



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

WFP Bhutan Country Brief May 2021



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

Due to the government's proposal to reorient the UN support activities to address the priorities of COVID-19 pandemic response, most of the month of May was spent on the validation of the activities in the Annual Work Plan while making necessary adjustments in interventions to reduce and mitigate risk of the pandemic.

Operational Update

- WFP prioritized the need of capacity strengthening assistance in Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) sector preparedness in its Country Strategic Plan 2018-2023. Through seed funds (approximately USD 40,000) from the ETC model country project, WFP will work together with the Government to strengthen coordination in emergency telecommunications preparedness and response as well as enhance the government capacity for resilient emergency communication systems in Bhutan.
- As a follow-up to the April workshop on 72-hour rapid assessment, WFP is working with a technical working group comprised of relevant government agencies to prepare a detailed workplan and ensure to update the vulnerability data sets to run the analysis if a disaster occurs.
- As part of the capacity strengthening efforts within the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) portfolio in Bhutan, WFP is supporting the operationalization of the Logistics Desk through the Logistics Preparedness Project. A briefing was recently held with the new Director, Directorate of Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, to brief the activities under the Logistics Desk. The first inception workshop scheduled for mid-July aims to involve multi-stakeholders participation as part of a National Logistics Preparedness working group.
- As part of the ongoing technical collaboration with BAFRA-NFTL (National Food Testing Laboratory) and India Section of AOAC (Association of Official Analytical Collaboration) INTERNATIONAL, WFP facilitated the provision of membership of AOAC INTERNATIONAL and access (user license) to AOAC's OMA (Official Method of Analysis) for 5 NFTL staff.

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WFP Bhutan Strategy

Country Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	Jun-Nov 2021 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
8.94 m	5.67 m	0.03 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

- The 43-day long national lockdown that was recently lifted affected support services to the smallholder farmers. The extension staffs had difficulties in providing regular production support services to the farmers. Logistics and market access were severely disrupted due to restrictions on travel and mobility. This also led to postharvest losses, which denied the farmers of a good opportunity to sell their produce and earn income.
- 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 and respond to disasters.

This will provide opportunities to increase technical knowledge, build leadership skills, broaden professional horizons and leverage valuable scientific networks in Bhutan. OMA would provide access to over 3,000 validated analytical methods. This initiative would further build NFTL's competency and proficiency in the analysis of fortified foods.

- WFP facilitated a virtual meeting between Central Institute for Post-Harvest Engineering and Technology (CIPHET), India, and Bhutan's National Post Harvest Centre (NPHC). A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding between CIPHET, WFP and NPHC for technical cooperation will be drawn up. Further, they agreed to carry out collaborative research and studies, such as studies on post-harvest losses. CIPHET will support in technology transfer and trainings for NPHC, exchange of information & knowledge products, such as SOPs, equipment specifications for laboratory, and visit to CIPHET campus (subject to travel restrictions).
- On resource mobilization, WFP prepared a proposal to support the disaster risk management and submitted it to the Embassy of Japan in New Delhi, India. WFP is also in the initial stages of exploring resource mobilization possibilities through the Climate Adaptation Fund/Innovation Grant.
- WFP is commissioning the decentralized evaluation (DE) of WFP's support to smallholder farmers and expanded portfolio across the agriculture value chain in Bhutan. The DE is planned for 3rd and 4th quarter of 2021. Preparation work has started and Terms of Reference for the evaluation was completed in May.
- To take forward the Food Systems Summit dialogues, in consultation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), European Union (EU) and the World Bank, WFP drafted and shared a concept note to guide the government counterparts.