

Greetings, supporters and friends.

We are thankful for the way in which First Steps has been so wondrously blessed by all of you who have given so generously and sacrificially.

Project manager Hannah Visser traveled to DPRK in April, visiting First Steps soymilk operations and meeting with officials

at the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) to review our Sprinkles pilot program.

Hannah, accompanied by First Steps volunteer Noni Goertzen (see Noni's Diary), confirmed the arrival and installation of five new VitaGoat machines, which have added another 10,000 children to the 50,000 who were already receiving a daily cup of nutritious soymilk. They also confirmed the arrival of 15 new soybean grinders, designed to increase production at very low energy consumption. First Steps' herd of VitaCows and VitaGoats now numbers 32, serving three urban communities (Nampo, Wonsan and Hyongiesan), as well as co-operative farms.

It has been a very difficult winter in North Korea, with food shortages being felt even in the capital, Pyongyang. Last August's flooding in DPRK was the worst in 40 years, wiping out homes, bridges, schools, clinics and crops.

The most encouraging news came from Hannah's meeting with the ICN about the two-year Sprinkles study. ICN officials were very positive as preliminary study results have shown the rate of malnutrition dropped from 56 percent to 32

percent among women and babies who had been taking Sprinkles for just a six-month period.

At present the acclaimed micro-nutrient is being distributed to 72,000 pregnant and lactating women, as well as babies, and it is our goal to

continue working with the government

to make Sprinkles available on a national

scale. It will require major

funding, but the eventual impact could be enormous and it's certainly something to pray about.

Despite the challenges of working

in what appears to be the beginning stages of another famine, we put our trust in God's blessing and guiding more than ever. We cannot

emphasize enough how concerned we are for the young and vulnerable children. Now more than ever, we need your support to save young lives in North Korea. Your prayers are

cherished as another First Steps delegation will be traveling to DPRK in May/June. Above all, please pray for the North Korean people. Despite the immense suffering we witness on our visits, we know that God is at work and that He loves the little children that we serve. We look forward to sending out our regular four-page newsletter after we return in June.

*"How precious is
Your loving kindness, O God!"*

And the children of men take refuge

in the shadow of

Your wings"

Psalm 36:7



Noni's Diary *May 2008*

During our visit we were carried by grace, kept safe, and were in no doubt of God's hand on us and on what we were doing.

In the many places we visited, we observed what the officials showed us, and then were able to walk down the hall of the school/daycare/orphanage and open doors to see what was going on. We visited two larger soymilk plants in Nampo and Hyongjesan, which supply soymilk to children in their communities.

The children in the Nampo baby orphanage were healthy and well cared for. The Nampo kindergarten orphanage was a sadder place. Some of the children had come to the orphanage recently from families that just couldn't feed them, and others were orphaned by disaster. There

were six- and seven-year-old children who weighed only about 20 pounds, some as low as 15 pounds.

We were there to document different stages of malnutrition

and the saddest was an eight-year-old who had patchy hair, held no eye contact, and weighed a mere 18 pounds. It was in stark contrast to my own giant, Andrew, who is almost nine and weighs in at 90 pounds.



The cup of soymilk the children receive is full of

nutrition compared to the corn gruel and few vegetables they also receive.

Sadder still were the kindergartens and daycares on the cooperative farms that First Steps has just begun to help. The headmasters and caregivers were loving and generous people, but they really have very little to give. For lunch, the children were given a boiled egg and a few bean sprouts.



Many children appeared malnourished, small with distended bellies, but most of them still managed a smile for visitors.

It was a highlight for me to be able to interview some pregnant women and new mothers who were part of the Sprinkles program. To see the healthy babies was a joy and the mothers were so thankful and excited to be able to have access to the micro-nutrient. One lady compared this pregnancy to her first, which was "Sprinkles-free." She said she felt so much better, had more energy, and was able to eat what little food she had with no stomach aches and much less nausea. She was also looking forward to giving Sprinkles to her baby after weaning. It was clear this healthy start gives the babies a big boost early on in their lives.

It was a life-changing trip, thank you so much for your prayers.

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