



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief September 2020



Operational Context

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

The national poverty rate, as measured by the international poverty line of USD 1.90 per person per day (PPP), has fallen from 23 percent in 2007 to 8.2 percent in 2017.

Although people's overall nutritional status has improved, health problems related to a lack of nutritional and balanced diets remain a challenge, including micronutrient deficiencies.

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

WFP has been present in Bhutan since 1974.



Population: **0.73 million**

2015 Human Development Index: **132 out of 188**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **21.2% of children between 6-59 months**

Highlights

In September, WFP held a series of consultations with agriculture stakeholders that resulted in WFP supporting enhanced winter vegetable production in the country. On the innovation front, WFP has stepped up its support on the monitoring and evaluating system for the agriculture ministry, completing the data collection stage. WFP has also made progress on the 72-hour rapid assessment system as well as the earthquake impact modelling study with a planned simulation exercise.

Operational Updates

1. WFP agreed with the Department of Agriculture to support enhanced winter vegetable production in targeted districts in the southern belt of the country. That followed several consultative meetings with the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives to ensure continuity of the programme. Additionally, WFP had follow-up calls with the Regional Agriculture and Marketing Cooperatives Offices in Mongar & Gelephu districts. However, the implementation of planned activities may be delayed by the COVID-19 response.
2. WFP has been working with the Ministry of Agriculture on mapping and strengthening the agricultural monitoring and reporting systems and has collected various indicators and processes practiced by different government agencies. Currently, WFP is studying these data to identify strengths, overlaps, and gaps. A working session is planned for all stakeholders to meet and develop the blueprint of the required system.
3. WFP participated in discussions with the apex Government planning body, the Gross National Happiness Commission, to streamline the Annual Work Plan and Budget 2020 to align better with the Government's COVID-19 response program.
4. WFP, in partnership with the Association of Official Analytical Collaboration (AOAC) India section, organized the second technical webinar as part of Phase-I of technical cooperation among WFP, AOAC and Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority's National Food Testing Laboratory (NFTL). An independent expert on the subject, Dr V. K. Gupta delivered a webinar to help strengthen the knowledge of NFTL analysts on vitamin analysis in foods, particularly fortified rice.

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WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Oct 2020-Mar 2021 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.9 m	5.3 m	0.0 m

Strategic Result 1: Everyone has access to food

Strategic Outcome 1: School-age children, women and vulnerable groups in Bhutan have improved nutrition in line with national targets by 2023

Focus area: Root Causes

Activities:

- Assist the Government in its transition to a national school nutrition programme based on an integrated approach to school feeding that connects school feeding with nutrition education, school health and school agriculture and embeds gender across all activities, strengthened supply chains and school nutrition infrastructure optimization.
- Provide technical assistance to the Government and the national food production and trade sectors to ensure that sound policies are in place and ensure quality and safety of fortified foods, especially rice, throughout their supply chains.

Strategic Result 5: Countries have strengthened capacities to implement the SDGs

Strategic Outcome 2: Government has strengthened capability to address food security and nutrition challenges and prepare for and respond to crises, including those resulting from climate change, by 2023.

Focus area: Root Causes

Activities:

- Provide the Government with gender-informed and vulnerability-focused capacity strengthening relevant to its management of national emergency resources, development, enhancement and testing of national emergency response plans and coordination systems, through WFP's leadership of the emergency logistics and communications sectoral working group.

Challenges

- Bhutan has limited awareness about its disaster risks, compounded by the fact that the country has not faced major disasters in recent times. There are also some knowledge gaps on the relationship between disasters and its impact on food security. In response, WFP is working with government partners to increase national disaster awareness.
- While the implementing partners in nutrition are highly committed, their numbers are limited, which hinders their ability to support the implementation of national health and nutrition strategies. WFP is therefore supporting the Department for Disaster Management to build stronger national capacity to prepare for and respond to disasters.

Photo Page 1: © WFP Bhutan/ Binai Lama: Protected agriculture practiced in Zhemgang district.

Photo on the right: © WFP Bhutan/ Gopi Kharel: A mobile storage unit being constructed in Thimphu district.

5. WFP in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, UNICEF, and a creative artist conceptualized a nutrition-health education show for young children, which will air on the national Bhutan Broadcasting Service. The live show format combines action, sketch comedy, animation and puppetry. The show will consist of five episodes covering topics such as immunity, eating local food, seasonal and diverse diet, hydration, physical activity and avoiding junk foods, amongst others.

6. WFP completed an initial discussion with the Department of Disaster Management to integrate the data from the 72-hour rapid assessment approach with the disaster management portal of the Royal Government of Bhutan. This initiative intends to strengthen the cooperation between WFP and its government partners and strengthen the national disaster preparedness data system.

7. WFP, in partnership with Newcastle University, undertook an earthquake impact modelling study last year. Using the findings of the study, WFP, in consultation with the Department of Disaster Management, has proposed a virtual earthquake simulation exercise to strengthen disaster preparedness in the country.

8. WFP procured five mobile storage units and a container as a part of our support to the COVID-19 response, in addressing the National Food Security Reserve storage. These will also contribute towards the expansion of the Humanitarian Staging Area and Forward Logistics Bases in the country.

