



FIRST STEPS

news

Summer 2017



A First Steps team of four visited North Korea from June 3 to 13. Over ten days our team travelled to a number of different locations across the country, including Nampo and Hyongjesan in the west, Wonsan and Tongchon in the east, and Samjiyon in the north. We visited soymilk production sites, kindergartens, daycares, orphanages, clinics, a hospital, and more. We also went to Yonsa, the northeastern area devastated by flooding last summer.

delayed by flat tires! Happily, we crossed paths with the truck and were able to stop and see the items for delivery. We look forward to returning to Yonsa to see how this shipment was finally put to use.

It was good to visit these areas again and begin catching up on work that had been delayed. We met with our dedicated partners and were introduced to some new partners as well. We were reminded numerous times of the urgency of continued provision of micronutrient Sprinkles. At every location we were told that more and more women are asking for Sprinkles and that mothers are really seeing the difference made in their babies' and their own health.

We were encouraged to hear that our partner soymilk production sites have continuously provided soymilk for the children despite delayed shipments of soybeans. Our latest shipment of beans is scheduled to arrive in July just as our partners begin to run out of their own locally-grown beans.

Thank you all for praying, giving, volunteering and remembering the most vulnerable. As we travelled over the bumpy and washed out roads, we were thankful to be able to represent you to beneficiaries living in remote communities. We continue to learn from those we serve how to be thankful in adversity and to always give thanks to God the Father.

Susan Ritchie
Executive Director

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction...

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

To visit the northern areas, we began with a domestic flight to Chongjin, North Hamgyong province, followed by an eight-hour, bone-rattling drive to Samjiyon! The team then visited Yonsa to follow up on the relief items which First Steps' supporters generously made possible last year. The people in Yonsa expressed sincere gratitude for the micronutrient Sprinkles, food items and roofing we sent as well as their hopes for more. Despite huge government-led reconstruction efforts in the wake of last summer's flooding, many projects, including new bridges and reinforced river embankments, still remain in progress. Almost 1000 acres of former agricultural land along the river is strewn with boulders, stumps and other debris. Certainly, no crops will be grown there this season.

A final shipment of food items and roofing had been scheduled to arrive at the same time as the team was visiting, but road conditions led to the truck being twice



Plenty of Potential in Potae

In Samjiyon, the team visited a kindergarten and daycare in a neighbourhood called Potae. By 4-wheel drive it took us one hour to reach this community located over the mountain from the local soymilk production site. Surprisingly director Cha Hye-Suk at the kindergarten told us that they often go and pick up the soymilk themselves by bicycle!

At the Potae #1 Kindergarten and #1 Daycare, about 30% of the children do not meet the national standard height. Director Cha told us: "The children really like the soymilk. It's good for their colour. After we began receiving soymilk, more children began coming to school. The children's general nutritional status has improved. The flavour is always the same and the children like it!"

The team also visited a hospital in Potae that received Sprinkles. There,



Children in Potae now receiving daily soymilk.

the team was greeted by two pregnant women and four mothers with their babies. Nine-months pregnant 28-year-old Ho Un-Byul told us enthusiastically: "I got pregnant in October. And I thought this is strange. These symptoms are really strange. I was feeling dizzy and weak. So I went to the clinic and they gave me micronutrient Sprinkles. I began taking Sprinkles in December of last year. When I took that

medicine my symptoms of dizziness disappeared and I could think clearly again. Oh this is good I thought! So I went back in January to try to get some more and get a check-up but they were only able to give me enough for one week. I took what they gave me. The medicine is very good!"



Ho Un-Byul, happy to get Sprinkles.

Yonsa Home Visit with mother Mun Kum-Hae

Meet 26 year-old mother Mun Kum-Hae and her six-month-old son Kim Whi-Bok. The team visited Mrs. Mun's home to talk to her about the supplies she received from First Steps' supporters.

Mrs. Mun is a Yonsa native who used to live just upstream from her current home, an apartment built after the flood. Mrs. Mun explained how on the night of the flood, water started coming into her home. In the morning she left and walked to the hospital. She ended up having to stay there for four months until she gave birth.

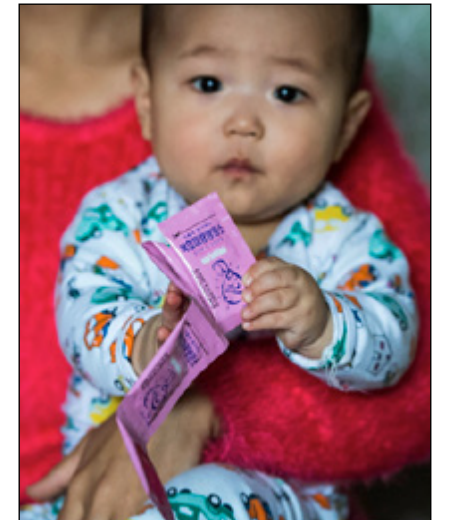
A few weeks after she arrived at the hospital, the First Steps team visited Yonsa, bringing Sprinkles and nutritious food items. Mrs. Mun received some food items, as well as Sprinkles, from September until December when she gave birth. "I was really weak and thin, but now look at me! After taking Sprinkles, I would put it in my soup, my stomach got really big! The doctor said I might even need a caesarean!" She said her aches and pains went away and in the end she was able to give birth naturally.



Mun Kum-Hae and Whi-Bok: Healthy and happy.

Her son Whi-Bok has begun taking Sprinkles now too. She separates a Sprinkles sachet into three servings, one for each meal. Whi-Bok's development has been very fast. Mrs. Mun credits the Sprinkles she had and so far the three weeks of Sprinkles Whi-Bok has had.

"Thank you so much for helping us during our most difficult time. Thank you especially for thinking of the women."



Whi-Bok holds sachets of Sprinkles.

Award-Winning Soymilk Production Team



Director Jo Jong-Suk, award winner, with new VitaGoat.

Meet the award-winning soymilk production expert director Jo Jong-Suk and her hardworking team. Director Jo was appointed a few years ago as the new director of the Waudu Daycare and Kindergarten Supply Centre in Nampo city. From the start, Director Jo has pushed her team to produce the highest-quality soymilk possible. Their hard work was recognized this past year by the government. Director Jo won an award for having the top soymilk producing daycare and kindergarten supply centre in the country!

Last year this factory received a new First Steps VitaGoat. It was Director

Jo's idea to put the VitaGoat boiler and cooker in separate rooms to maintain hygiene and reduce smoke and heat—this innovation has since been adopted by other production sites!



Director Jo with her hardworking team.



Flood plains with Mrs. Mun's new home in the background.



Flood Follow-Up



The First Steps team visited Yonsa to confirm the delivery of 17,000 square metres of corrugated metal roofing and screws, as well as nutritious food items and micronutrient Sprinkles. Kim Kyong-Chol, the Vice-Chairman of the Yonsa People's Committee, explained how timely our support was last fall as the relief items we sent were some of the first to arrive.

Last fall, First Steps donated micronutrient Sprinkles, soybean oil, soybean meat, soybean paste as well as enriched corn flour to pregnant mothers and children. Vice-Chairman Kim told us that recipients had called him and asked that their thanks be conveyed to us. In person, more than once we were told: "Koreans need their soybean paste! Thank you so much!" At the Kuso Daycare, Director Kim Kyong-Sun explained that the children ate soup made from the soybean paste twice a day and liked it, along with the soybean meat, very much.

To see the donated roofing, First Steps visited a number of locations including a kindergarten, a daycare, a school and an apartment complex. A portion of the roofing had been stamped with First Steps' footprint logo for easier identification. It was fun to be driving or walking past an area and have someone suddenly notice footprints on the roofs! We were told the roofing and screws were good quality. Mrs. Kim Kyong-Ok, director of the Yonsa Kuso Kindergarten, said their roof hasn't sustained any damage since being installed, unlike some of the other roofs in the area.



Top photo shows post-flood devastation in Yonsa, while the bottom photo shows the rebuilt Kuso Kindergarten and Kuso Daycare fitted with roofing provided by First Steps' supporters.

During the visit last September First Steps', Susan Ritchie and a nutritionist from the Korean Institute of Child Nutrition gathered the pregnant women and mothers in this area and explained about the benefits of Sprinkles. We were told all the women came to get Sprinkles and then returned the following month too. Ms. Ri Bong-Sil, an ob/gyn from the local hospital said: "The Sprinkles were fantastic. Everyone loved them." Director Kim of the Kuso Daycare said that the children gained height and weight while taking Sprinkles.

Yonsa is still in need of much help. Rebuilding is still in progress and will take time. The area lost almost a thousand acres of agricultural land where corn, potatoes and soybeans were planted. First Steps continues to consider what other ways we can continue to support this community. Please continue to keep the people of Yonsa in your prayers.



River bank is reinforced following last summers' flooding.



Children sing in Yonsa.



Building materials are piled for reconstruction in Yonsa.



Workers clean up debris on flood plain.

Gifts of Kindness



Soybeans are shipped from Canada to North Korea to make soymilk. One cup of soymilk costs just 3 cents, including shipping.

Donate \$ _____ towards soybeans.



A \$50 donation to the **micronutrient Sprinkles** program provides 18 months of sachets for a baby (6 to 24 months) and 9 months of sachets for a pregnant and nursing mother. A lack of nutrients in the diet impacts growth and brain development. Sprinkles prevents rickets and lowers the rates of diarrhea and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in children under 2 years of age.

Donate \$ _____ towards micronutrient Sprinkles.



20-litre **stainless-steel milk cans** are vital for storing and transporting soymilk from production centres to the children we serve. They cost \$100 each.

Donate \$ _____ towards milk cans.



The **VitaGoat** is powered by combustible fuel (wood, coal, etc.). It processes soybeans directly into nutrient-rich soymilk and provides about 1,500 cups of soymilk per day to hungry children. The main difference from the VitaCow is that the VitaGoat runs without electricity. The cost of a VitaGoat is \$4000.

Donate \$ _____ towards a VitaGoat.



VitaCows process soybeans directly into soymilk providing children with a warm and protein-rich drink. The VitaCow is powered by electricity and can produce 2000 cups of soymilk per day to feed hungry children. The cost of the VitaCow is \$7000.

Donate \$ _____ towards a VitaCow.



name _____
address _____
city _____ prov. _____ postal code _____
phone _____ email _____

Please make cheques payable to First Steps Health Society and forward to: 3260 West 5th Ave. Vancouver, B.C. V6K 1V4 Canada
BIN: 821724036 RR0001. Gifts are acknowledged with an official receipt for income tax purposes.

For further information contact us at 604.732.0195 or visit our website at www.firststepscanada.org

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