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UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

DPR KOREA

DONOR UPDATE 28 FEBRUARY 2003

CHILD NUTRITION SURVEY SHOWS IMPROVEMENTS IN DPRK, BUT UN AGENCIES CONCERNED ABOUT HOLDING ONTO GAINS

- ◆ **New nutrition assessment results show success of humanitarian action**
- ◆ **Serious shortfalls in all areas of the appeal put these gains in jeopardy**

1. EMERGENCY OVERVIEW AND RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Nutrition assessment results

The report on the October 2002 nutrition assessment was released on 20 February. It shows substantial improvements in the nutritional situation of children in the Democratic People Republic of Korea (DPRK) thanks largely to the effectiveness of the humanitarian action programme funded by the international community. The assessment – the largest of its kind ever to be undertaken in the DPRK – covered both child and maternal nutrition and was carried out last October by the Government's Central Bureau of Statistics and Institute of Child Nutrition, in collaboration with UNICEF and the World Food Programme. Though not strictly comparable with an earlier survey conducted in 1998, clear positive trends are discernible:

- The proportion of children underweight (weight-for-age) has fallen from 61 per cent in 1998 to 21 per cent in 2002.
- Wasting or acute malnutrition (weight-for-height), has fallen from 16 per cent to 9 per cent.
- Stunting, or chronic malnutrition (height-for-age), has dropped from 62 per cent to 42 per cent.

The assessment also provided the first objective analysis of differing vulnerability across the country. Stunting in Nampo City was 25 per cent, for example, compared to 48 per cent in South Hamgyong Province. The wasting rate in Pyongyang, the capital, was just under 4 per cent, against 12 per cent in South Hamgyong. The survey found similar patterns in food availability and the incidence of childhood diarrhoea.

This confirms observations from field monitoring that the northeastern provinces are more vulnerable than other parts of the country.



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

The assessment also showed that about one-third of mothers are malnourished and anaemic, demonstrating how important women's health and nutrition is to that of their children. Though child malnutrition has fallen considerably, according to the survey, UNICEF and WFP are still very concerned. According to WHO criteria, the underweight rates are still "high", and the stunting rates are "very high." Moreover, the recent slump in external donations for food, medical and other assistance could compromise the gains causing malnutrition rates to rise once again. UNICEF and WFP staff working in the DPRK participated in the data collection teams for the assessment. In addition, experts from the UK's *Centre for International Child Health* and the Bangkok-based *Thailand Health Foundation* provided support for survey design, training, analysis and verification of statistical accuracy. The two independent bodies pronounced it a credible and accurate assessment.

The survey covered children less than seven years of age and their mothers from 6,000 randomly selected households in 10 of the country's 12 provinces and municipalities. The youngest child from each household was weighed and measured, and the mother's nutritional condition was assessed. In addition, questions were asked about factors that could influence nutrition, such as food availability, child feeding and care, and health status.

2. UNICEF RESPONSE: ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

UNICEF EMERGENCY UPDATES are available at <http://www.unicef.org/emerg> and <http://www.reliefweb.int>

UNICEF seeks US\$ 12,096,000 in the new Inter-Agency Appeal

As part of the 2003 UN Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal for DPRK, issued in November 2002, UNICEF is seeking US\$ 12,096,000 to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable of the population. The main stakeholders are about 15 million children and women, including 2.5 million children under five, 480,000 pregnant and 450,000 lactating women. Priorities are:

- To support the delivery of basic life-sustaining services in health and nutrition, including hospital-based rehabilitation of severely malnourished children.
- To support critical prevention programmes, such as malnutrition reduction, immunization plus, water and environmental sanitation and basic education.
- To develop model approaches using effective low-cost strategies that can later be replicated in other areas when additional funding becomes available.
- To support the development of national capacity of service providers, caregivers and families through training, technical assistance, planning and monitoring.
- To respond to short-term natural disasters.
- To improve and sustain the quality of the learning environment for primary school and kindergarten pupils with a focus on the most disadvantaged.
- To improve access to adequate quantities of clean water and upgraded sanitation for high-risk populations.

Ensuring the availability of very vital medicines to treat life threatening childhood illnesses

So far in 2003, “very vital” medicines have been delivered to eight of the twelve provinces and cities of the DPRK. Deliveries to the remaining four provinces will be completed in March. UNICEF now supports the provision of “very vital” medicines to over 2,000 health facilities countrywide. With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Health’s logistics system is improving, and deliveries to health facilities are now more regular and follow an annual delivery plan. Deliveries to the most distant provinces in the northeast of the country are by UNICEF’s own transport. Full details of the 2003 annual delivery plan, the current health facilities coverage plan and the types of medicines provided are available from the UNICEF office.

Immunisations continue for children and pregnant women

In spite of the cold weather, vaccination services continued to be offered over the winter months in most parts of the country. Further upgrading of the national system for proper storage and handling of vaccines (the cold chain) is a priority for 2003. Although much of the country’s cold chain equipment has been replaced over the past five years, more needs to be done to ensure that vaccines for the country’s 470,000 infants and 480,000 pregnant women, each year, are potent and safe at the time of vaccination. A UNICEF technical assistant to the Ministry of Public Health arrived in country in January and is now providing both formal and on-the-job training for six months this year.

Water and Sanitation – good progress

Good progress is reported by the UNICEF-supported water and sanitation programme. The programme continues its focus on a number of selected counties for greater impact. Rehabilitation of town and rural water supplies is underway in three focus counties in Kangwon and South Hamgyong provinces. Piped water systems are being replaced, bore-wells are being drilled in institutions. Seventy-two small-scale institution based sanitation projects are nearing completion.

Education – basic student materials for 1,500 schools

Distribution of basic school materials - including pencils, rulers, erasers - and textbooks using 2002 contributions is now being completed in advance of the new school year, which begins on 1 April. The project provides support to over 1,500 primary schools—mainly primary schools in the northeast of the country. For the first time since 1988, all 14,500 kindergartens countrywide have recently received reprinted textbooks through the project.

Overseas study visits / technical assistance – a contribution to capacity building

In January a five-member team from the Ministries of Foreign affairs, Public Health, City Management and Education, together with UNICEF senior staff, undertook a two-week study visit to Cuba to look at UNICEF-Government of Cuba cooperation and Early Childhood Development programming in particular. As a result, changes are anticipated in child care policies, emphasizing greater parental responsibility, involvement and capacity building.

A four-member team from the Ministry of City Management, together with UNICEF project staff, traveled to China and Vietnam for two weeks from February 14. In China the team will spend time learning about WES item technical specifications. In Vietnam the focus will be to learn about approaches to decentralized planning for improving rural water supply and community participation.

UNICEF is currently providing specific technical assistance to the Ministry of Health’s national immunisation programme to upgrade the cold chain (Phase 1: January – April). Technical assistance will be provided in March to the Ministry of Public Health in Breastfeeding Management as part of the renewed effort to promote and protect breastfeeding in the DPRK.

UNICEF's approach to capacity building in the DPRK combines a number of key components: agreement on a well-prepared medium term action plan to build capacity rather than ad-hoc training events, overseas training or specially prepared study visits for key officials increasing exposure to international developments and standards, in-country technical assistance, and support for assessments/studies.

Field visits

In 2002, UNICEF staff undertook field monitoring visits to health facilities (hospitals and clinics), children's institutions, primary schools, nurseries and other specific project sites in all of the 12 provinces/cities countrywide.

So far in 2003, UNICEF staff have made monitoring visits to four of the 12 provinces / cities countrywide. Main findings are:

- Acute respiratory infections (pneumonia) and diarrhoea are still the most common illnesses in children.
- Moderate malnutrition is widespread, severe malnutrition is seen – these field observations are consistent with the findings of the recent nutrition assessment.
- Health clinics have very vital essential medicines for treatment of children's illnesses until April.
- Paediatric hospitals and baby homes have stock of high-energy therapeutic milk for the treatment of severe malnutrition until May.
- All institutions report fewer hours of electricity compared to this time last year.

UNICEF, as is the case for other UN agencies, currently has access to 162 of 205 counties.

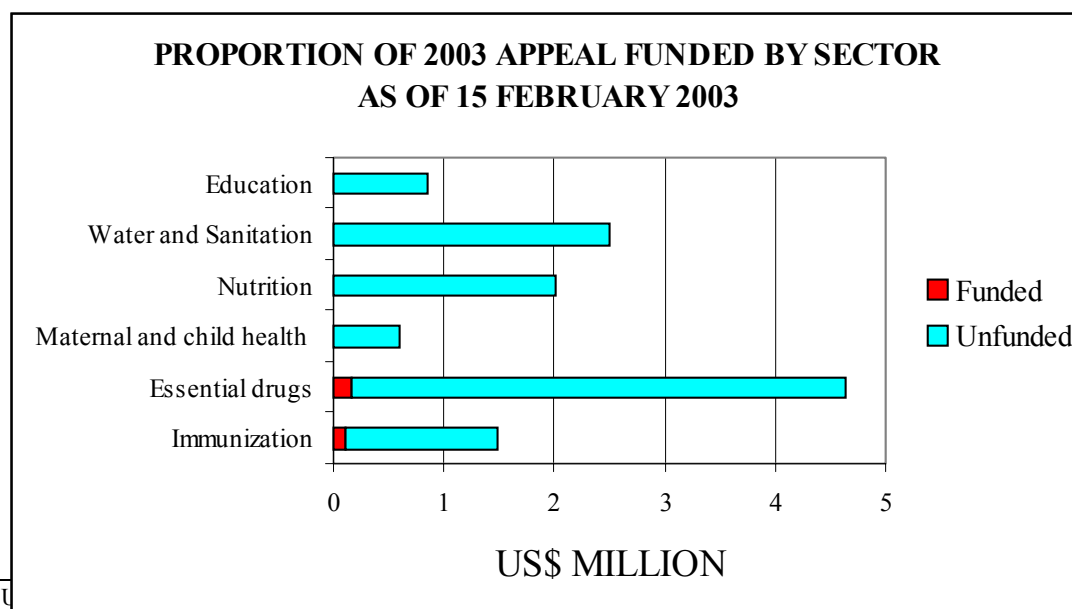
Programme Planning

The Government-UNICEF programme plans of action for 2003 were completed in January, and signed on February 10. Copies are available upon request from UNICEF. As last year, plans are output based and developed using a logical framework approach. On March 10, the Government and UNICEF will hold a country programme strategy meeting, to review draft plans for cooperation over the period 2004-2006. The UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific will attend the strategy meeting, as well as UNICEF's main partners in the DPRK.

3. APPEAL REQUIREMENTS AND RECEIPTS

As part of the UN Consolidated Appeal for DPRK, UNICEF appealed for US\$ 12,096,000 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\$)
Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI)	1,480,500	104,998	7	1,375,502
Essential drugs	4,646,250	167,102	3.5	4,479,148
Maternal and child health	598,500	0	0	598,500
Nutrition	2,016,000	0	0	2,016,000
Water and environmental sanitation and hygiene education	2,509,500	0	0	2,509,500
Education	845,250	0	0	845,250
Total	12,096,000	272,100	2.2	11,823,390



As of 14 February the total funds received for the 2003 Appeal amount to US\$ 272,100, covering only 2.2 per cent of the total appeal requirements. Due to the severe under-funding situation, the UNICEF Executive Director approved a special allocation of US\$ 900,000 from the UNICEF Global Reserve Fund.

The following table indicates the contributions received for the Appeal, by donor.

TABLE 2: FUNDS RECEIVED FOR 2003 APPEAL BY DONOR AS OF 15 FEBRUARY 2003		
Donors	Income/Pledge (US\$)	Purpose
Norway	272,100	EPI, Essential Drugs
Total	272,100	

4. IMPACT OF UNDER-FUNDING AND CURRENT PRIORITIES

UNICEF DPRK is greatly concerned at the low level of funding for its 2003 programmes. **The shortfall in funding prevents UNICEF from providing adequate support and puts children at greater risk of death and malnutrition.** For example, funding is available for UNICEF to provide only “very vital” medicines (5 items) to health clinics for the first six months of the year. Additional funds are now urgently needed to initiate procurement of very vital medicines – and ensure that treatments continue to be offered without interruption – for diseases such as childhood diarrhoea and pneumonia, the major causes of illness and death for children in the DPRK. Funding is only available for UNICEF to provide vaccines for the first four months of the year. Contributions are now urgently required to initiate procurement of vaccines and to avoid interruption of the national immunisation programme.

The table below outlines the most urgent priority requirements.

TABLE 3: REQUIREMENTS AS OF FEBRUARY 2003		
Project	Beneficiaries/coverage	Amount Required (US\$)
1. Essential drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 million people in UNICEF-designated areas and child care institutions nationwide 	2,500,000 for very vital medicines
2. Immunization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 470,000 children under the age of one year 480,000 pregnant women 	500,000 for vaccines and critical cold chain equipment
3. Nutrition rehabilitation / control of micronutrient deficiencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children below 5 years of age (approx. 2.5 million) 480,000 pregnant and 450,000 lactating women 10,000 severely malnourished children referred to 42 facilities Whole population for iodized salt 	500,000 for high energy therapeutic milk for severely malnourished children in hospitals and for vitamin-mineral premix for pregnant women

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

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