

New Beginnings in DPRK

“In our society, children are the king of the country; we don’t hold back anything for the children”

So reads a sign that greets you as you enter the Sariwon Baby House in Sariwon, DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; formerly North Korea). As you walk further in and are taken to see the children and the conditions they live in, you see that reality for them means not only a lack of royal abundance, but even of basic necessities.



The Sariwon Baby House is one of 6 government orphanages that GAiN had been supporting with humanitarian aid shipments of nutritious baby food, medicines, clothing, and blankets until January 2007, one year after the DPRK government required all foreign NGOs to leave the country, including GAiN staff. Recently members of GAiN Canada and GAiN Germany traveled to DPRK to meet with government officials and discuss plans to reinstate the provision of humanitarian aid for the 6 orphanages and resume offering ESL classes by GAiN-provided native English speaking instructors.

According to the United Nations, the spring crop of wheat and potatoes will meet only 10% of the nation’s food needs. There is a predicted shortfall of 1.7 million tons of food this year. UNICEF reps confirmed that malnutrition and unhygienic conditions are commonplace in DPRK’s orphanages. GAiN’s visit to orphanages in Sariwon and Nampo during this trip confirmed that little has changed in this dark, impoverished country since the end of 2005.

Sariwon Baby House is home to 500 boys and girls from 0 – 4 years old. As is the case in all of the 15 orphanages in DPRK, they are understaffed. The workers’ desire to provide for the children is hampered not only by the limits of their energy, but by their government’s policies. Many of the children have skin rashes, and diarrhea is a huge problem, both of which testify to poor nutrition and hygiene. They don’t even have an adequate supply of basic soap. The staff are very grateful for past GAiN humanitarian aid, and are looking forward to continued shipments.



Soaking syringes for reuse

Babies connect with GAiN Staff’s loving touch





Waiting for basic medicine

Among their requests for future aid is: milk powder, nutritious food, vitamins, soap, laundry detergent, clothing, blankets and other bedding, antibiotics, ointments and other medical supplies.

Conditions at the Nampo Baby House are not much different for the 132 boys and girls that live there. Summer brings problems with diarrhea and winter brings pneumonia and respiratory problems. Skin rashes are common right now. Staff are also very grateful for GAIN's past humanitarian aid support, and are eager to begin receiving it again. The children here and at the Nampo Kindergarten Orphanage (147 children, 5-8 years old) are in need of nutritious food, laundry soap, clothing (especially for babies), medicines, antibiotics and medical equipment. Currently they are forced to reuse syringes due to their short supply. Probably most ironic is their great need for milk powder; there is a dairy only 40 km away, but the milk spoils in transport and is sour when it arrives.



Orphanage official receives aid from GAIN Germany

GAIN's first 2007 shipment of much needed humanitarian aid to these 6 orphanages arrived in June, much to the relief of the 870 children living there. Only through partnering with caring people like you can GAIN collect the required funding to ship future containers of nutritious baby food, soap, medicines and other life-basic necessities to these needy boys and girls.



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