



**United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs**

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**UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM  
in the  
DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

**UN COUNTRY TEAM CONCERNED BY SEVERE WINTER WEATHER CONDITIONS**

The UN Country Team in DPR Korea is becoming increasingly concerned over the widespread effects the coldest winter in 50 years is having on the people of the country. In mid-January 2001 temperatures fell to the lowest levels recorded in the last 50 years. In Chagang Province in the north of the country the temperature was minus 37 degrees Celsius and in Pyongyang minus 27. As a result road networks are impassable and NGO workers report that the country is 'at a standstill' outside the capital.

For a population already weakened by years of food shortages, limited access to utilities and basic health services, limited provision of electricity and ever more difficult access to fuel wood for heating, the severe winter conditions have potentially deadly consequences. Few homes in North Korea are sufficiently heated and hospitals and other public buildings such as schools, offices and factories have little or no heating at all. High levels of deforestation mean that people have to walk even further in sub-zero temperatures to collect firewood.

At the same time the poor harvest of 2000 means that food provision through the PDS will cease by the end of January in most parts of the country. Thus from February to late June, when the first 2001 harvest takes place, people will have to rely on alternative means of finding food. United Nations food-aid monitors report that food distributions via the Public Distribution System are currently at around 200 grammes of cereals per person per day, which translates into some 720 k/cal. The minimum requirement for an adult to survive is 2,200 k/cal per day.

For the elderly, children and the sick, the outlook is even bleaker. Vulnerable people in DPR Korea are less able to fend for themselves. Food provided through WFP as well as ongoing medical supplies provided by UNICEF, WHO, IFRC and NGO are thus vital, and early pledges and delivery of these commodities are urgently needed since the focus of aid programmes are during the lean season, which has already started and will continue until mid-year. Concurrently, assisting DPR Korea with provision of seeds and fertilisers should take place now, in order that supplies and equipment are available at the start of the growing season.

In the current cold weather conditions people who are living in institutions are facing a particularly harsh situation. Health institutions, including maternity hospitals are, in the main, unheated, as are children's institutions, schools and kindergartens.

The onset of a winter of such severity has greatly added to the hardships the people of DPR Korea are already facing as a result of the shortages of food, power, basic services and ever more erratic weather conditions. A timely and balance response can prevent many deaths among children, women and the elderly.

*Pyongyang  
DPR Korea*

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