

# ***DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA: Humanitarian Assistance***

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*Due to the prevailing economic situation in the country, the main activities of the Red Cross Society of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK Red Cross) continue to focus on social services and particularly on the health programme.*

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## ***The context***

Since its initial phase in 1995, the food and shelter emergency programme has gradually changed focus. The priority is presently given to health support and a longer term Disaster Preparedness, Response and Capacity Building. The Federation/DPRK Red Cross operational area covers four provinces - North Pyongan, South Pyongan, Chagang, and Kaesong - targeting 48 counties with an estimated population of 5.8 million.

Despite a large-scale and long-lasting humanitarian assistance, the situation in DPRK remains precarious. The government's mid-term strategy is focusing on rehabilitation of the agricultural sector in order to maximise food security. At the same time, they recognise that international support to health sector is still needed. Present health services are unable to handle the increased health problems. High level of malnutrition, communicable diseases and inadequate immunisation of children result in high mortality rates.

Rainfall and the level of water in reservoirs are extremely low in comparison with previous years. Therefore, a drought is quite possible. This situation has a negative impact on cultivation of rice, maize and other crops. It is estimated that food production will drop this year, adding further strain to the already uncertain food security situation in the country.

## ***Latest events***

On 13 and 14 June, the historical summit between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Republic of Korea took place in Pyongyang. The "North - South" Red Cross talks included issues such as exchange visits of separated family members and repatriation of long term prisoners. This is an introduction to the events planned for 15 August, in accordance with the historic North - South Joint Declaration.

## ***Red Cross/Red Crescent action***

The Federation and the DPRK Red Cross plan to continue their joint health programmes. These programmes include the distribution of drugs and medical equipment to 1,681 institutions, health promotion, training of health personnel, Community Based First Aid (CBFA) and water and sanitation and winterisation programmes. Activities in Disaster Preparedness, Disaster Response and Capacity Building are planned countrywide and consist of training, continued decentralisation of disaster preparedness stocks and their reallocation to regional warehouses and other disaster preparedness activities carried out by Red Cross branches jointly with other agencies.

### **Health •**

During field trips, the Federation as well as other humanitarian organisations observed an increased number of cases of malnutrition among adults and children. Medical staff confirmed an increase in the number of malnourished patients. The authorities are trying to get additional humanitarian assistance to prevent this situation while a health assessment is still to be made.

The number of cases with water related diarrhoea is increasing due to the lack of safe drinking water. In many counties, severely dehydrated children were noticed. According to UNICEF, health institutions, specially nurseries, are short of the oral rehydration salt (ORS), vitamins and other essential drugs.

The operation theatres in county hospitals are clean but are short of even very basic surgical equipment as well as anaesthetics. And yet, acute abdominal operations are those most frequently performed.

### *Drug Distribution Programme*

The ri (local) hospital kits arrived in July. In total, 293 kits consisting of 1,459 cartons have been received (3 cartons missing). Therefore, just 290 medical kits were distributed from the central warehouse.

The estimated date of arrival of county hospital kits is 10 August. The Federation plans to start the distribution by the end of August.

### *Monitoring*

In July, over 40 county warehouses were visited together with the NS counterparts. Monitoring of around 60 ri hospitals is planned for the beginning of August, representing 20% of all ri hospitals in the operational area.

The DPRK Red Cross monitors visit health care institutions on regular basis. According to their reports, some institutions have not completed the drug consumption forms as required by the Federation.

### *Disease surveillance*

The last disease surveillance reports from selected institutions were collected in March 2000. The Federation is still waiting for the permission from the Ministry of Public Health to collect information covering March - May 2000.

#### *Medical Equipment*

In total, 1,005 sterilisers have been distributed in South Pyongang and Kaesong provinces. The sterilisers (221) destroyed by fire on 3 March were handed over to the Ministry of Public Health for disposal.

#### *Health Training*

Training on prevention of diarrheal diseases is currently going on. These courses are planned to be completed by mid-September.

#### *Anti Malaria Project*

The Federation started with health education training on malaria. This activity has been agreed upon with the Ministry of Public Health as one part of the Federation involvement in an anti-malaria campaign. In July, around 400 community health workers and Red Cross First Aid volunteers were trained. The workshops are well received and highly appreciated by the participants. Anti-malaria drugs (Chloroquine and Primaquine) were also distributed in July. In the agreement with the Ministry of Public Health, the Federation received detailed distribution plans from each county. Monitoring will be carried out in August.

#### *Drug Manual*

Twenty thousand revised drug manuals have been printed. The revised version prepared jointly by WHO, UNICEF and the Federation includes chapters on malaria and TB. Both diseases are considered as serious problems in the country. Distribution plans are under preparation.

#### **Water and Sanitation •**

In all 15 county hospitals included in the first phase of the programme, the installation works have been completed. As regards the second phase, a local supplier provided 21 county hospitals with the material. However, the inspection of the material showed that the pipes, valves and the welding material did not meet required standards. The supplier agreed to replace all items within 10-14 days. Assessment of 19 hospitals identified for the third and fourth phase of the programme is still going on. Training in maintenance of pumps and valves as well as in water quality testing have been conducted in Kaesong, Jungju and Huitchon counties. In total, 80 participants were trained.

The Federation procured 25 MT of 65% chlorine in China. Chlorine will be distributed to the institutions included in the programme according to the distribution plan which is currently under preparation.

#### **Community Based First Aid (CBFA) •**

The Federation and the DPRK Red Cross plan to start the Community Based First Aid programme in the present operational area with the possibility of expanding it throughout the country through the Red Cross network. This programme includes extensive training of Master Trainers, Trainers and Red Cross volunteers with the main goal to work with communities and meet their needs. The programme will cover health education and disaster preparedness training. One hundred identified First Aid posts will receive all necessary First Aid material. A draft proposal has been prepared in co-operation with the National Society and is presently under consideration.

#### **Vehicle workshop •**

With the arrival of a new Federation technical delegate, the current set-up of the workshop was checked. The plan of action has been reviewed with the fleet and workshop managers.

Implementation of the workshop management system has been initiated. Hand tools were issued to the workshop staff, various workshop equipment has been introduced and technical training completed.

#### **Disaster Preparedness and Response •**

The DPRK Red Cross is taking an active part in the ongoing national campaign to reduce the damage by drought. The Red Cross branches have mobilised volunteers to actively participate in digging wells, watering plants, etc.

#### **National Society •**

The DPRK Red Cross distributed 956 cartons of spaghetti to 1,930 beneficiaries in 17 counties /cities. The ration given was 500 g/person for 10 days. The beneficiary list was prepared by the National Society and it included families with many children and single mothers.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has donated 200,000 MT of fertilisers to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The donation has been channelled through the two National Societies. The distribution is currently underway.

### ***Outstanding needs***

Financial resources to carry out the medical programme are urgently needed.

### ***External relations - Government/UN/NGOs/Media***

An international forum on the Korean Peninsula was held by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome on 1-2 June 2000. A Federation representative participated in the forum. A round- table of donors was organised by UNDP in Geneva on 21-22 June 2000.

A representative of World Vision (WV) left DPRK and closed their operation as the agency was denied residence in DPRK. The PVO consortium (Private Volunteer Organisation) closed their operation after the completion of their agricultural activities.

### ***Contributions***

See Annex 1 for details.

Peter Rees-Gildea  
Director  
Operations Funding and Reporting Department

Hiroshi Higashiura  
Director  
Asia Pacific Department

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