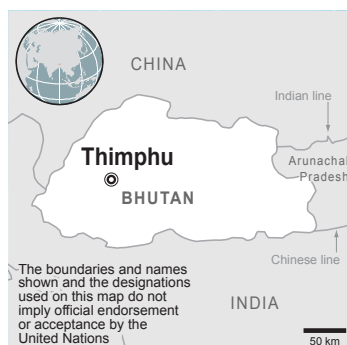


# Basic education/literacy, income security and employment for vulnerable people including children and women in Bhutan



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Bhutan

**Duration:** November 2007 to December 2010

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNDP; UNFPA; UNICEF; UNV; WFP

**Other Implementing Partners:** Government of Bhutan and non-governmental organizations

**Budget:** \$2,235,839.10

**Key Words:** Rural poverty; women; children; education; health; income generation

## BACKGROUND

In 2007, rural communities of Bhutan faced many difficulties due to their remote location, unfavorable mountainous terrain, inadequate landholdings, and limited connectivity among scattered and remote settlements. The livelihoods of many rural Bhutanese were also highly vulnerable to natural disasters, harvest fluctuations and family sickness, thereby exposing rural populations to economic and food insecurity, either continuously or on a seasonal basis.

As a result, growing disparities had emerged between rural and urban areas of the country. At the time of the project's formulation in 2007, 38% of the rural population lived below the national poverty line (US\$0.58 per day) compared to 4.2% of the urban population. Providing high standards in education was a further challenge among remote populations in rural areas, and literacy rates stood at 52% in rural areas compared with 75% in urban areas.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In order to better address the needs of rural populations in Bhutan, the project worked towards: (i) improving access to 15 child-friendly schools to increase enrolment and completion rates among rural children, both girls and boys, in primary education; (ii) providing clean drinking water in 20 community schools, latrines in 8 schools, and kitchens with fuel efficient stoves to improve school sanitation and environment in 14 selected rural schools; (iii) increasing knowledge, skills and income of rural poor households through the provision of non-formal

education, village skills training and the establishment of a network of 10 Integrated Community Development Centres; (iv) extending micro-finance services to poor households, particularly women and those not reached previously; (v) creating jobs, self-employment and small businesses to reduce unemployment, particularly among youth and women; and (vi) enhancing the capacity of civil society organizations in supporting vulnerable populations and promoting gender equality.

### BENEFICIARIES

This project benefited an excess of 80,000 vulnerable people, including children, unemployed and unskilled

youth, illiterate and unskilled women, and disabled people living in southern and eastern Bhutan.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

- i) Through a coordinated and multi-sectoral response, UNICEF, WFP, and the Royal Government of Bhutan Ministries of Education and Health successfully improved 63 schools and the lives of over 6,000 students. In tackling the full spectrum of threats that were compromising the students' education and physical wellbeing, including sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, conditions of classrooms and hostels, and teacher training on gender specific issues and special academic assistance, the project contributed to improving academic performance and student enrolment and retention.
- ii) The establishment of a network of Integrated Community Development Centre allowed the project to provide a comprehensive response to the numerous insecurities identified by the targeted rural communities. Through these centres a total of 685 Non-Formal Education Instructors were equipped with teaching skills and materials on issues ranging from

basic literacy and numeracy to reproductive health and early childhood care and development. Meanwhile, the provision of tools and machinery along with the development of marketable skills and product development training, as part of the Community Income/Employment Generation Programme, provided sustainable livelihood options to 85 households.

- iii) Towards responding to the needs of unemployed youth eager to start their own businesses but lacking the necessary skills and financial resources, the project implemented an Income Generation Start-up Support Programme (IGSP). The IGSP provided small-business support packages that included technical training, equipment, raw materials, and a start-up seed grant. Through this initiative, 44 micro-enterprises were established, providing employment for 56 young people in three poverty stricken and extremely remote districts in southern and eastern Bhutan.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The Child Friendly School (CFS) initiative and the accompanying improvements at the 63 selected schools demonstrated that a genuinely integrated and targeted multi-sectoral response that addresses the full spectrum of threats faced by those living in remote districts was imperative in improving the human security of the most vulnerable. Consequently, it was recognized that in order to capitalize on the improvements made within schools, these achievements should be accompanied by activities that address the economic, food, and health security needs of the broader community. Accordingly, the establishment of 'One-Stop Centres' that combine the different elements of the project, including activities supported through Non-Formal Education classes,

services offered by the Community Information Centres, and business training provided under the Income Generation Start-up Support Programme, were considered to be instrumental in extending the reach of the project. These Centres, rather than providing sporadic and geographically dispersed responses, could offer a more comprehensive, cost effective and efficient way for addressing the interrelated challenges confronting populations living in remote rural areas of Bhutan and could help improve the long-term impact and sustainability of the interventions offered under the project. Such a comprehensive framework could also ensure that the initial gains made under the project are not lost as a result of human insecurities in other areas.