

UNICEF HUMANITARIAN ACTION REPORT 2009

DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

SUPPORTING QUALITY EDUCATION

UNICEF has been helping the Government improve schooling for children in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) for many years. In the past, efforts focused on the conditions in the classrooms – putting in double-glazed windows to insulate them during the freezing winter or providing good furniture. More recently, support is aiming at strengthening school teaching and learning.

How well children learn much depends on the quality of teaching. Every three years teachers in DPRK attend a one-month session in a teachers' training centre (TTC) to enhance their skills.

Choe Jin Hyok, 48 years old, married and father of one daughter, is the director of the TTC located in Jongpyong County, in South Hamyong Province. Mr. Choe started as a secondary schoolteacher. He rose to become a school inspector and, since November 2006, he is the director of the TTC in Jongpyong.

As the director, Mr. Choe is responsible for improving the skills of all the teachers in his county so that they reach a minimum standard. He believes that, by training teachers, he helps the students. This motivates him very much in his efforts to see that the centre offers the best possible training.

Currently, the centre's building is old and there is not enough space to accommodate all the teachers who participate in the training. To make matters worse, in August 2007, a big flood hit almost the whole of the country. Jongpyong experienced non-stop rains for nearly a week. Many homes, schools and hospitals were badly damaged.

Mr. Choe was stunned to see the fate of the TTC. He feared that the huge loss of textbooks, furniture and teaching materials could never be replaced. But help came quickly. The Government promised to construct a new building. Many organizations, including UNICEF, came forward to help. Mr. Choe was overwhelmed with relief. "With all the help we received, I feel that the county is not lost and that people still care for us," he said.

Mr. Choe and all the teachers in Jongpyong are set to move to their new building by the beginning of 2009. UNICEF is providing tools, construction materials and furniture, as well as the entire equipment for a fully adequate library, including 902 books and a computer.

Teachers all over the county are happy about the new training centre that is getting ready. "With the new building and a brand new library with audiovisual equipment and materials, teachers will have a fresh new start in improving the quality of teaching in Jongpyong County," says a beaming Mr. Choe.