

BHUTAN

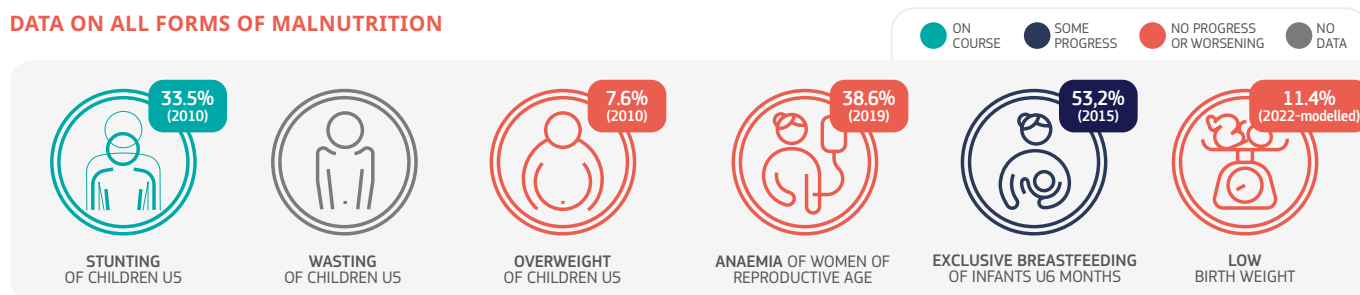
Nutrition situation in Bhutan

AT A GLANCE

The population of Bhutan is currently 787 000 people¹, with around 61% in rural areas. Bhutan appears on course to reach the international stunting target for 2025, although around a third of children under five years are still affected². There is insufficient data to assess progress towards international targets for wasting but most recent reports suggest that around 5.9% of children are affected³. Bhutan has made no progress on targets for overweight in children under five years, rates of low birthweight, or anemia in women of reproductive age – almost 40% of women in this

age group are affected. Causes of malnutrition, include chronic poverty, drought, gender inequality, inadequate diets, poor infant and young child feeding and caring practices, lack of safe water, hygiene and sanitation and low access to basic health services. At the same time, around 33% of the adult population in Bhutan is overweight, 11.4% of whom are living with obesity, and average salt consumption is high at 8.3g per person per day. Bhutan has a Gender Inequality Index value of 0.334 with a ranking at 80 out of 166 countries (2022)⁴.

DATA ON ALL FORMS OF MALNUTRITION



The data reported in the 2023 EU Nutrition Country Profiles is drawn from the UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates and the Global Nutrition Report (GNR).

NUTRITION GOVERNANCE

- The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) updated the Food and Nutrition Security Policy in 2023, with the following policy goals: 1) ensuring food security for all Bhutanese households through either producing their own food or having means to buy their food; 2) reducing all forms of malnutrition to achieve optimum health, nutrition and wellbeing; 3) enhancing the agricultural sector's annual contribution to GDP growth rate by focusing on high value agriculture and livestock production and enhancing export value of agriculture and livestock products.
- A National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan (NNSAP 2021-2025) is currently in place. Its main objective is to improve nutrition security, especially for children, women, adolescents, the elderly and those with special needs, with a focus on multisectoral collaboration to meet national and global targets by 2025.
- The National Nutrition Task Force (NNTF) is comprised of multiple agencies and is the custodian of the NNSAP. It is served by a Secretariat, based in the Nutrition Programme of the Ministry of Health (DOPH), which leads on the coordination between all sectors and guides and facilitates the implementation process.

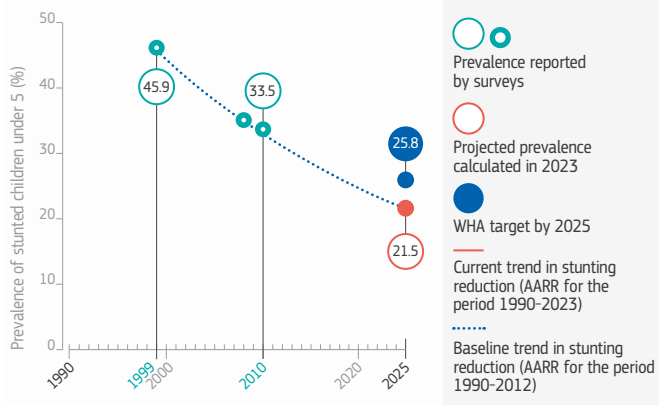
Example of EU support

The 2021-2027 EU Budget Support Programme aims to reduce poverty in Bhutan by supporting the implementation of RGoB's renewable natural resources sector's five year plans for 2018-2023 and 2023-28. This framework acknowledges the need to reduce the import of essential food items and to address malnutrition, which is responsible for 69% of Bhutan's disease burden.

Specific Objective 1.3 of the EU Multi-annual Indicative Programme (MIP) is 'enhance food and nutrition security'. Key outputs include ensuring sustainable food production through climate resilient approaches and increasing the number of schools providing nutritious food through the School Feeding Programme.

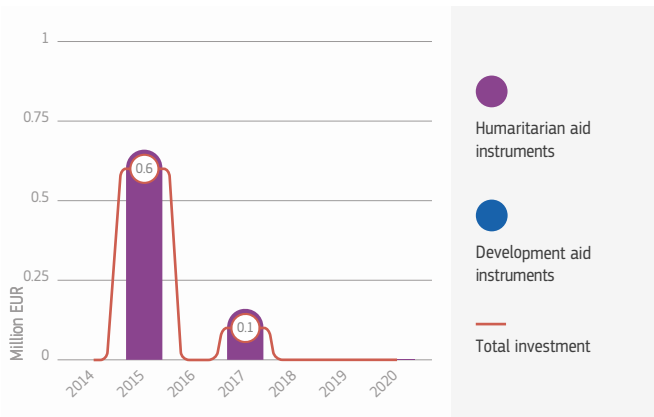


Progress on the two EU pledges for nutrition



TREND, PROJECTION AND TARGETS IN THE PREVALENCE AND NUMBER OF CHILDREN (U5) STUNTED

Bhutan has seen a steady decline in the prevalence of stunting since 1999. Recent projections anticipate that Bhutan will exceed the World Health Assembly target by 2025. If the current rate of decline in the number of children stunted (2.9% annually) is maintained, then 10 000 children are expected to be stunted in 2025, lower than the target figure of 12 000.



EU FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION BETWEEN 2014 AND 2020 – TOTAL OF EUR 0.7 MILLION

EU commitments for nutrition between 2014 and 2020 include EUR 0.7 million in humanitarian assistance for nutrition. For the period 2022-2027, the EU invested EUR 15 million in nutrition related development assistance through the Budget Support Programme 'Promoting Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Agrifood Systems in Bhutan'⁵.

Planning for nutrition 2021-2027

At the [UN Food Systems Summit](#) held in Tokyo in 2021 the Government of Bhutan committed to: achieve a carbon neutral, environmentally benign, high performance food system by 2030, which is resilient to shocks and climate change, effectively provides affordable, safe and nutritious food for all, provides gainful employment, empowers women and children, and radically advances maximisation of Gross National Happiness and the achievement of SDGs.

The government identified eight pathways for food system transformation in [their national pathway document](#), which included: securing production and smallholder livelihood and build climate resilience; enhancing and protecting values, standards and markets through promotion and strengthening of private enterprises and farmer cooperatives; developing and rolling out a set of digital tools, including real time digital platforms to provide information on agri-food produce and facilitate digital marketing; securing financing and 'de-risking' the agri-food sector; advancing research and technology aimed at building resilience, securing and increasing production, helping build value chains and enhancing production, prioritising biofortification and production of nutrient-dense crops; and strengthen capacity, coordination and partnerships

Nutrition forms part of the 360-degree approach of the EU's Global Gateway. The MIP for Bhutan is very well-placed to support these commitments, particularly through Priority Area 1 (Climate Change, green growth for a resilient Bhutan), where enhanced nutrition and food security is an explicit outcome of strategic objective 3. Strategic objective 2 of Priority Area 1, climate resilient approaches for sustainable food production, also provide opportunities to improve diet diversity and nutrition outcomes, through promoting nutrition-sensitive agriculture and income diversification. The EU Budget Support programme 'Promoting Inclusive, Sustainable and Resilient Agri-Food Systems in Bhutan' also reflects these pathways and will contribute directly to these outcomes (see Example of EU support).

In addition, actions under MIP Priority Area 2 (Good governance for inclusive socio-economic development) and 3 (Digital Transition) provide an opportunity to integrate strategies to improve nutrition through local government initiatives and through public service delivery, as well as through support to the education sector. The cross-cutting approach of both the MIP and the EU Budget Support Programme (2021-2027) to strengthening gender and women's empowerment offers additional opportunities to improve nutrition in Bhutan.

1 - [UNDESA World Population Prospects World Population Prospects](#), estimate for July 2023.

2 - Bhutan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2010.

3 - [Global Nutrition Report 2022](#).

4 - [UNDP Gender Inequality Index](#).

5 - Data in this section excludes some regional, global and policy/research/information commitments that could not be disaggregated by beneficiary country. The European Commission applied the methodology of the SUN Donor Network for nutrition resource tracking 2014-2020 and the OECD DAC's nutrition policy marker from 2021 onwards. Data for 2022 are preliminary.