



Research Report Security Council

Improving the health situation in the
Democratic People's Republic of Korea
(DPRK)

*Student Officers:
Lisa van Haarlem
Katan Shooker*

Research Report
Model United Nations Alfrink
2019

Introduction

Impoverished and isolated North Korea, which is subject to multiple sets of United Nations Security Council sanctions over its pursuit of nuclear weapons, suffers from chronic food shortages and inadequate health services according to international aid agencies. Hospitals lack medicines, equipment, and trained staff.

In this year's "needs and priorities" assessment of North Korea, the UN Development Programme described its healthcare services as "inadequate" with a "lack of essential medical equipment, pharmaceutical remedies, appropriate referral systems, therapeutic equipment and assistive devices, as well as limited professional capacity". It added "Furthermore, health infrastructure is poor with many facilities having inconsistent water, electricity and heating." North Korea's health infrastructure is "crumbling" and "in dire need of help," according to Amnesty International. The country spent less on healthcare per capita than any other country in 2009 according to the World Health Organization. Meanwhile, pervasive malnutrition has led to a tuberculosis epidemic, while infant mortality rates are far higher than neighbouring South Korea, among other health crises.

The committee

The Security Council has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council's powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations and international sanctions, and the authorization of military action through Security Council resolutions.

Like the UN as a whole, the Security Council was created after World War II to address the failings of a previous international organization, the League of Nations, in maintaining world peace. The Council held its first session on the 17th of January 1946.

The Security Council consists of fifteen members. China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America are the five permanent members of the committee and have the right to veto any Security Council resolution. The other ten non-permanent members are elected by the General Assembly to serve two-year terms.

In MUNA the Security Council consist of 15 double delegations. The countries that were in the Security Council in December before the start of the conference are selected. Security

Council members prepare themselves the same as they would for other committees. However, since its resolutions will be made ad-hoc, the debate does not start with an entire resolution but is built up clause by clause during the debate and the Security Council will not participate in the plenary session.

Keywords

Research Report
Model United Nations Alfrink
2019

- **Stunting**
Stunting is a form of chronic malnutrition and is a low height-for-age. It is caused by the combination of nutrition insecurity with other factors like limited access to quality health care, poor maternal health and lack of clean water.
- **Diarrhea**
Diarrhea causes the body to lose fluids and nutrients. A lot of diarrhea in a short period of time causes dehydration and malnutrition, which can be deadly.
- **Anemia**
Anemia is a nutritional deficiency that is mostly caused by low iron. Young children and pregnant women are most likely to developing anemia. Common symptoms of the disease include drowsiness, fatigue and weakness. Without treatment, anemia worsens and can cause chronic ill health and delay cognitive development.
- **Endemic**
A disease or condition that is regularly found and very common among a particular group or in a particular area. If outbreaks occur, it becomes epidemic.
- **Malnutrition**
Physical weakness and bad health caused by having too little food, or too little of the types of food necessary for good health.
- **Malnourished**
When someone is malnourished he or she is weak and in bad health because of having too not enough food or too little of the types of food necessary.
- **Anesthesia**
Anesthesia is the state of temporary loss of sensation or awareness that is used for medical purposes. A patient under the effects of anesthetic drugs is referred to as being anesthetized.
- **Non-communicable diseases**
Non-communicable diseases are diseases that cannot be passed from one person to another.

Overview

Free health care, along with free public education, was an important pillar of North Korea's socialism. By the Social Insurance Law of 1947, North Korea introduced free health care for workers and their family. Special programs were introduced for maternal care and for the protection of workers' safety and efforts were made to rebuild and expand medical and childcare facilities. This led to a system with more hospital beds and a lower infant mortality rate than South Korea in the 1960s. By 1980s, however, North Korea suffered from a stagnant economy and increasing isolation, especially due to the fall of the Soviet Union and severe sanctions from the West. The state became unable to supply basic medicines and equipment, the free

Research Report
Model United Nations Alfrink
2019

health care system collapsed in its ability to provide service to the sick. This, together with food shortages and the breakdown of the sanitation system caused infectious diseases and a rise in mortality. Even though the health and life expectancy of North Korea are becoming slightly better, there are still a lot of things that must be improved.

Parasites

In November 2017, a North Korean soldier was shot multiple times by his former comrades when he fled to South Korea. While he was operated on in South Korea, the surgeons discovered the soldier had a number of large parasites in his body.

A professor at Seoul National University College of Medicine stated that the use of human fertilizer on crops and poor sanitary conditions led to the transmission of parasites in North Korea.

Chemical fertilizer was supplied by the state until the 1970s, but from the early 1980s, production started to decrease. By the 1990s, the state could not supply it anymore, so farmers started to use human excrement. In 2014, supreme leader Kim Jong Un even personally urged farmers to use human waste to fertilize their fields.

The belief that at least half of the North Korean population might have parasites therefore is not unrealistic. For those who can eat well and are healthy, parasitic infections might not be a big deal. But for those malnourished, this can be very critical as parasites steal much-needed nutrition.

Medical system

The soldier mentioned above also had hepatitis B, which is a serious risk factor for liver cancer. The transmission of hepatitis B is mainly transmitted through unsterilized needles or syringes used by hospitals. North Korea has a long history of not-so-outstanding health care. In 2010, Amnesty International found the country's health care system couldn't provide sterilized needles, clean water, and food or medicine in hospitals and many of the patients didn't even have anesthesia for surgery. While the global average was to spend \$716 per capita on health care, North Korea spent just \$1. Another big problem in the medical system is corruption. Doctors are now often charging for their services, and people are getting turned away if they can't pay.

Infant mortality rate

With potentially unsafe hospital conditions, it is no wonder that the infant mortality rate in North Korea is startlingly high. North Korea's infant mortality rate is 22.1 deaths per 1000, which is nearly four times as high as the USA and more than seven times higher than South Korea. Even for babies born alive, they are also at high risk for malnourishment because of North Korea's scarce resources. Also, 25% of children under the age of 5 suffered from chronic malnutrition in 2012, according to the National Nutrition Survey of North Korea, a report supported by UNICEF, the World Food Program, and World Health Organization. The report added that nearly one in three women were anemic.

Diseases

Research Report
Model United Nations Alfrink
2019

In North Korea, the greatest number of deaths comes from non-communicable or non-infectious diseases, such as cancer, heart diseases, and respiratory problems. A lack of sufficient nutrition makes fighting off diseases difficult because the immune system has not enough strength.

Common diseases in North Korea are: cardiovascular disease, cancer, and chronic respiratory disease. In 2013, most deaths were caused by ischemic heart diseases, strokes and chronic diseases in North Korea. Communicable diseases like tuberculosis and malaria are endemic in North Korea. Tuberculosis, which is a curable disease, affects 345 out of 100,000 citizens. This is considered to be one of the highest rates outside of sub-Saharan Africa. Tuberculosis is a disease associated with poverty, bleak conditions, and a lack of sanitation.

Malnutrition

During the 1990s, North Korea was ravaged by famine, causing the more than 2 million deaths. Food shortages are continuing today, caused by factors such as bad weather, lack of fertilizer, and a drop in international donation. The food shortages cause a number of malnutrition diseases. A 2009 UNICEF report found that North Korea was “one of 18 countries with the highest growth retardation among children under the age of 5. A survey in 2017 found that about a fifth of the North Korean children are affected by malnutrition.

The country was ranked 11th among the 119 countries that were surveyed. With a score of 34, North Korea's hunger situation is considered to be serious, and worse than the previous year when the country ranked 27th, with a better score of 28.2.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
1950s	North Korea starts to put emphasis on healthcare.
1955-1986	The number of hospitals grew from 285 to 2,401
1990s	North Korean healthcare suffered a steep decline because of natural disasters, economical problems and food and energy shortages.
2010	A national telemedicine network was launched. It connects the Kim Man Yu Hospital in Pyongyang with 10 provincial
July 2010	The World Health Organization (WHO) described the healthcare system as ‘the envy of the developing world’
2013	A study showed that the largest obstacle for understanding the accurate health status of North Korea is the lack of the validity and reliability of its health data.

Major countries and Organizations involved

DPRK

Healthcare in North Korea includes a national medical service and health insurance system. North Korea's government provides universal health care for all citizens. North Korean health services are offered for free. In 2001 North Korea spent 3% of its gross domestic product on health care.

The World Health Organization (WHO)

The DPRK became the member state of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1973. The collaboration between the Government of DPR Korea and WHO has developed positively and it has further expanded after the establishment of WHO Country Office in DPR Korea in November 2001

Resolution

The health situation in the DPRK is intolerant towards humanitarian aid.. To make sure the situation improves, a lot of changes need to take place. You as delegates have to think of possible solutions. Take into consideration that the DPRK does not want supplies from other countries, but help the DPRK by delivering instructions, guiding them to a better health situation. To get started with your resolution, you could try to incorporate the answer of these questions in a resolution:

- What could be done to create a proper sewage infrastructure and sanitation services?
- How could malnutrition be tackled?
- In what way could the health care system be changed so that it is available to every inhabitant?

Links and sources

<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/22/health/north-korea-defector-parasites-health/index.html>

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/137159/ccsbrief_prk_en.pdf;jsessionid=1E2A96401732E35F3D1BB618D37DBB68?sequence=1

<https://www.voanews.com/a/north-korean-defector-health-hygiene/4125169.html>

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/ASA24/001/2010>

Research Report
Model United Nations Alfrink
2019

