



Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200532 “Nutrition Support for Children and Women” in DPR Korea

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The two-year project started in July 2013 and it will continue until June 2015 as a continuum of the previous PRRO 200114. The project assists about 2.4 million people, mainly children and pregnant and breastfeeding women in 87 counties of DPRK with 205,800mt of mixed food. In partnership¹ with the DPRK Government, WFP supports 14 food production factories which produce fortified biscuits and Super Cereal for children and women.

HIGHLIGHTS

- WFP has faced serious shortfall of commodities disrupting particularly direct distribution of oil and pulses to young children and women. WFP food distributions were 39 percent compared to the planned distribution quantities during the quarter.
- WFP's current and forecasted food stocks will last to produce Super Cereal until May 2014 distribution with limited oil and pulse distributions to children's institutions and women.
- Biscuit production will be stretched up to February 2014 as school holidays will take place from 1 January to mid February.
- Without contributions, further reduction in ration size and/or food baskets are expected which will reduce the nutritional impact on the beneficiaries. WFP may also reduce beneficiary numbers and/or categories. Children at the nurseries received only 50 percent of their food ration quantities while the women received on average only 33 percent of their planned food quantities.
- In December, only 88 percent of primary school children received WFP food assistance with reduced number of feeding days. No Food for Community Development activities for autumn season took place to address emergency preparedness or response in particular by protecting agricultural land and rehabilitating flood-affected infrastructures due to limited resources.
- As a positive note, for the first time during the project, WFP was able to distribute pulses to selected child institutions and women for one or two months².
- Household consumption of protein remains a concern as 9 percent of the visited households did not consume any kind of protein foods at least once during the week before the monitoring visit. This level of protein consumption will not meet nutritional requirements of the target beneficiaries.
- Child chronic malnutrition and poor dietary diversity among children, women and households remain the main concerns. Super Cereal, biscuits, pulses and oil are much needed to improve the local diet to supplement the poor dietary intake among the target groups.
- WFP conducted 763 field visits during the quarter. The visits confirmed the delivery of WFP food at project sites and utilization. During the visits, it was revealed that beneficiaries very much appreciated the food they received but more food variety was consistently requested.
- MAM pilot expanded to a second county in Kangwon province and three monitoring missions to the implementing counties found implementation going on as planned. Further expansion of the programme is expected during the first quarter of 2014.
- The 2013 Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) report indicated that production of soya beans reduced another 6 percent (production reduced already over 30 percent in 2012).

¹ The Government provides the facility, staff and utilities while WFP provides raw food material, micronutrient mix, packaging material, spare parts for the machinery and technical support.

² November (selected women, pediatric hospitals/wards, orphanages, selected nurseries), December (selected women, pediatric hospitals/wards).

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION STATUS

From October to December 2013, WFP reached a monthly average of 1.48 million beneficiaries with total of 10,371 mt of food³ during the quarter (Figures 1 & 2). The beneficiary caseload represents 88 percent of the eligible beneficiary caseload but the provided food rations were only 39 percent of the total entitlements.

Figure 1: Planned and actual beneficiaries

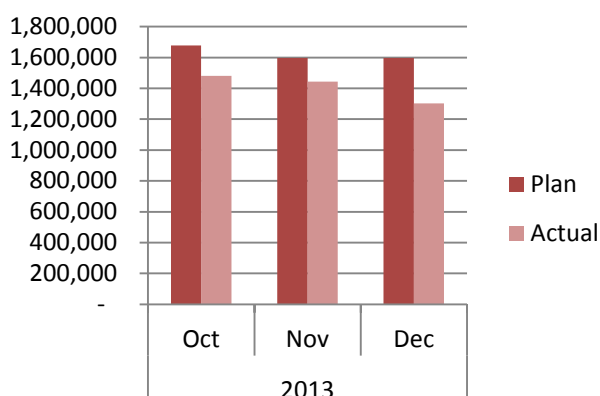
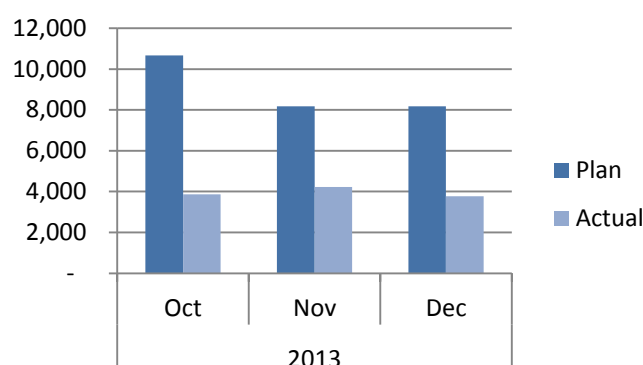


Figure 2: Planned and actual food distributions per month (mt) in raw commodity



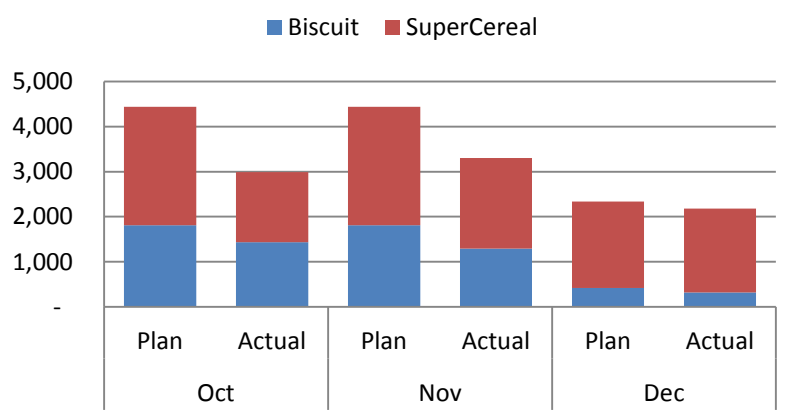
LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

In a partnership with the DPRK Government and WFP, 14 factories⁴ produced altogether 8,474mt of fortified food during the quarter for distribution; on average 2,825mt per month. Of the total production, 36 percent was fortified biscuits and 64 percent Super Cereal. As shown in Figure 3, production was below the production target due to resourcing shortfalls.

Production plan for December reduced due to expected school break from 1st January through mid February 2014.

In view of the foreseen shortfalls in food pipeline, WFP will have to make a difficult decision to suspend biscuit production effective again from March – except the factories in the Northern parts as these areas are traditionally more food insecure. New premix will only be ordered when more contributions are available as the lead time to receive the order is up to 6 months and WFP does not want to take a risk to stock premix if the food to produce biscuits is not available. If the current level of resourcing shortfalls continue to prevail, the production priority will always be Super Cereal as it is provided to the most vulnerable (young children and pregnant/breastfeeding women), whereas biscuits are provided mainly for primary school children.

Figure 3: Monthly local food production (metric tons)



The currently available food stocks will allow WFP to produce Super Cereal without sugar until April 2014 for May distribution. However, there will be pipeline break in dried skim milk powder in January as the DSM is expected to arrive in early March.

³ Either as direct distribution or provision of raw food commodities to factories for local food production purpose.

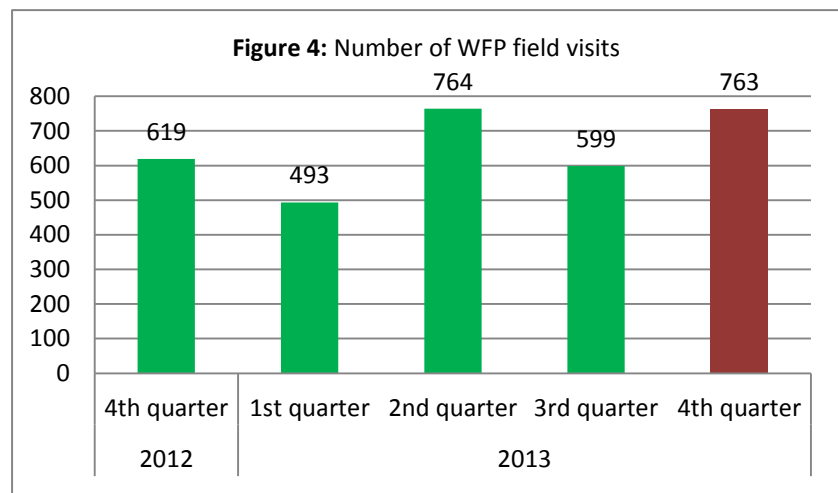
⁴ 7 biscuit and 7 Super Cereal factories

MONITORING FINDINGS

MONITORING STATISTICS/SUMMARY

As per the Letter of Understanding between WFP and the Government of DPRK, WFP international staff⁵ undertakes regular monitoring visits to project implementation sites (institutions, households, Food for Community Development project sites), warehouses, food production factories and distribution sites. WFP conducted a joint WFP-FAO CFSAM during the reporting period. During this quarter, WFP teams covered each of the operational provinces for the 763 random field visits⁶ (Figure 4). WFP teams conducted on average 254 visits per month.

The number of monitoring visits during this quarter increased compared with the same quarter in 2012. This was mostly linked with higher focus on direct beneficiary monitoring instead of checking food arrivals at warehouses as due to low project resourcing status, much less food was received. During the quarter, WFP DPRK operation received food monitoring support from WFP Cambodia Country Office. As a conclusion, the conducted monitoring visits and the assessments ensured the staff that WFP food reaches the right places and intended beneficiaries.



CHILD INSTITUTIONS

During the quarter, WFP staff visited 233 child institutions including nurseries, kindergartens, primary schools, baby homes, child centers and boarding schools. Additional 9 were visited for moderate acute malnutrition project monitoring.

Overall, the attendance rate at day-institutions increased slightly from 96 to 97 percent, without any significant differences between institution types.

In December, only 88 percent of primary school children received biscuits. At the same time, children at nurseries received only 50 percent of the monthly food rations. For example, oil was distributed to the orphanages in South Hwanghae in October while pulses was distributed in November to orphanages in all of the supported nine provinces but only to the nurseries in the three North Eastern provinces (Kangwon, North and South Hamgyong).

Children like the cooked meals provided at the institutions and WFP staff witnessed consumption in the institutions which were visited during lunch break. During the visits, the main food item requested by the institution staff was oil as it would make food easier to cook and make it tastier and more palatable for the children. They are hopeful that more food items will be provided to diversify children's diet and to ensure better nutrition outcomes. The institutions have received cereal and vegetables (kimchi) from the state.

The CFSAM reported child institution meal composition being below international recommendations, particularly in terms of protein content.

⁵ Including Korean speaking international Food Aid Monitors

⁶ Two planned monitoring trips were cancelled during the quarter because of flooding or late inclusion of a new operational county in the project.

Table 1: Planned food rations for children (g/person/day)

Food item	Resident institution			Day institution		
	Baby home (0-4yrs)	Child centre (5-6yrs)	Boarding school (7-16yrs)	Nursery (6mo-4 yrs)	Kindergarten (5-6yrs)	Primary school (7-10yrs)
Super Cereal RMB	100					
Super Cereal CSM/CMB	100	100	100	100	100	
Biscuit	30	60	60	30	60	60
Pulses	50	50	50	50	50	
Oil	25	25	25	25	25	
Cereal	50	150	200	50	150	

RMB: rice-milk-blend, CSM: corn-soya-milk blend, CMB: cereal-milk-blend

TREATMENT OF MODERATE ACUTE MALNUTRITION AT NURSERIES

WFP started a pilot programme to treat child moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) at nurseries in Kangwon province. The health staff measure children's height and weight every month and those identified as MAM, receive 100 grams per day ration of Super Cereal as take-home ration on a monthly basis until they have gained enough weight and are no longer acutely malnourished. The children receive their regular WFP supported meals at nurseries that consist another 100 grams of Super Cereal in addition to other available food items.

WFP nutrition team conducted one MAM implementation training in Chonnae county in Kangwon province. In addition, three monitoring trips were conducted in the nurseries at the implementing two counties during the quarter. Implementation was going on as planned with only minor clarifications on reporting. More findings on the MAM pilot will be presented in the later M&E bulletins when more data is available.

PEDIATRIC HOSPITALS/WARDS

During the quarter, WFP staff visited 119 pediatric hospitals or wards. Health Officials reported that the main illnesses⁷ among the children were respiratory infections (74 percent), diarrhea (73 percent), and cold (52 percent); very typical findings for winter months. Thirty-one percent of patients were children under 2 years, 35 percent between 2 and 5 years while the remaining 34 percent were children between 5 and 16 years. Similarly to the previous quarters, slightly more boys were admitted than girls (53 vs 47 percent, respectively).

Monitoring findings suggest that 18 percent of the children under 5 years of age admitted in the visited hospitals were acutely malnourished. The found prevalence is only for sick children and not representative for the general population and the definition of malnutrition may not always be consistent, but the figure can indicate still a positive improvement in child nutrition.

The WFP provided food is cooked for daily on-site meals for the pediatric in-patients. Due to the low in-country food stocks during the quarter, pulses were available for the in-patients only during November when WFP provided two months' supply of pulses the eight provinces. Oil was distributed in October in South Hwanghae province only.

Table 2: Planned food rations for child patients in pediatric hospitals/wards (g/person/day)

Food item	In-patients (6mo-16yrs)
Super Cereal RMB	100
Super Cereal CSM/CMB	100
Pulses	50
Oil	25
Cereal	150

RMB: rice-milk-blend, CSM: corn-soya-milk blend, CMB: cereal-milk-blend

⁷ Each visited hospital reported the main admission illnesses; percentages are based on the illnesses present at that moment. E.g. the 73 percent of children with diarrhea means that 73 percent of visited hospitals listed diarrhea being among the main illnesses; not 73 percent of the children having diarrhea.

pregnant and breastfeeding women

Pregnant and breastfeeding women are entitled to receive mixed food (Super Cereal, pulses, and oil) from WFP from the second trimester of pregnancy until 6 months after childbirth, depending on the availability of commodities. On average, during the quarter, the pregnant and breastfeeding women were receiving only some 33 percent of the planned ration quantity. First time during this project, pregnant and breastfeeding women in Kangwon, South Hamgyong and South Hwanghae provinces received pulses in November, with one full month ration. Ryanggang province also received pulses in November with two months rations. Women in South Hwanghae and Ryanggang provinces did not receive Super Cereals due to pipeline break.

WFP staff visits to a household with a pregnant or breastfeeding woman benefiting from WFP's assistance during the quarter confirmed that the women were pleased to receive the WFP food and expressed the food having a positive impact on their own and their children's health and nutritional status. In the following part on household food security, the data is based on the monitored pregnant and breastfeeding women's households.

FOOD SECURITY

WFP staff visited 119 households and held 98 discussions with county officials during the quarter as part of the regular monitoring. Like during the past quarters, discussions with the visited households indicated that food security and nutrition situation has improved from last year, mostly due to Public Distribution System (PDS) ration and also due to WFP's food assistance.

CFSAM 2013 estimates another 5 percent increase in national cereal production. However, at the same time it reported second consecutive year of reduced soya production; further 6 percent reduction from 2012.

According to the government sources, the average PDS rations increased to 390 grams per person per day in October and to 400 grams for November and December; similar to the year 2012 trend. The ration falls below the government target (573 grams/person/day). During the quarter the average PDS ration composition in the visited WFP operational counties contained some 63 percent maize, 32 percent rice, and the remaining 5 percent attributed to early crops (wheat, barley, potato).

Household food consumption

A typical Korean diet consists of cereal, vegetables, and condiments (such as bean paste) which lacks both macro and micronutrients. During the quarter, all the households monitored⁸ ate three meals per day but 9 percent did not consume any kind of protein source (meat, fish, eggs, pulses) a week before the visits. The proportion of households consuming protein foods was found at the highest level (i.e. 91 percent) compared to the other quarters, which is a very positive finding. On average animal-based protein and pulses were consumed 1.6 days and 3.3 days per week respectively. Consumption frequency of pulses has increased from past quarters when consumption has been steady at somewhat 1 to 2 days per week. One explanation for this could also be that WFP distributed some pulses during the quarter and 11 percent of the households reported food aid as the main food source for pulses. Oil, cereals and vegetables (kimchi) were consumed pretty much on a daily basis.

Household food consumption is calculated based on the frequency and nutritional value of the food consumed by the households during the week preceding the interview visits. Based on their diet, households are categorized as having poor, borderline or acceptable consumption⁹.

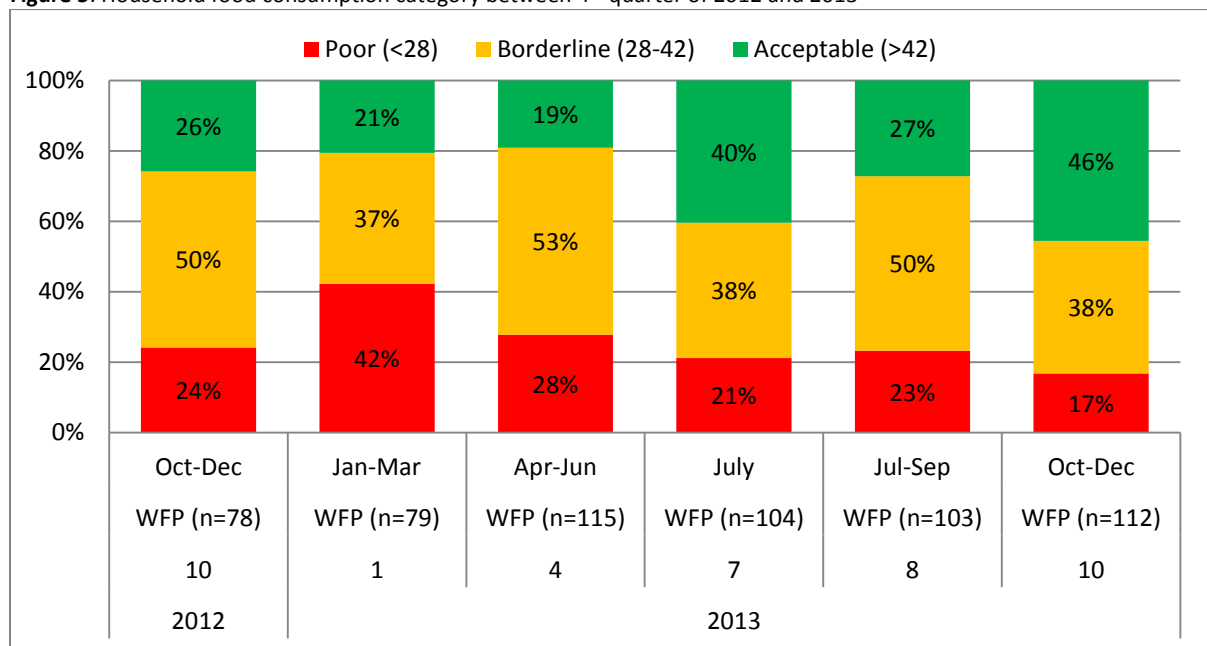
As shown in Figure 5, household food consumption has further improved compared to a year ago but still slightly over half of the households fall in the borderline and poor consumption categories. In one year, some 20 percent of households have shifted from borderline or poor consumption to acceptable consumption category – something that can be explained by the found improved pulse consumption frequency. In general, households tend to shift between the consumption categories during the year. Now with the positive improvement, it could be expected that the increase seen in 2013 in poor food consumption during the first quarter may be less dramatic in 2014. However,

⁸ WFP monitored either pregnant or breastfeeding women's households

⁹ Poor food consumption is likely to lack both macro and micronutrients needed for healthy and active life, borderline consumption may lack some nutrients while acceptable consumption should meet nutritional requirements fully.

the further reduced soya bean production in DPRK may hamper households' access to soya protein during 2014. However, regardless the positive improvement in food consumption, the situation remains fragile especially for protein source food intake.

Figure 5: Household food consumption category between 4th quarter of 2012 and 2013



Coping strategies

Although the visited households reported consuming 3 meals per day as in previous quarters, 61 percent of the visited households during the quarter used some kind of coping strategies: mostly relying on support from others and eating cheaper, less preferred food. Ten percent were reducing meal serving sizes while currently no households had reduced the number of daily meals. Trend analysis indicate that relying on relatives remains somewhat similar levels (around 60 percent) throughout the year while reliance on less preferred/cheaper food trend is more volatile; mostly peaking in July and having minor peaks during random quarters.

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