public sector reforms. It is also suggested that an annual check be established to review progress in country strategic plan implementation based on the theory of change and line of sight.</p>	Strategic	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau and headquarters, as needed	High	December 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
1.3	<p>Build on existing evidence and address evidence gaps, taking into account the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WFP Bhutan should invest in a set of needs assessment studies to address evidence gaps, with attention paid to the generation of baseline data on institutional capacity and gaps, including in relation to the challenges at the school and district levels concerning the integration of the Mobile Operational Data Acquisition-based monitoring system for the national school feeding and nutrition programme into the education management information system, and to identify the capacity development needs of teaching staff in relation to the expansion of social and behaviour change communication on nutrition through schools. A study should be undertaken on how best to (further) integrate gender and disability inclusion across the portfolio. The next country strategic plan should indicate that the key evidence gaps will be filled in collaboration with the relevant government counterpart agencies. 	Strategic and operational	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau; headquarters; the Government; other United Nations agencies; civil society and non-governmental organizations in Bhutan	High	July 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase, and during the implementation of the next CSP

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2	Achieve better harmonization with other United Nations entities and processes					
2.1	<p>Develop a partnership strategy to position WFP Bhutan more clearly in relation to other United Nations entities.</p> <p>Develop a partnership strategy, with a focus on maximizing complementarities with other United Nations agencies – both for programmatic work, in line with the results of the ongoing common country analysis process and the next United Nations sustainable development partnership framework, and for operational aspects, as part of the rollout of the United Nations' Business Operations Strategy – and with service providers (civil society and non-governmental organizations, academia and private sector actors). In particular, WFP should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seek further collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund on social and behaviour change communication on nutrition – to ensure that messages are coherent for key nutrition target groups across the life cycle, with a focus on adolescent girls and boys as future parents – and on disability-inclusive schools; • advocate for the development of a common Rome-based agency approach to country capacity strengthening and further explore joint resource mobilization opportunities; and • explore opportunities for joint advocacy on disaster risk management with selected partners, including the United Nations Development Programme. 	Strategic	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau; headquarters; the Government; other United Nations agencies; civil society and non-governmental organizations in Bhutan; academic institutions; private sector actors	High	Throughout 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
2.2	Continue engagement in technical working groups. Continued engagement in the relevant sectoral technical working groups – on social and behaviour change communication and emergency logistics – is recommended, as the working groups provide a good platform for coordination, knowledge-sharing and collaboration on advocacy and policy development with a wide range of actors.	Operational	Country Director, with the technical team	The Government; other United Nations agencies; civil society and non-governmental organizations in Bhutan	High	Ongoing
3	Enhance the management of development results, reporting and accountability and increase flexibility to plan for and respond to dynamic operational environment					
3.1	Review the result indicators and improve performance monitoring. Define, track and analyse a comprehensive set of indicators across all country strategic plan activities, including improved indicators for monitoring capacity strengthening and gender equality, disability and social inclusion. Draw on the updated corporate results framework and define and improve supplementary country-specific indicators to ensure monitoring coverage. For the remaining time under the current country strategic plan, it is suggested that WFP start collecting data on the Systems Approach for Better Education Results indicator.	Operational	Country Director, with the technical team	Regional bureau; headquarters, as needed	High	Throughout 2023, as part of the new CSP design phase

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
3.2	<p>Develop a knowledge management plan.</p> <p>Develop a knowledge management plan and system for capturing, storing and disseminating relevant information internally and externally. Particular attention should be paid to generating and storing baseline and follow-up data, including by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improving the tracking of the inputs and outputs of country capacity strengthening efforts for the Government (reports on workshops and other training, joint field mission reports and so on); regularly preparing knowledge products (memos, case study papers, PowerPoint presentations, videos, blogs and so on) to present an analysis of data on the national school feeding and nutrition programme and an overview of insights gained from two years of support for smallholder farmers; and accompanying annual country reports with a more detailed annual report, or set of reports, for each area of work to support external advocacy while meeting internal requirements. 	Operational	Country Director; monitoring and evaluation officer; programme officers; communications and advocacy officer	Regional bureau; headquarters, as needed	High	From the annual country report for 2022 onwards

	Recommendations and sub-recommendations	Recommendation type	Responsible WFP offices and divisions	Other contributing entities	Priority	Deadline for completion
4	Enhance resource mobilization					
4.1	<p>Strengthen and diversify the resource mobilization strategy.</p> <p>A strong resource mobilization strategy should include close collaboration with the Government and other partners on joint activities and should look beyond traditional bilateral donor agencies to explore options for gaining access to non-conventional and less competitive funding sources. Such options can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (further) technical collaboration; • corporate social responsibility funds; and • further work with international financial institutions and/or efforts to foster market linkages with private sector entities – especially in India or other countries in Asia – for engagement either with WFP Bhutan or directly with government agencies. <p>Rather than seeking to reap the rewards of ad-hoc opportunities, such arrangements should be based on clear decisions related to WFP's strategic positioning in Bhutan.</p>	Strategic	Country Director; budget and programme associate; programme officers	Regional bureau; headquarters	High	December 2022

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