



Humanitarian Action for Children

unicef 

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is characterized by chronic food insecurity and lack of access to life-saving basic services, with profound impacts on the most vulnerable. Despite a substantial drop in stunting from 28 per cent in 2012¹ to 19 per cent in 2017,² provincial disparities persist; and 3 per cent of children under 5 years are suffering from acute malnutrition³ and mutually-reinforcing deprivations. Approximately 39 per cent of the population (56 per cent in rural areas) lacks access to a safely managed drinking water source;⁴ and diarrhoea and pneumonia remain the two main causes of death among children under 5 years. Given the high ratio of child mortality among newborns and maternal deaths caused by sepsis and infections, appropriate equipment in health care facilities, especially in delivery wards, is critical to reducing the risk of postpartum and neonatal infections and minimizing hospital-acquired infections. Prolonged dry spells, flooding and limited agricultural inputs – which led to increased food insecurity in 2019 – will likely persist in 2020. In September 2019, Tropical Cyclone Lingling inundated 46,000 hectares of farmland, affecting food supplies.⁵ Crop production is not expected to recover from the slump of the past two years. External assistance will therefore continue to play a vital role in safeguarding the well-being of children and families, whose food security, nutritional status, general health and sanitation needs would otherwise be compromised in the restricted operational environment compounded by stringent scrutiny.

Humanitarian strategy

As lead of the nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector working groups and co-lead of health with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF remains at the forefront of humanitarian response in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. To sustain the delivery of life-saving interventions, UNICEF will continue to work with partners to apply its three-pronged strategic approach of: 1) providing basic supplies in line with global standards; 2) strengthening the timely and effective delivery of essential health, nutrition and WASH services, especially for children under 5 years and pregnant and lactating women; and 3) building local capacities to strengthen data collection and evidence generation. UNICEF will also focus on integrated service delivery to facilitate equitable access to WASH interventions, reduce high mortality and morbidity rates, address undernutrition among women and children, particularly girls, and build community resilience through application of the first 1,000 days of life approach, which links nutrition, health and WASH interventions. This revised appeal also reflects an increase in the geographical coverage of UNICEF health activities, including a scale up in emergency obstetric and newborn care support with consumables, equipment and tools to an additional 10 counties.⁶

Results from 2019

As of 31 August 2019, UNICEF had US\$6.7 million available against the US\$19.5 million appeal (34 per cent funded).⁷ To mitigate the impact of underfunding, UNICEF utilized other regular resources to achieve planned targets. Nearly 1.5 million children under 5 years, including 498,000 children aged 6 to 23 months, received vitamin A supplementation with multiple micronutrient powder for their home food fortification. More than 200,000 people gained access to safe drinking water through new connections (over 60,000 beneficiaries) and the rehabilitation of existing water supply systems (over 141,000 beneficiaries). UNICEF directly supported the construction of nine new water supply systems and the rehabilitation of 14 existing water supply systems. However, due to low funding, construction of new systems is still ongoing with completion expected in December. While sanitation messages on safe treatment of excreta reached some 4,000 people through the promotion of urine diversion and composting toilets, the hygiene target was not achieved due to the minimal impact of Tropical Cyclone Lingling, which did not require an intensive emergency response.⁸ Low achievement against the target for providing pregnant women with obstetric care was due to lack of funding.

Total people in need

10.4 million⁹

Total children (<18) in need

2.67 million¹⁰

Total people to be reached

6 million¹¹

Total children to be reached

1.6 million¹²

2020 programme targets

Nutrition

- 95,000 children under 5 years suffering from wasting treated through inpatient and outpatient therapeutic feeding programmes¹³
- 1,600,000 children under 5 years provided with micronutrient supplementation (vitamin A and micronutrient powder)

Health

- 800,000 children under 5 years with diarrhoea treated with oral rehydration salts
- 6,000,000 people provided with access to essential medicines
- 35,000 pregnant women in 50 priority counties accessing emergency obstetric and newborn care
- 50 counties equipped to delivery emergency obstetric and newborn care¹⁴

WASH

- 183,000 people provided with access to safe drinking water with longer-term services
- 40,000 people in humanitarian situations provided with a sufficient quantity of water of appropriate quality for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene with pre-positioned supplies
- 50,000 people in humanitarian situations provided with sanitation or key hygiene kits and items

	UNICEF 2019 targets	UNICEF total results
NUTRITIONⁱ		
Children under 5 years suffering from severe acute malnutrition treated through inpatient and outpatient therapeutic feeding programmes	70,000	43,788
Children under 5 years provided with micronutrient supplementation (vitamin A)	1,600,000	1,502,982
HEALTH		
Children under 5 years with diarrhoea treated with oral rehydration salts	890,000	406,800
People accessing essential medicines	6,000,000	3,678,000
Pregnant mothers in 50 counties accessing emergency obstetric neonatal care services	90,500	29,000
WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENEⁱⁱ		
People with access to safe drinking water	223,000	60,048
People reached with hygiene and sanitation messages	50,000	4,000

* Results are through 31 August 2019 unless otherwise noted.

ⁱ Nutrition results are based on the Central Bureau of Statistics second quarter report dated 30 June 2019.

ⁱⁱ Low achievement against the targets can be attributed to low funding.

Funding requirements

In line with the inter-agency 2020 Needs and Priorities document,¹⁵ UNICEF is requesting US\$22.5 million to meet the humanitarian needs of children in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2020. Humanitarian funding for the country has declined since 2015, and in 2019, the Humanitarian Action for Children appeal had a 66 per cent funding gap. In an increasingly scrutinized and restricted financial environment, without donor support, UNICEF will be unable to meet children's basic humanitarian WASH needs and support life-saving interventions in health and nutrition, which are essential to addressing the undernutrition situation and recurrent disasters.

Sector	2020 revised requirements (US\$)
Nutrition	9,891,808
Health	6,808,245
Water, sanitation and hygiene	5,800,000
Total	22,500,053

¹ Central Bureau of Statistics, '2012 National Nutrition Survey', March 2013.

² Central Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children's Fund, '2017 DPR Korea Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey', UNICEF, June 2018.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea data on areas affected by Tropical Cyclone Lingling, 8 September 2019.

⁶ Total coverage for UNICEF emergency obstetric and newborn care activities includes 250 ri hospitals across 50 priority counties.

⁷ Available funds include US\$6.1 million received against the 2019 appeal and US\$598,065 carried forward from the previous year.

⁸ The target of 40,000 people was set as a minimum preparedness measure for hygiene promotion activities in the event of a sudden-onset emergency (i.e., floods or cyclone).

⁹ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'DPR Korea: 2020 Needs and Priorities Plan' (provisional and subject to adjustment related to the 2019 crop production figures yet to be released), OCHA, February 2020.

¹⁰ The population under 18 is 25.5 per cent of the total population as per '2017 DPR Korea Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey'. Applied to 10.8 million people in need, this yields an estimated 2.75 million children in need of humanitarian support.

¹¹ This figure is based on the total population in the 50 priority counties targeted by UNICEF with essential medicines and oral rehydration salts. This includes 3.12 million women and girls.

¹² This figure is the total number of children under 5 years receiving support from the nutrition programme (micronutrient powder and vitamin A). This includes 832,000 girls.

¹³ The overall target includes 42,049 children with severe acute malnutrition and 52,951 children with moderate acute malnutrition with concurrent illnesses.

¹⁴ Given the success in reaching nine convergent counties with emergency obstetric and newborn care in 2019, in 2020, UNICEF is scaling up this programme to reach an additional 10 counties with comprehensive and basic emergency obstetric and newborn care across the 50 priority counties through the provision of adequate equipment and tools. These additional activities will also require the provision of regular consumables to ensure the continued functionality of the services.

¹⁵ '2020 DPR Korea Needs and Priorities Plan'.

Who to contact for further information:

Myo-Zin Nyunt
Representative, Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Tel: +850 2 3817234
Email: mnyunt@unicef.org

Manuel Fontaine
Director, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS)
Tel: +1 212 326 7163
Email: mfontaine@unicef.org

Carla Haddad Mardini
Director, Public Partnership Division (PPD)
Tel: +1 212 326 7160
Email: chaddadmardini@unicef.org