



## A Season of New Growth

Flowers are blooming, the sun is shining, and the skies are clear and blue. This season of new growth, reminds us of God's promise to do a new thing, no matter how impossible it seems.

(Orphanage), the children enthusiastically shared how drinking a cup of soymilk every day has improved their concentration, giving them more energy and helping them to stay focused at school.

**“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”**

Isaiah 43:19

We witnessed this wonderful, God-given promise last December, when a First Steps team returned to Dokchon, a coal mining community in North Korea, for the first time in five years. Returning here was nothing short of a miracle! Our work was brought to an unexplained halt five years ago; but God made a way for us and now we are back!

Other new partnerships blossomed in Nampo at the Ryongsu General Clinic and Sohung Polyclinic. There we met expectant and new mothers who have started taking micronutrient Sprinkles. Mothers told us incredible stories of improved health in their babies and their own anemia disappearing, all due to Sprinkles.

We witnessed God at work in the lives of children in the daycares, kindergartens and orphanages we visited. At the Wonsan Secondary Boarding School

As you read this, summer has arrived in North Korea but instead of clear sunny skies, they have experienced unpredictable weather and tough growing conditions. Planting crops is difficult and many of our partner locations face challenges in reaping good harvests. Please keep our Korean partners in your prayers as they faithfully labour to feed the children.

Wherever you are, may God's promises of new life fill you with hope, and may streams of living water continue to flow in and through you this season.

Susan Ritchie  
Executive Director



## Sowing Seeds of Hope



The fields of Dokchon are still recovering after floods.

During our December visit to Dokchon, we visited a soymilk production site, a daycare and a hospital.

At the Dokchon Foodstuff Factory, our partners described the hardships they faced growing soybeans. The area is still recovering from a devastating flood that happened in 2011. Despite their

challenges, they plan to expand their soymilk production facilities and are keen to partner with us again.

At the Undok Daycare, giving children soymilk daily is difficult due to erratic soybean harvests. First Steps provided a SoyaKit, a low-cost, small-scale system which does not require electricity and produces seven litres of soymilk per hour.

At the Dokchon City People's Hospital, our team met with doctors to share about the benefits of micronutrient Sprinkles to babies and pregnant women and gave them samples. Our Dokchon partners suggested that we start working with three clinics in the area. Just weeks later they picked up their first truckload of Sprinkles!



Susan Ritchie and Director Kim Mi-Hyang open the SoyaKit at the Undok Daycare.

In March, we returned to Dokchon. We visited those three clinics and learned that Sprinkles had reduced anemia in pregnant women and helped babies to grow and thrive. We also visited the Undok Daycare again, where the staff have been using the SoyaKit to produce nutritious soymilk for the children every day.

## Made With Love

Every morning at 9:00 a.m., a truck filled with cans of freshly made soymilk leaves the Hyongjesan Supply Centre. Hard-working hands labour together to make sure that this delivery goes smoothly. Traveling along bumpy roads, the truck brings soymilk to daycares and kindergartens in the community.

One of its daily destinations is the Hadang Daycare. Children here receive soymilk everyday and as a result, they are reaching the national standard weight and height. The children are grateful: "The soymilk is really delicious. Thank you for sending it."

As Hyongjesan's population surges, new daycares and kindergartens are

expected to be built next year. The number of children in each grade also increases annually, which means that the demand for soymilk will grow.

But the supply of soybeans is not always reliable. Our partners at the Hyongjesan Supply Centre described their challenges: "We had too much rain and that ruined the crops, so our harvest was decreased. We are at a low altitude, so it floods easily."

To supplement their soybean crop shortfall, First Steps provided more than 50% of the beans for the Hyongjesan Supply Centre last year. Since the arrival of soybeans from Canada, they have been able to produce soymilk



"The soymilk is really delicious."

consistently. Their dedication is admirable. As one partner told us, "We don't have a day of rest. Even on Sundays we have to produce soymilk for Monday."

# All Things Are Possible

At the Shinmi Polyclinic in Hyongjesan, God has been faithful in responding to the hopes and dreams of the women here. We began providing Sprinkles to this clinic just last year and since then, they have celebrated the births of 98 babies!

During our March visit, we met Mrs. Ri Won-Kyong and her five-month-old baby Ju-Im. The nutritional boost of Sprinkles, which she started in her first trimester at the suggestion of her doctor, contributed to her carrying this baby to full term. She recalled with anguish the heartache she had endured in losing four babies previously as a result of miscarriage. Now, holding her

precious miracle in her arms, she said her hope had remained steadfast through the years. "We were waiting for this baby," Mrs. Ri said. "My baby's complexion is good and she is developing quickly. Sprinkles are very good."

Mrs. Ri's story is just one of the many miracles we have witnessed firsthand in North Korea. Truly, nothing is impossible for God. "He gives the childless woman a family, making her a happy mother. Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 113:9).

As you pray for mothers and babies at the Shinmi Polyclinic, we ask that you keep its director, Dr. Kim Sun-Man, in



Dr. Kim and his granddaughter at Shinmi Polyclinic.



Mrs. Ri is grateful for her healthy baby Ju-Im.

prayer as well. Dr. Kim has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to ensuring the health of mothers and babies at the clinic. Recently, Dr. Kim suffered a stroke. When we visited, he welcomed us enthusiastically even though he had been in the hospital for a month and had to return after we left. Please pray for his continued recovery.



Phil always enjoyed meeting the children.

## Thank you Phil!

First Steps would like to extend our sincere thanks to Phil Schafran, whose term on the Board of Directors has come to an end.

Phil and Linda Schafran have been First Steps supporters since 2009 and visited North Korea on many occasions, once celebrating their 33rd anniversary in the country. Phil also traveled to Russia and China to source and facilitate the purchasing of soymilk processing equipment, including the high quality stainless steel soymilk cans First Steps continues to send to North Korea to this day.

As we reflect on this season of growth, we are deeply grateful for the seeds that Phil has planted in the hearts of those he has encountered and for the hard work he has put into the life of First Steps. We wish him God's blessings as he steps into a new season in his own life!



Phil and the First Steps team at a soymilk production site.

## 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.



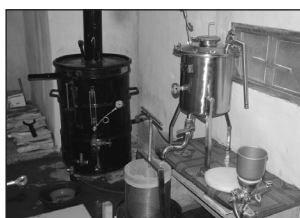
**Micronutrient Sprinkles** are sachets containing a blend of vitamins and minerals that are added to food. Sprinkles prevent anemia and rickets and lower the rates of diarrhea and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in children under two years of age. A \$50 donation to the Sprinkles program provides nine months of sachets for a pregnant and nursing mother and 18 months of sachets for a baby (6 to 24 months).

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 cost of a VitaGoat is \$5500.

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 a VitaCow is \$7000.

Donate \$ \_\_\_\_\_ towards a VitaCow.

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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.

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