

## Being a Mom in North Korea

All moms want the best for their children, but it's especially tough to be a mom in North Korea. Moms and pregnant women in North Korea want to be healthy during their pregnancy so that their babies are strong. At the Sopo Polyclinic, Dr. Il Hae Son told the First Steps team that pregnant women and children like Sprinkles and are incredibly frustrated when the clinic runs out. The women tell Dr. Son that without Sprinkles, their children have a harder time digesting food, become diarrhea-prone, and develop respiratory problems. When women and babies are receiving Sprinkles



A doctor and new mother meet at the Sopo Polyclinic.

they feel better. Park Keum Soon, who was due on April 15, told our First Steps team that before getting Sprinkles she would become dizzy and tire easily. By taking the micronutrient powder daily, her symptoms disappeared. Now, Soon is more hopeful that she'll give birth to a healthy and strong baby. The number of women who receive Sprinkles depends on the generosity of donors like you. Please prayerfully consider supporting this program.

## First Steps: Gifts of Kindness



Soybeans are shipped from Canada to North Korea to make soymilk. One cup of soymilk costs just 2.7 cents including shipping.

Donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ towards soybeans.



The micronutrient Sprinkles program provides 18 months of sachets for a baby (6 to 24 months) and 1 year of sachets for a pregnant and nursing mother at a cost of \$50. A lack of nutrients in the diet impacts growth and brain development. Sprinkles prevents rickets and lowers rates of diarrhea and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in children under 2 years of age.

Donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ towards micro-nutrient Sprinkles.

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  
BIN: 878227511 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for income tax purposes.  
For further information contact us at: 604.732.0195 or www.firststepscanada.org

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## Soybean shortages cause for concern

From March 22 to April 1, Phil and Linda Schafran and Susan Ritchie travelled to North Korea. The 10-day trip was nonstop as the team met with 3-6 partner sites daily, with each meeting lasting up to three hours. While each meeting was informative and needed, Phil, Linda and Susan agreed the highlight was spending time with the children, pregnant women and babies



Children at the Wonson Kindergarten Orphanage are happy drinking their cup of nutrient-rich soymilk.

2011. The most recent crop (2013) was adversely affected by early heavy rains during the growing season. Through the Soymilk program, First Steps has sent machinery (VitaCows and VitaGoats) to increase our local partners' soymilk-producing capacity. But with poor crop yields, there aren't enough soybeans to reach more children. Your generous gifts have enabled First Steps to fill the gap.

Another trip highlight was conducting

benefiting from First Steps' Soymilk and Sprinkles programs.

*"They are to do good,  
to be rich in  
good works,  
to be generous,  
and ready to share."*

1 Timothy 6:18

With your help, First Steps is reaching 100,000 children with a daily cup of nutrient-rich soymilk. However, the need in the country remains extensive. The United Nations estimates about one third of children under the age of five, living in North Korea, are stunted and malnourished. Why? One reason is that North

Korea's soybean production was down a massive 31% in 2012 compared with

short interviews with some of our local partners, to learn more about the people we are working alongside. A memorable conversation was with Mrs. Jong Hui Ri, the principal at Wonsan Secondary Boarding School. Before she became a principal, Mrs. Ri attended Teacher's College in Pyongyang and taught Korean literature at a middle school. Mrs. Ri and her husband were both orphans. Although she's in charge of more than 700 children, she told us "all the children are like my children." This is one of the reasons why Mrs. Ri is such a fantastic principal.

## A Message from the Executive Director of First Steps

I'm so encouraged by stories like Mrs. Ri's. Her commitment to the orphans in her charge reminds me of donors like you, who have decided to share your abundances with people in North Korea. It is with your ongoing support that Mrs. Ri is able to provide "her children" with nutrient-rich soymilk.

It's also encouraging to know that the

people and work of First Steps has left a deep impression on Mrs. Ri. When we visit she often asks me to pass on her greetings to specific individuals that she has met during previous First Steps visits. She is mindful of what has been done for the children and is full of gratitude for how your donations are impacting them.

Without a daily cup of soymilk these children would be more severely affected by stunting and malnutrition. Because of First Steps' partners like you, Mrs. Ri's students will have a better life. *"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership..."* (Philippians 1:3-4).

— Susan Ritchie

## Volunteer Spotlight: Phil Schafran

Committed volunteers like Phil Schafran are so important to First Steps. Phil has faithfully sat on First Steps' Board of Directors for a number of years. On numerous occasions Phil has travelled to North Korea with First Steps to monitor the arrival and distribution of soybeans and Sprinkles throughout the country. When Phil's post as Director of Donor Relations

and Communications at Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), BC, recently ended, he immediately told First Steps he wanted to become a part-time volunteer! In addition to donating his time, talent and expertise, Phil has a heart for the people in North Korea. His continued commitment to First Steps' work is humbling; moreover, it is an incredible blessing to this ministry.



Phil boosts spirits wherever he goes.

## Mr. Yong Su Hong: Ten Years, One Can at a Time

It is thanks to donors like you that First Steps is able to purchase soybeans and soybean-processing



Mr. Yong Su Hong

machines to serve a daily cup of soymilk to 100,000 children in North Korea. But, how does the soymilk reach the children every day? It is with help from our dedicated partners in North Korea, who transport the soymilk (usually on three-wheeled motorcycles or bicycles) from production centres to the children. To learn more about these workers, our monitoring team interviewed Mr. Yong Su Hong, a 50-year old worker at the Hanggu Daycare and Kindergarten Supply Centre. For 10 years, he has been delivering soymilk on his bicycle to

children, four cans per day, one can at a time (each trip takes him up to one hour). Mr. Hong's manager told us: "[Mr. Hong] has never missed one day of work. Missing isn't even what he knows." Mr. Hong hopes to continue working until he is 60 because "it's good work", he says. As our monitoring team prepared to leave the site, Mr. Hong explained he couldn't remember how they produced soymilk before First Steps partnered with them. With gratitude and sincerity he said: "Please say 'thank you' to First Steps' donors." On Mr. Hong's behalf, "thank you!"

## Our First Steps Children are Growing Up!

Visiting baby homes, kindergarten orphanages, and primary and secondary boarding schools is a highlight for the First Steps monitoring team while they are in country; but this time it was bittersweet. The spring semester ended in late March, which meant the older students were moving up! Wonsan Kindergarten Orphanage was sending 167 children to the Primary Boarding School on April 1 to begin Grade 1. Mrs. Jong Jong Suk, the director, told First Steps she wanted to give the children "as much to eat as possible" before they move out.



A boy waves to the camera while drinking his soymilk at the Wonsan Kindergarten Orphanage.

At the Wonsan Secondary Boarding School 123 children were graduating. The principal, Mrs. Jong Hui Ri, explained how some students will go to college or join the

army, but many will become workers in factories or on farms. When First Steps asked her what about her role as principal gave her the most satisfaction, she replied: "When students achieve some good...and come back and share some success."

## Maintaining Soymilk Delivery Trucks

The last visit to North Korea included the purchasing of parts needed to rebuild the engines of two delivery trucks (one in Nampo and one in Wonsan). These four-cylinder Japanese trucks were used when First Steps purchased them over 10 years ago for \$8,500 CDN each. The trucks each carry 30 stainless steel milk cans at a time to and from dozens of kindergartens and daycare centres each day.

Now, both trucks need their engines rebuilt. These are minor rebuilds that don't include the lower engine (crankshaft) and probably not the head (valves) either. The engine parts First Steps purchased during

the visit included cylinder sleeves, piston rings, bearings and head gaskets. Most of these parts were manufactured in China. It cost \$580 USD to buy these materials. The engines will be rebuilt by the truck drivers, who anticipate that this will keep the trucks running for up to five more years.

This is one example of how resilient and resourceful the North Korean people are. No

one mentioned purchasing new trucks. Instead, our local partners asked for the materials needed to refurbish engines that are already 10 years old. And, the factories are hoping to use the vehicles for five

more years. This objective is more remarkable when we remember that these trucks are used all day, every day, on extremely bumpy roads that may or may not be paved.



This is one of two trucks First Steps purchased over 10 years ago for \$8,500.