

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

DPR KOREA

DONOR UPDATE 27 MAY 2004

- High rates of malnutrition and diarrhoeal diseases among children, a high maternal mortality ratio, a shortage of drugs and deteriorating education in DPR Korea need to be addressed.
- UNICEF received only around 50% of the revised CAP requirements (US\$ 14,803,000), including the response to the Ryongchon tragedy.
- Essential drugs for 12 million people, textbooks and basic school materials for 650,000 girls and boys, as well as immediate support to 2,000 primary school children in Ryongchon are UNICEF's current priorities.



The boundaries and names shown do not imply official UN endorsement.

1. ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies

High rates of child malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies continue due to food shortages and the limited capacity of the country's social services to respond. The 2002 Government-UNICEF-WFP nutrition survey showed that 42% of the country's children below seven years of age are chronically malnourished, 9% are acutely malnourished and 70,000 are severely malnourished, requiring special hospital care for their survival.

Shortage of essential medicines and equipment

A widespread shortage of essential medicines and basic equipment due to the continued deterioration of social services remains a major concern. Local production and importation of drugs has almost completely ceased. Simple equipment is either not in place or is over thirty years old. Knowledge and skills of staff need to be upgraded.

High rates of diarrhoeal diseases and deaths

High incidence of diarrhoeal diseases caused by contaminated water, use of unsanitary latrines and unhygienic practices reinforces the cycle of malnutrition and contributes to high infant and child morbidity and mortality. Piped water availability has been curtailed and is often contaminated because of deteriorated infrastructure and distribution system. The treatment of piped water is no longer a regular practice due to lack of national budget. Families now frequently have to seek alternative water sources and the burden of water collection falls on women and children. The perception, knowledge and practices of parents concerning home management of diarrhoeal diseases are also known to be poor.

High maternal mortality ratio

Continued high rates of maternal mortality caused by a deteriorating health system that is finding it increasingly difficult to deliver good services and manage emergency referrals is another major issue in DPRK.

Deteriorating quality of education for children

The improvement in quality of education is an issue in DPRK, as is the continual shortages of basic school supplies, often now a charge on parents rather than the local authority, shortages of textbooks, and further degradation of school infrastructure. Field observations and verbal reports from the Ministry of Education indicate that the prolonged hardships,

such as illness and lack of adequate heating in schools during the long sub-zero winters, are beginning to provoke a pattern of absenteeism. Humanitarian assistance has made modest contributions, but without a definite move towards systemic improvements, this is not a sustainable approach to solve the problems.

Sudden death, loss and trauma for children: Explosion at Ryongchon County

On Thursday 22 April 2004, at 1210 hrs local time, two train wagons exploded at Ryongchon Station, Ryongchon County, North Pyongan Province. The blast killed more than 160 people, including 76 children, and injured 1,300 people, 370 of whom were hospitalized with serious injuries. The explosion caused major damage to housing, schools and medical facilities. The only primary school, one of the two Kindergartens and the only nursery were totally destroyed causing disruption of children's education, discontinuation of care-services, displacement and trauma to nearly 2000 children.

2. ACTION

Addressing malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies

UNICEF has delivered F100 therapeutic milk to health facilities in DPRK to treat more than 16% of the country's severely malnourished children. This was largely due to the significant ECHO contribution that ensured additional deliveries to more hospitals at the county level, increasing the rehabilitation centers to 61 and reaching more children who would have otherwise died. With more funding from Republic of Korea and ECHO, it is expected that, by the end of the year, UNICEF will rehabilitate more than 41% of the country's severely malnourished children and increase the number of the rehabilitation centers from 61 to 157.

Targeted care institutions were equipped to carry out regular growth monitoring in an effort to build capacity of the Government to prevent malnutrition. A group of master trainers in all provinces were trained on growth monitoring, early childhood development and care. The skills and knowledge is being transferred to the care takers in care institutions (nurseries and baby homes) through regular refresher training.

With a joint effort of WFP, UNICEF and the Government, production of vitamin and mineral fortified food has continued. Vitamin and mineral premix is supported through ECHO contribution. The food is given to young children, pregnant (from 4 months) and lactating women, contributing to the decrease of micronutrient deficiencies and improving the nutritional status of children in DPRK.

Two protocols on micronutrient supplementation - Protocol on Iron/Folate Supplementation before Pregnancy and Treatment of Iron Deficiency / Anaemia, and Protocol on Multi-Micronutrient Supplementation during 1st Trimester of Pregnancy - were drafted and shared with the Ministry of Public Health. Supply of micronutrient supplements for pregnant women is expected in June/July. UNICEF expects to reach 60% of pregnant women in DPRK to reduce incidence of micronutrient deficiencies in pregnant women and protect newborn children from impaired growth and development.

Approximately 49,000 pregnant women in vulnerable areas of the country with high iodine deficiency received iodized oil capsules. This includes all pregnant women in Chagang and Ryanggang provinces and all pregnant women in selected counties in North Hamgyong province. Now approximately 49,000 newborns are less likely to be born with iodine deficiency, which impairs mental and physical development.

Supply of essential medicines and equipment

UNICEF has ordered sufficient quantities of vaccine to fulfill the needs of DPRK in 2004. Cold chain equipment needed to store vaccines as well as spare parts and local means of transport have also been ordered. Over 350,000 infants will be fully immunized, protecting them from disease and disability. However, with GAVI assistance for AD Syringes and safety boxes drying up at the end of 2004, pre-order of further supplies of these items for 2005 looks uncertain unless the Government can ensure alternative funding sources.

UNICEF delivered essential medicines to 2,648 health facilities, reaching all provinces and cities in the country. The deliveries were on time thanks to sustained progress of the Central Medical Warehouse (CMW) / Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) logistic capacity. The very basic drugs necessary to treat the main causes of children's illness and mortality in DPRK are available. Millions of children will be treated for simple yet life threatening illnesses, including diarrhoea and pneumonia. However, the number of such drugs has been limited to 22 out of 60 on the Essential Drugs List adopted by WHO, UNICEF, IFRC and UNFPA, thus limiting the treatment of some diseases and conditions while other serious illnesses remain untreated or not optimally treated.

In addition, local production of oral rehydration salts (ORS) was maintained at 3 million sachets meeting 30% of the country's need and contributing to the decrease of child mortality due to diarrhoeal diseases.

Water supply and sanitation interventions for reducing diarrhoeal diseases

The construction of gravity flow water supply systems in Kosan and Kowon counties is one of the most successful achievements of the WES programme in 2004. 15,000 families (about 75,000 people) now receive uninterrupted supply of clean water, which is expected to substantially reduce risks of diarrhoea transmission, thus helping to break the vicious cycle of reduced resistance/increase vulnerability and malnutrition.

The UNICEF Water and Environmental Sanitation project will continue to work in these two focus counties, but at the ri level (rural communities). The predicted outcome of this project is uninterrupted supply of clean water to individual households in these cities and ris and reduced risk of diarrhoeal diseases.

The DPRK Government and UNICEF have also agreed to encourage and expand this gravity flow piloting scheme to seven additional cities and counties during 2004-2006. Assessments of some new water and sanitation project activities have been completed and others are in progress. No new rehabilitation has been initiated, but will begin by mid-year.

Due to the arrival of ECHO 2003 funds in 2004, an upward adjustment of implementation targets for 2004 is possible. In the face of a large unmet demand in this sector and increased handling capacity, the planned funding level has just been revised upwards in the CAP MYR by US \$ 1,000,000. Implementation is on track, and the absorptive capacity of UNICEF as well as the Government is adequate to take on the additional implementation load this increasing planning level will imply. This increased implementation, if achieved, will ensure clean water supply and sanitation facilities to an additional 30 children's institutions such as nurseries, and baby-homes as well as 15 remote schools, serving a total of approximately 25,000 children.

Addressing maternal mortality through safer delivery

Equipment for emergency obstetric care at county hospitals and midwifery kits for the ri level have been ordered out of 2003 Swedish SIDA contributions, now completely expended. Pregnant women now have access to emergency obstetric care, which is expected to reduce the maternal mortality rate. Basic Obstetric Care kits will serve an estimated 14,400 normal deliveries at Ri level and Emergency Obstetric Care kits will serve an estimated 250 complicated deliveries at the referral level of County/Provincial hospitals. For the first time, funding has been received specifically for Safe Motherhood. New Zealand has recently contributed US\$ 199,500 for this project.

Improving quality of education for children

UNICEF has been able to provide 82MT of printing paper due to the late arrival of pledged funds in 2003, which resulted in some spill over to 2004. 60,000 primary and pre-school children (out of a planned coverage of 650,000) will have new textbooks. With funding just received UNICEF has ensured basic school materials (pencils, rulers, erasers and notebooks) for 300,000 children. The effectiveness of the classroom, including learning retention, is expected to increase.

Two regional office advisors visited DPRK to do an assessment of quality of education in DPRK and run a workshop on the subject to the Government. Also, plans have been finalized for two staff from the Ministry of Education to attend a regional technical workshop on learning assessments in Bangkok later this year. The process of reviewing ways and means of improving quality of education, including incorporating life skills in schools, has been initiated.

Crisis in Ryongchon

UNICEF delivered a truck carrying emergency essential medical supplies valued at \$17,000 (antibiotics, ORS, Paracetamol, IV fluid, syringes and water purification tablets) within 48 hours after the explosion to the provincial medical warehouse of Ryongchon (transported within 12 hours of receiving official information and appeal). An assessment of damage was taken and the reconstruction of a primary school, a kindergarten, and a nursery has been included in the Mid Year Review of the CAP. UNICEF has provided technical support for the drilling of bore holes at the affected site to provide an alternative water sources to those temporarily without water. 50 school-in-a-box kits have been delivered to ensure continuation of children continue receiving education in temporary arrangements while the schools are rebuilt.

Emergency preparedness and response to the Ryongchon crisis has contributed to saving lives of those wounded in the explosion. In addition, UNICEF has played a part to returning normalcy to children by having them back to school and restoring education services and system.

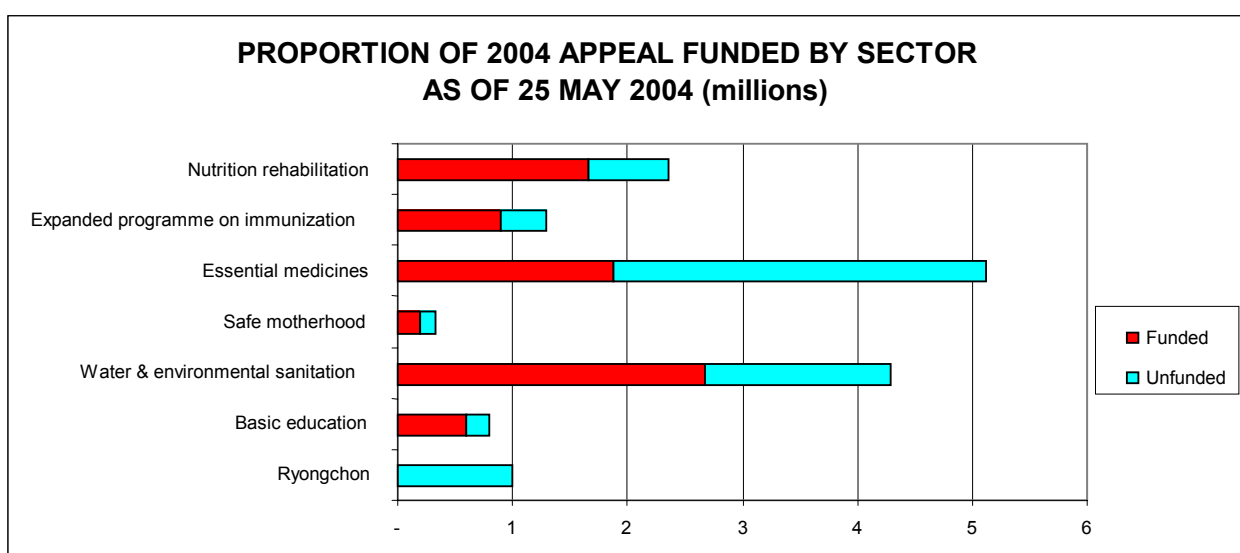
Advocacy dialogue with the Government

UNICEF Executive Director, Carol Bellamy, visited DPRK 13-16 March to look first-hand at the situation of children in the country, to engage the Government in dialogue regarding the opportunities and constraints in programming for children, and to increase awareness amongst the international community that results for children are being achieved with UNICEF support in DPRK. The visit resulted in renewed commitment from the Government on behalf of children, interest from the Republic of Korea who is now emerging as a more active partner of UNICEF's programme in DPRK, as well as enhanced awareness of the international community and donors of the situation and needs of children in DPRK.

3. APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

As part of the 2004 UN Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal for the DPRK, UNICEF appealed for US\$ 14,803,960 to support its Emergency Programme for children and women in the country. The table and graph below show the current funding status of the Appeal, by sector.

Sector	Target (US\$)	Funded (US\$)	% Funded	Unfunded (US\$)
Emergency Nutrition Rehabilitation, Prevention of Malnutrition and the Control of Micro-nutrients	2,358,720	1,666,976	71	691,744
Expanded Programme on Immunization	1,299,200	885,254	68	413,946
Essential Medicines	5,118,400	1,873,724	37	3,244,676
Safe Motherhood	343,840	199,500	58	144,340
Water and Environmental Sanitation	3,732,800	2,671,001	72	1,061,799
Education	924,000	636,626	69	287,374
Ryongchon	1,027,000	0	0	1,027,000
Total	14,803,960	7,933,081	54	6,870,879



The following table indicates the contributions received for the Appeal, by donor. ECHO remains the largest donor for DPRK with combined contribution of US\$ 2,615,666 against CAP 2003 and CAP 2004. An amount of \$1,396,771 allocated in 2003 was utilized for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition. UNICEF is grateful to the generous donor contributions, which have greatly assisted in continuing humanitarian interventions for the most vulnerable children and women in the DPRK.

Donor	Income/Pledges (US\$)	Purpose
Canada	451,128	Essential medicines, water supply and sanitation
European Community (ECHO)	998,752	Nutrition rehabilitation, essential medicines
European Community (ECHO)	1,616,914	Water supply and sanitation
Finland	373,134	Education, nutrition rehabilitation
New Zealand	350,000	Safe motherhood, essential medicines
Norway	426,750	Immunization, water supply and sanitation
OPEC	250,000	Water supply and sanitation
Republic of Korea	1,000,000	Nutrition rehabilitation, essential medicines, immunization
Sweden	649,350	Education, essential medicines

United Kingdom	1,817,053	Nutrition rehabilitation, immunization, essential medicines, water supply and sanitation
Total	7,933,081	

4. IMPACT OF UNDER-FUNDING AND CURRENT PRIORITIES

Under funding and late funding for UNICEF programmes in the DPRK has usually forced postponement of activities, slowed implementation of activities and reduced programme coverage. **Shortfalls in funding prevent UNICEF from providing adequate support and puts children at greater risk of death and malnutrition.** For example, UNICEF is currently only able to provide several “very vital” drugs out of the more than 200 items on the WHO essential drugs list.

The table below outlines the most urgent priority requirements:

Table 3: PRIORITY REQUIREMENTS AS OF 25 MAY 2004		
Project	Beneficiaries/coverage	Amount Required (US\$)
1. Essential medicines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 million people in eight provinces/cities Children and pregnant women referred to provincial hospitals in three provinces and one city 	1,000,000 (for vital drugs)
2. Safe-motherhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 480,000 pregnant women 	100,000 (for equipment for safe child deliveries)
3. Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 650,000 girls and boys in the most vulnerable provinces (north-east) as well as in orphanages in all provinces countrywide 	200,000 (for textbooks and basic school materials)
4. Ryongchon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2000 children of one primary school, one kindergarten and one nursery that had been totally destroyed 	1,027,000 (more firm estimates subject to further detailed assessment)

UNICEF is thankful to the above-mentioned donors who have contributed/expressed indications to support its efforts in responding to the humanitarian needs of children and women in DPRK.

Details of the UNICEF DPRK Emergency Programme can be obtained from:

Pierrette Vu Thi
Representative
DPR Korea

Tel: + 850 2 381 7150
Fax: + 850 2 381 7676
E-mail: pvuthi@unicef.org

Olivier Degreef
UNICEF EMOPS
Geneva

Tel: + 41 22 909 5655
Fax: + 41 22 909 5902
E-mail: odegreef@unicef.org

Dan Rohrmann
UNICEF PFO
New York

Tel: + 1 212 326 7009
Fax: + 1 212 326 7165
E-mail: drohrmann@unicef.org