

## Barren Land and a Bounty of Hope

Over a year has passed since the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the beginning of the global pandemic. As spring awakens winter in the north, the strangeness of our daily lives continues. We are reminded of the Lord as our pillar and our only constant - the object of our hope. COVID-19 has brought many challenges to all people across the globe, but especially to the already vulnerable population of North Korea; people who have suffered one hard winter after another, punctuated by multiple floods and famines, throughout the past decade. The North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, has spoken of “an unprecedented series of crises”, which includes a severe typhoon season and large-scale flooding at a time of almost complete economic lockdown.

The limitation of external supplies is projected to have a negative effect on the coming planting season, with further implications for the following harvest. We ask you to join us in prayer for this country and for all the precious children, mothers, and babies, whose access to food and nutrition is disproportionately impacted

by the current conditions. We cry out to the Lord in anguish for the weak and the suffering, with the steady assurance that He is good, abounding in love towards all creation, and worthy of our deepest trust. “Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,” the poet writes. Every bowl of soymilk the children drink represents an investment in hope for their lives.

A 40-tonne shipment of soybeans sent last year remains in Dalian, China along with two 40-foot containers of micronutrient Sprinkles: almost 7.3 million sachets! We have, however, been assured they will receive priority crossing into the DPRK. Furthermore, we are thankful that some Canadian bureaucratic issues have been resolved. We are also thankful that communication with our partners has remained unhindered throughout these challenging times.

Please join us in praying that the spring planting season, the summer growing season, and the harvest in the DPRK will be bountiful, so that it may support the people of the DPRK in their



most vulnerable moment.

September 2021 marks the 20th anniversary of the creation of First Steps. To celebrate this occasion and God’s faithfulness, we are preparing a commemorative book documenting experiences that have shaped us, testimonies to God’s goodness and grace, and previously unpublished photos from the past twenty years. Please check the insert for more details, dates, and instructions for pre-order!

*Susan Ritchie*  
Executive Director





Faces of joy.

## Joanne Cho's Story

As a South Korean citizen, I have never been allowed to visit North Korea. Yet, God has vividly and powerfully revealed to me His heart for North Korea from our home office in Vancouver. As the Financial Coordinator, I witness the loving commitment of our donors and can truly sense God's compassion and care for His people in North Korea through

every gift, big or small.

or corporate donors, but by multiple individual donors.

When I look back, it is easy to see the miraculous nature of all that God is doing with us. His incredible feats like this are not rare, one-time events. Each time there is a need in this ministry, I have witnessed it being met in God's perfect timing. Some will look at such events and attribute them to mere coincidence, but as someone in the midst of these things, I know that God Himself has stepped into this ministry. There is no human logic, luck or

simple coincidence that can explain what I have seen.

God is personally present even in the midst of the menial, everyday tasks of First Steps. Sometimes He extends His grace to us so that we can witness Him lift us through seemingly impossible situations.

Through the prayers and generosity of donors who are willing to put the love of God into practice, God is graciously doing amazing things in North Korea. As a member of First Steps, I thank God for the blessing of allowing me to be a part of His incredible work.

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”**

Proverbs 3:5

It touches my heart to read the prayers and messages that come in. A gentleman writes a humble message along with his gift: “I’m sorry that I am unable to donate a lot.” His gift is in new bills (a Korean tradition of showing honour to God in offerings). A single mother who is raising three children prays daily for God’s grace to also extend love to the children in North Korea. Every precious gift of a prayer or donation, blesses children and mothers in North Korea.

I’ve also had the chance to witness extraordinary generosity along the way. In December 2019, we only had enough funds to cover our operating expenses for a few more months. Though I was concerned about funding our next Sprinkles order, God had prepared immensely generous donors for such a time as that. We were able to order 7.2 million sachets of Sprinkles! That lump sum was not provided by a government



Our dedicated partners preparing to take on the day.



Working hard to produce soymilk.





# Limited Edition; 20 Years in the Making

First Steps is excited to announce the release of an image-rich commemorative book celebrating 20 years of working in North Korea.

Showcasing 48 pages of exclusive pictures, including images shot for First Steps by internationally recognized, award-winning photojournalist, John Lehman. These photos, coupled with personal accounts from First Steps staff and volunteers, offer an intimate view of First Steps' work on the ground in North Korea over the past two decades.

Designed, sourced, and printed in Canada on premium quality paper, this limited edition hardcover book is destined to become a unique conversation piece in many homes and will make a fine gift for family, friends, and anyone who has ever been curious about work and life in North Korea.

With a limited production, we are offering an early-bird price for pre-orders placed by May 30th, 2021, of \$45.00 including shipping. Regular orders placed after May 30th, 2021 will be \$60.00 per book.

The dimensions of the 48-page hardcover book are 30.48 cm x 22.86 cm (12" by 9").

If you would like to order your very own commemorative book, please complete the form below and mail it to First Steps at: 3260 W 5th Ave, Vancouver, BC V6K 1V4. Orders will also be accepted over the phone, (604) 732-0195, or by email at [info@firststepscanada.org](mailto:info@firststepscanada.org).




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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  
For further information contact us at 604.732.0195 or visit our website at [www.firststepscanada.org](http://www.firststepscanada.org)

## Malnutrition Matters working with First Steps in the DPRK

# *First Steps Chat with Frank Daller*

Frank Daller is one of the founding partners of Malnutrition Matters, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing sustainable low-cost food technology solutions for rural environments. This interview took place on February 23, 2021 at 2:00 pm.

### **First Steps:**

Hi Frank! Thanks for taking the time to be interviewed for our Spring Newsletter. I understand that you recently retired after working with Malnutrition Matters for many years. Could you start by telling us a bit about the organization and what your role was?

**Frank Daller:** I co-founded Malnutrition Matters in 2000 with Brian Harrigan. We both had worked in food processing in the private sector before, with a soymilk equipment company. With that company, we had actually developed the SoyCow, an earlier version of the VitaCow. As a two-man

company for many years, both of us kind of did everything together. By the end, I focused on technology, training and distribution.

**First Steps:** How did Malnutrition Matters and First Steps begin working together?

**Frank Daller:** Susan reached out to us—I'm not sure how she found out about us, but I do know the first VitaCow we supplied to First Steps was in 2003. I guess we'd gotten to know Susan earlier in 2003, and we arranged for a VitaCow, which we had made in Russia, to be sent to the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) directly from Russia.

supplier of training, know-how, and equipment. We informed First Steps of the electricity needs and soymilk producing capacity of the VitaCows and VitaGoats. It was a matter of making sure everyone understood how the equipment worked and what was needed to be able to decide where it should be sent.

**First Steps:** Is the VitaGoat well-suited to the DPRK?

**Frank Daller:** There are a number of reasons the VitaGoat is well-suited to the DPRK. One is that it requires very little electricity. There is also an enormous need for the type of nutrition soybeans provide, and the people in the DPRK are culturally accepting of it—it's not like you're introducing something radically new to their experience. They recognize the quality of the beans, and because soymilk is something that they couldn't make on their own, in little batches in homes, it was welcomed—as we were sure it would be. And the people are very industrious in terms of the operation and maintenance of the equipment, so it's guaranteed that they're going to have a good output—and a lot of people are going to benefit from each system they operate. I would think that the DPRK operations of the VitaGoat systems were the best in virtually any place in the world, unless we



Frank Daller, Susan Ritchie, Kim Chol, Kim Myong Hee, tasting soymilk from a new VitaGoat.

### **First Steps:**

How has Malnutrition Matters partnered with First Steps to provide soymilk to the DPRK over the years?

**Frank Daller:** Really, it was First Steps that was able to negotiate or navigate everything to be able to let stuff arrive. Everything was set up without us having ever been there, with

the local people being resourceful enough to be able to use translated manuals. We were basically just a





were in a university lab in the West or something. It's very impressive how people worked with the equipment. It's not an exaggeration that this was just fantastic—how we were treated and how they treated the equipment, really maximizing the value of it.

**First Steps:** What was your impression of malnutrition in North Korea on your visits with Susan?

**Frank Daller:** I'm not a nutritionist... but the kids did not all look openly malnourished and I was only aware of their stunted growth when we found out how old the kids were, so certain

**Frank Daller:** I was just totally impressed with the way First Steps had managed to link up with all these projects, and get through the bureaucracy and all the other legal issues required to deal with North Korea. But in the sites themselves, whether it was an orphanage or a school, or factories, it just seemed to be really good people doing good work and under very difficult conditions. It was quite impressive to see that this was helping so much.

**First Steps:** As we close off, do you have any encouragement or a sneak peek of upcoming news for supporters of First Steps?

**Frank Daller:** I've been working on other things. And one of the things I'm working on is the Porridge system [called VitaPorridge] with a technologist in Belgium that I've worked with for years. So this was something we talked about at Malnutrition Matters, but it never got developed. And I want it. Basically, I'd like to bring it to the point where it's actually being used in North Korea.



A warm cup of soymilk, fresh from a VitaCow.

The new piece of equipment Frank references is called the "VitaPorridge system." Combined with existing machinery and some other small additions, we plan to extend the existing Vitacow equipment allowing the entire soybean to be used in porridge production. Using this system, there will be no by-product being filtered out, maximizing the nutritional value of each soybean. Furthermore, this new system will allow the addition of rice or any other starch/grain that's available. The grain can be cooked without adding to the cost of the soymilk production—there is enough heat from the VitaCow or VitaGoat to cook the grain as well. Our goal is to optimize every aspect of the process to produce a greater variety of food with greater nutritional value, less electricity, and less labour.



Frank Daller and Susan Ritchie examining soybeans.

things were not obvious. But you could imagine that there were serious nutritional challenges. They were certainly low on their intake of protein, as eggs were expensive and so was animal protein, if indeed they could find it. So there was a huge need for protein and micronutrients of course, which is why it was so fantastic when First Steps started providing Sprinkles too.

**First Steps:** What was your impression of First Steps on those visits?



First Steps beans.

## 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.



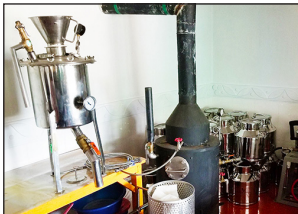
**Micronutrient Sprinkles** are sachets containing a blend of vitamins and minerals that are added to food. Sprinkles prevent anemia and rickets and lower the rates of diarrhea and pneumonia, the leading causes of death in children under two years of age. A \$50 donation to the Sprinkles program provides 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.

For further information contact us at 604.732.0195 or visit our website at [www.firststepscanada.org](http://www.firststepscanada.org)

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