

Highlights

- A milestone in the transition to full government management of the School Feeding Programme was achieved with the Ministry of Education taking complete control of the annual workshops held for focal teachers managing the school feeding at their respective schools.
- WFP, as a member of the UN One Programme Education Sub-Group, finalised the joint Annual Work Plan for 2017, which will be presented to the Country Programme Board for approval.
- The role of the School Feeding Technical Committee is gaining importance in the implementation of the National School Feeding Programme.

WFP Bhutan Country Brief

WFP Assistance

| Development Project 200300 | Total Requirements (in USD) | Total Received (in USD) | 6 Months Net Funding Requirements (in USD)* |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| (2014-2018) | 8.6 m | 7.3 m (85%) | - |

*January 2017 - June 2017

WFP supports the Government of Bhutan to become self-reliant in the management, coordination and implementation of a cost-effective, equitable and quality national school feeding programme.

The Royal Government of Bhutan has been implementing school feeding for more than four decades and WFP's support is gradually being phased out. WFP's development project is facilitating this transition process by transferring knowledge, systems and skills to the relevant government partners. The residual number of students supported by WFP is gradually reducing with responsibility, and a certain number are being handed over to the Government on an annual basis. By the start of the 2019 school year, the responsibility for all schoolchildren will be covered by the Government.

The project has two primary objectives aimed at phasing out WFP support to school feeding by the end of 2018: (i) to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education to be an effective steward of a nationwide school feeding programme; and (ii) to maintain access to and gender parity in primary education that contributes to enhanced learning.

In line with these objectives, WFP pursues two inter-related strategies: firstly, to continue supporting primary schools in remote areas, gradually handing over this responsibility to the Ministry of Education, and secondly to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry to set policy and priorities, manage the supply chain and oversee programmes, so that it can independently administer the nationwide school feeding programme.

These objectives correspond to WFP Strategic Objective 4 and are aligned with Bhutan's Eleventh Five Year Plan (2013-2018) and the United Nations One-Programme (2014-2018) under the outcome of providing equitable access to, and the utilization and quality of, essential social services for all, with a focus on sustaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and addressing emerging challenges.



Credit: Jamyang Choeden/Ministry of Education, Bhutan.
Caption: Teachers from various schools in eastern Bhutan participating in the workshop on Nutrition and School Feeding Management held at Samdrup Jongkhar, Bhutan.

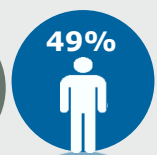
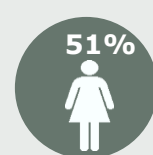
In Numbers

Schools assisted 176

School children reached 19,092

Coverage all 20 districts

People Assisted
December 2016



Main
Photo

Credit: Desang Dorji/Ministry of Education, Bhutan.
Caption: Banner for the workshop on Nutrition and School Feeding Management for the programme's focal teachers held in Phuentsholing, Bhutan.

Operational Updates

- The School Health and Nutrition Division (SHND) of the Ministry of Education received a budget allocation from the overall Education Sector budget to conduct the workshop for teachers that are responsible for managing school feeding at their respective schools, popularly known as "School Mess In-charges". Until 2016, WFP used to provide financial support for this crucial investment in developing the capacity of the teachers to efficiently manage the programme. The role of a Mess In-charge is borne by the teachers as an additional responsibility on top of their teaching role without additional incentives or benefits. These annual workshops also provide the teachers an opportunity to come together and share practical knowledge and issues, which is also useful for the SHND, in its efforts to continuously improve the programme.
- The Joint WFP-Ministry of Education Annual Work Plan for 2017, developed under the UN One Programme, focuses on activities that will enhance the various aspects of the school feeding programme, such as the policy level, improving nutritional aspects, supply chain and monitoring and evaluation components.
- The School Feeding Technical Committee, comprised of a multi-sectoral representation, has now evolved into an important decision making body. This is evident from the last meeting in late November 2016, where the committee made urgent decisions on the school feeding food basket and other operational activities.
- The School Feeding Technical Committee meeting in November also decided to pilot a few supply chain models that were suggested by the Kuehne Foundation expert, who reviewed the current school feeding supply chain. The objective of these pilot models are to establish an effective and cost efficient supply chain for the National School Feeding Programme.

Challenges

- Identifying qualified local consultants continues to be a bottleneck for the implementation progress of some capacity development activities.
- Despite financial support from WFP to help the Ministry of Education in recruiting additional manpower, a lengthy bureaucratic process is delaying recruitment and consequently the implementation of planned activities.
- The hand-over of the programme depends on the Government's financial ability to assume all feeding-related costs. The ability to take over the school feeding programme heavily depends on the revenue they expect to generate from ongoing hydropower projects, which are delayed by a few years because of technical issues. The delay in commissioning the hydropower projects is a risk for the continuity of the school feeding hand-over by 2018.

Country Background & Strategy



Bhutan is a small Himalayan country in South Asia, landlocked between China in the north and India in the south with a total surface area of 38,394 km². The country's development policies and plans are guided by the concept of Gross National Happiness, which stresses the achievement of equitable and sustainable development over economic growth.

The national poverty rate of Bhutan defined as USD 1.25 purchasing power parity rate per capita, is at 12 percent (2012). However, the country is still challenged by its mountainous terrain and poor road access isolating rural populations from markets and social services and limiting their livelihood opportunities. With the majority of the population living as rural farmers in small villages scattered throughout the mountainous landscape, logistical challenges impede access to social services. Close to one-fourth of the population suffers from seasonal food insecurity, especially during the months before the harvest.

Bhutan relies on India for more than 80 percent of its imports; 34 percent of the country's cereals are imported, and limited exports earnings are not sufficient to finance all foreign exchange requirements. A booming construction industry, especially for hydropower projects, and increasing availability of credit facilities has led to rising domestic consumption. The Government has responded to these imbalances by imposing some austerity measures, including import controls on vegetables that can be grown locally.

The Royal Government of Bhutan considers education as the key to alleviating poverty and empowering people, and as such, the sector receives the highest priority and emphasis: 16.7 percent of total government spending, 7.3 percent of GDP.

WFP has been present in Bhutan since 1974.

Population: **784,103 (2016)**

2015 Human Development Index: **140 out of 188**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

Donors Canada, Australia, Private Donors (RS Group, JAWFP, YUM! Australia)