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Information bulletin

Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Heat wave

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Information bulletin n° 1	Date of issue: 4 August 2018
Date of disaster: Ongoing from 11 July 2018	Point of contact: Mohamed Babiker, Head of DPRK Country Office
Host National Society: Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Red Cross Society	
Number of people affected: 13,768	Categorization of disaster: Yellow ¹

This bulletin is being issued for information only and reflects the current situation and details available at this time. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea Red Cross Society (DPRK RCS), with the support of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has determined that available information points toward significant humanitarian needs that may require support from the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund.

The situation

On 2 August 2018, the DPRK RCS officially informed the IFRC Country Office in the DPRK of a developing emergency in both South Pyongan and South Hamgyong Provinces due to a recent heat wave which is severely affecting agricultural production. The heat wave has brought temperatures of over 39°C across the country as of 3 August. The heat wave started as of 11 July 2018 and is expected to last at least 23 days. This climatic event is seriously affecting agricultural production of the country. There have been reported casualties among elderly people and children due to heat stroke and these reports are being followed up by the local branches whose catchment area covers a total population of 13,768. It is anticipated that this weather pattern will continue until mid-August and will significantly reduce the yield, especially that of maize that is showing signs of withering and affect the livelihood of the people in the affected communities. According to state media, Rodong Sinmun (Korean Workers' Party newspaper) the Pyongyang government has declared a state of emergency on 2 August 2018 because of the unusually hot weather.

Initial reports of crop damage from South Pyongan and South Hamgyong from the local Red Cross branches indicate the following situation:



State media column on the heat wave (**Photo: Rodong Sinmun**)

Province	County	Village (Ri)	Affected Cornfields	Affected Rice Paddies
South Hamgyong	Kumya County	Ponghung-ri	25 hectares	56 hectares
		Phungsong-ri	37 hectares	
South Pyongan	Sinyang County	Tokhung-ri	70 hectares	
	Songchon County	Onjong-ri	136 hectares	

¹ Based on the IFRC Secretariat's Operational Response Framework. This categorization implies that the response intervention is within the capacity of the National Society of an affected country to manage with resources available in-country. If requested, the IFRC Country Office may provide any necessary technical or management support to the National Society, and if required, the IFRC Regional Office may support the mobilization of regional disaster response tools, with Geneva supporting the allocation of Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF).

Chronic food insecurity, early childhood malnutrition and nutrition insecurity are widespread in DPRK. According to the 2017 Global Hunger Index (GHI), which measures and tracks hunger worldwide, DPRK has a score of 28.2, which is classified as 'serious'. Around 10.3 million people, or 41 per cent of the total population, are undernourished. There are many complex, intertwined reasons for the high rates of undernutrition in DPRK. This includes mountainous terrain, with only 17 per cent of land good for cultivation. Farming is largely reliant on traditional farming methods, and a lack of agricultural inputs, such as quality seeds, proper fertilizer and equipment. In addition, changing weather patterns have left DPRK vulnerable to droughts and floods, which often result in reductions in agricultural production.

The IASC Index for Risk Management (INFORM) ranks DPRK 41 out of 191 countries in terms of disaster risk. Floods and drought, sometimes both in the same year, regularly strike the country. An estimated 6.2 million people have been affected by natural disasters between 2004 and 2016. Furthermore, climate change has produced, and is expected to produce further visible impacts, with the degradation of natural resources affecting agricultural production.



Temperatures have reached more than 40°C in some regions of North Korea since late July. (Photo: AP, in *The Guardian*)

In 2014, a dry spell over 18 months caused drought, affecting agricultural production and access to water, left 18 million public distribution system (PDS)-dependents at risk of food insecurity, malnutrition and illness. In June 2017 the Government declared a national emergency following a dry spell that affected key food producing provinces in the south west of the country. The dry spell compounded the undernutrition situation, putting at risk the lives of 782,000 children under five and 313,629 pregnant and lactating women. The 2017 dry spell stressed the early season crops and constrained planting and early growth of main season crops. The Government mobilized communities and resources to provide irrigation, to reduce any impact from the dry spell. Humanitarian partners also provided support to the response, including through activities to prevent and treat malnutrition, as well as lifesaving health and water,

sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions. Despite these efforts, total food production (in cereal equivalent) in 2017 was 5.45 MT, a 7.42 per cent decrease from the previous year's 5.89 MT.

Dietary quality for many people in DPRK is poor, with limited consumption of food that is rich in protein, fat and micronutrients. This results in problems related to undernourishment including physical and cognitive development concerns. The immediate causes of undernutrition (both stunting and wasting) among under-five children is directly linked to food insecurity, sub-optimum feeding practices and lack of quality health services. Chronic food insecurity, as well as poor water and sanitation are main contributors to chronic undernutrition in the country.

According to DPRK 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) results, 20 per cent of children under the age of five in the DPRK are stunted and face an impaired physical and cognitive growth whilst three per cent of children under the age of five are affected by wasting and face an increased risk of death. Marked disparities exist between rural and urban areas, wealth groups and provinces both in stunting and wasting prevalence. In the MICS, the distribution of stunting by age of children is noteworthy. Evidence shows that in the DPRK, the percentage of stunted children increases with age after one year – and the highest is in the 48–59 months age group at 26 per cent.

Any threat to food security will have a serious effect on an already stressed population in terms of food availability and the risk of increased malnutrition which will affect the most vulnerable sectors of the affected population – children, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly and those with underlying illness. People's lifestyles have already been altered due to the heat wave. Currently, working times for farmers have been changed to early morning and late afternoon hours to avoid getting heatstroke. This also apply to farmers' markets which are now opening at 18:00 from their usual time of 14:00.

The current priorities of DPRK RCS are centred on the need to enable pumps in the most affected communities to pump water to the lands most affected by the drought by providing the community with fuel to activate their existing pumps. In addition, the DPRK RCS will mobilize their own mobile water pumps, bringing them to work in the affected areas providing much needed water from dams and channels to the fields where it is most required.

Through and in addition to these activities, DPRK RCS will:

- Reduce morbidity and mortality through improving irrigation to severely affected arable land;
- Improve food security in affected communities;
- Initiate and bring to scale awareness campaigns focusing on signs, symptoms and treatment of heatstroke and other health effects of the heat wave;
- Reduce anxiety of the population through dissemination of accurate and timely information;

- Review of the weather patterns of heat wave and plan to respond to needs and gaps in other communities;
- Conduct accurate and timely collection of data from government sources including the meteorological service.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea Red Cross Society (DPRK RCS) is meeting with government agencies such as State Committee for Disaster and Emergency Management (SCDEM) to coordinate activities and better understand the needs and gaps. The IFRC country office in Pyongyang is in communication with World Food Program (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to better understand their planned operations considering the developing situation.

The DPRK RCS has ongoing integrated programs in health, WASH, disaster management (DM), disaster risk reduction (DRR) and livelihoods focusing on food security in the affected communities. As such, it is very well positioned to quickly react with trained staff and volunteers, including community volunteers in the affected target communities. The DPRK RCS will discuss the priority geographical locations with the government authorities, as the heat wave is occurring nationwide. The DPRK RCS will also carry out additional assessment on health and WASH needs in four communities.

The DPRK RCS has actively commenced preparations for the operation and are preparing deployment of their mobile pump units. The IFRC DPRK country office is supporting the DPRK RCS in obtaining updates from UN and other partners and is coordinating with the relevant Working Groups (health, WASH and nutrition). The IFRC continues to closely coordinate with the DPRK RCS to determine the appropriate response and to process possible request for support from the IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF).

Proposed activities include:

- Deployment of 20 sets of mobile water pumps in the affected areas
- Replenishment of 20 family tents
- Deploy 100 pieces of salometer
- Deploy 100 kits for protection of volunteers (cap, sunglasses, boots, gloves, torchlight)
- Deploy 1000 m delivery hose
- Deploy 10 pieces of Onion tank (10m³)
- Deploy 8 pieces of bicycle for Red Cross volunteers
- Training on the usage of mobile water pump
- Sensitization on risk of heatstroke, the symptoms and treatment options
- Carry out needs assessment in affected communities

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief and the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



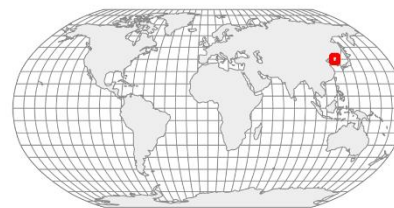
Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote **social inclusion**
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.



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