



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	7.5 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: Kunzang Deki/Ministry of Education.
Caption: During the second round of data collection for dietary assessment of school meals at Taba Damtoe Lower Secondary School in Samtse district.

Highlights

- The Royal Government of Bhutan added fortified rice to the food basket of the National School Feeding Programme.
- WFP facilitated the participation of Royal Government of Bhutan to the Global Child Nutrition Forum held in Montreal, Canada.
- The second round of data collection for dietary assessment of school meals was completed successfully.

These objectives correspond with 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.



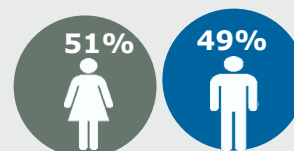
Credit: Kunzang Deki/Ministry of Education
Caption: School meals preparation in a make-shift kitchen at Taba Damtoe Lower Secondary School in the district of Samtse.

In Numbers (September 2017)

Schools assisted 171

School children reached 16,860

People Assisted



Operational Updates

- The Ministry of Education, as the lead agency for implementing the National School Feeding Programme, has started providing fortified rice in the school meals. As such, all of the 65,000 students in the national school feeding programme now receive micro-nutrient supplementation through the rice in their daily meals, up from the 16,860 school children who were until now the only ones receiving fortified rice. WFP continues to provide technical support in establishing a rice fortification programme in the country.
- WFP facilitated the participation of the Director General of Department of School Education, Ministry of Education and the Chief of School Health and Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Education to the Global Child Nutrition Forum held from 17 to 20 September 2017 in Montreal, Canada.
- The dietary assessment for the school meals is well on track with the completion of the second round of data collection. The data collected during the monsoon will show whether there are seasonal effects of the monsoon on the nutritional content of the meals. Despite challenges with the road conditions brought about by the monsoon rain, the enumerators visited all 24 schools selected for the assessment.
- The team of the School Health and Nutrition Division of the Ministry of Education has been reinforced with the addition of a School Feeding Programme Officer. WFP is currently providing support to train the new officer on Monitoring and Evaluation and Logistics.

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 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)