

# Situation Grows Worse, Not Better

As much as First Steps and other aid groups are endeavoring to help North Koreans, the latest detailed report from the United Nations is not encouraging – rather, it shows a continuing deterioration of the situation there:

- NICEF visits to North Korean hospitals in June and July showed sharp increases in cases of diarrhea, the leading illness among children. Also noted were dramatic increases in the number of children admitted to hospitals with severe malnutrition as a consequence of the higher disease burden.
- With disruptions in the supply of World Food Programme aid (mostly

cereal) in July, almost three million North Koreans were dropped from WFP distributions. According to the WFP report, this particularly affected “children in nurseries and daycares, pregnant and nursing women, the elderly and caregivers in child institutions in most provinces.”

- WFP aid shortfalls of about 65,000 tonnes are projected for the next five months, through January 2004. The major shortfall is projected for cereal (45,000 tonnes).

First Steps is more determined than ever to help North Koreans overcome their dire needs. We feel much of the urgency to deal with these needs has become

obscured by political rhetoric. We're not interested in choosing sides in that debate and we hope our supporters support that view. Lives must not be traded simply to make political points. Lives must be saved and communities built up to make lives worth living. Quite simply, that's our goal. We want to thank our donors and request their continuing support – and as well to invite others to join us as we strive to build a future for young North Koreans.



# FIRST STEPS **news**

September 2003

## First Steps Expands Its Reach

Greetings, and welcome to our Fall 2003 Newsletter – an update of our activities aimed at helping to feed malnourished infants in North Korea.

We're pleased to report that our latest shipment of Pablum (rice cereal) was delivered in July to daycare centres and orphanages, including a new one in the port city of Nampo.

When First Steps directors Susan Ritchie and Andrea Rose visited North Korea in November, 2002, they recognized a very real

need for weaning food at this particular orphanage – and now we're very excited that we've been able to provide some help.

This latest shipment was monitored after delivery by a North Korea-based aid organization, which has confirmed that First Steps' Pablum is on-site and is being regularly given to malnourished infants.



A big thank-you to Yvonne Ritchie (middle) for volunteering to drive a truck load of Pablum for delivery to the container bound for the DPRK. Andrea Rose(r.) and Susan Ritchie(l.) acted as navigators.

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### Yes, I want to help First Steps feed a child.

- I have enclosed my gift of \$90 to feed a weaning baby Pablum for one year
  - Here's a special gift or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to help purchase a VitaCow for children in Nampho
  - Here's a special gift or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to feed a weaning baby Pablum
- name \_\_\_\_\_
- address \_\_\_\_\_
- city \_\_\_\_\_ prov. \_\_\_\_\_ postal code \_\_\_\_\_
- phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheques payable to First Steps and forward to: 3260 west 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1V4 Canada  
BN: 87822 7511 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for Income tax purposes.  
For further information email Susan Ritchie at: susanrit@hotmail.com

First Steps is a Christian humanitarian organization reaching out to infants in North Korea.  
First Steps is based at 3260 West 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6G 1V4 Canada. BN:87822 7511 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for income tax purposes. For further information email Susan Ritchie at: susanrit@hotmail.com

First Steps Expands Its Reach con't.

This kind of nutritional support is vital for thousands of North Korean babies who do not receive nearly-sufficient nourishment from breast feeding. New mothers, like millions of other North Koreans, are struggling to find enough nourishment to keep themselves alive, let alone having the physical health to provide their babies with breast milk.



Boxes containing First Steps' July shipment of Pablum are unloaded by forklift at an orphanage in Nampo City

daycare in Nampo; as well as at an orphanage and daycare in North Hwanghae Province.

We want to make clear to potential new donors and to reassure our current donors that First Steps is a totally-volunteer organization with 100 per cent of donations being used to further our

activities, i.e. buying Pablum and covering transportation costs.

We will continue working to make progress with the help of supporters like you - let's hope that together we can change many more young lives.

At this time First Steps is helping to feed babies at the orphanage in Nampo and at a nearby children's

#### What is First Steps ?

First Steps is a Canadian-based charity that is helping to feed infants in the DPRK (North Korea) whose young lives are threatened by the hard life there.

We are providing rice cereal (Pablum, the original infant cereal developed in Canada), fortified with essential micro-nutrients, for distribution to nutritionally-vulnerable weaning babies. Our program targets infants aged 6-to-24 months.

#### Our Commitment to you

- First Steps is committed to preventing malnutrition in infants in North Korea.
- We pledge to use your donations effectively.
- We have the Korean language skills to work directly with the institutions that we deal with.

As a donor through First Steps, you are a partner in making a difference that counts, a difference that builds a future of promise for a baby and its family.

#### CONTACT US

Do you want get in touch with First Steps? Do you have questions about what we're doing? We'd love to hear from you. We're just a phone call, (604) 732-0195, or an e-mail (susanrit@hotmail.com) away. We will be happy to answer your questions and provide an update at any time.

# VitaCow Holds Huge Promise



First Steps is always searching to find new ways to feed more weaning babies more efficiently. In our Spring newsletter, we mentioned that we were investigating a piece of equipment called a VitaCow, which could produce enough nourishment on a daily basis to feed more than 1,000 children. It could also provide the kind of sustainability and dependability that overseas shipments cannot.



First Steps plans to send a VitaCow machine like this to North Korea. It can produce enough soy-based nourishment to feed more than 1,000 children per day

The VitaCow machine, which processes soy beans to produce high-protein soy milk, tofu and yogurt, etc., is highly energy efficient, which suits energy-starved North Korea very well. VitaCow can also process fruits, vegetables, cereals and grains.

The technology for VitaCow was developed by Malnutrition Matters, a Canadian-based group that is creating sustainable food solutions in 40 countries around the globe - and ours would be the first VitaCow installation in North Korea.

VitaCow has been particularly successful in Russia as that country evolves from the

collapse of the Soviet Union, so much so that the machine is now being manufactured in Russia. First Steps is in the process of ordering a VitaCow from Russia that will be shipped to North Korea. We have raised almost half of the approximately \$6,800 needed to purchase the machine and have it delivered to Nampo, where officials have made a commitment to do all that's required to facilitate its producing soya and other products to feed young children there.

In a report to First Steps, officials in Nampo indicated one VitaCow will be used to feed 1,300 children at various nurseries, daycares and preschools in the city. Officials

also assured us that a truck will be made available for distribution.

We believe that one of these machines would be complementary to what we're already accomplishing with Pablum. We see soya milk as a nutritious and cost-efficient way of providing supplementary protein to the babies we are currently feeding.

