



## WFP Bhutan Country Brief

### WFP Assistance

Development Project 200300  (2014-2018)	Total Requirements (in USD)	Total Received (in USD)	6 Months Net Funding Requirements (In USD)*
	8.6 m	7.5 m (87%)	-

\*May - October 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 Government of Bhutan has been implementing school feeding for more than four decades and WFP's support is gradually being phased out. The current 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.

Main  
Photo

Credit: Kencho Wangmo/WFP.  
Caption: Enumerators for the dietary assessment being trained on how to use nutri-survey software.

## Highlights

- **Dietary Assessment:** Fourteen enumerators were trained for four days on the data collection methodology and protocols. The enumerators consisted of district dietitians and officials from the district education offices.
- **Rice Fortification:** A local private sector rice mill with technical support by WFP successfully blended 315 mt fortified rice for use in the second quarter of 2017.
- **Quality Control Capacity:** WFP developed Quality Control protocols for rice fortification production and has started engaging with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests to train their staff on these.

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: School Feeding and Nutrition Facebook Page  
Caption: The Government of Bhutan as a "Three Eggs per Week" policy for healthy meals.

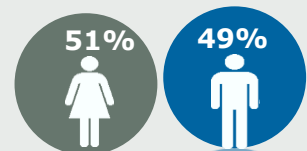
## In Numbers (April 2017)

Schools assisted 172

School children reached 16,860

Coverage all 20 districts

People Assisted



## Operational Updates

- The taskforce for the dietary assessment of school meals trained 14 district officials as enumerators for data collection on 17 to 20 April 2017. Six dietitians from the districts together with district education officials are working on the data collection in the sample schools. Detailed information on school meals will be collected from 24 schools from 9 districts across the country. Three rounds of data collection are foreseen; the first round took place during 21 to 30 April 2017 immediately following the training.
- A private sector rice mill contracted by WFP in Phuentsoling blended 315 mt of rice with fortified rice kernels. Throughout the process WFP ensured quality control and in the process developed Standard Operating Procedures for rice fortification in Bhutan. Following the blending, WFP completed the Quality and Quantity checks prior to handing over the fortified rice to the Ministry of Education for dispatch to the schools. WFP will assist the Ministry of Agriculture, the lead agency for rice fortification in the country, in training officials from relevant government agencies on how to conduct quality control for fortified rice and develop the necessary procedures for this.
- In collaboration with the School Health and Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Education, WFP introduced a newly developed monitoring tool for testing in ten pilot schools throughout this academic year. Focal teachers were trained on how to use the tool. During the pilot period, continuous feedback from the schools will be used to improve the tool and receive feedback on the information it generates; the key aspect of the tool being a more direct feedback loop to the schools to place their results versus those of other schools in the district and country.

## Challenges

- Identifying qualified local consultants continues to be a bottleneck for the implementation progress of some capacity development activities.
- The School Health and Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Education is short-staffed in implementing the school feeding programme. Two temporary staff with financial support from WFP have been recruited in the Division to fill in the gap until a more permanent solution can be found by the Ministry.
- 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 km<sup>2</sup>. 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)