

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS 1995-1998

The main purpose of this chronology is to help the reader by reconstructing MSF's actions and public statements in regional and international news reports of the period. It is intended as a tool for this specific document, and not as an academic reference.

	International	North Korea	MSF
1910	Japan formalises its occupation of Korea.		
1945	Japan's defeat – Korean peninsula split in two by the 38th parallel. Soviet administration and troops to the North and the US to the South.		
1948	Two separate Korean governments are established: the pro-Soviet North (<u>Kim Il Sung</u> as Prime Minister) and the pro-US South.		
1950	June 1950 <u>Southern invasion</u> by northern troops claiming to reunify Korea. <u>Korean war</u> : North backed by USSR and China, South backed by UN forces (mostly US).		
1953 JULY 1953	27 July 1953 <u>Ceasefire</u> in Panmunjom: no peace treaty.		
1972		<u>Kim Il Sung</u> President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (and Secretary General of the Labor Party).	

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1990	<p>Early 1990 End of Soviet aid to North Korea leads to energy shortages, lack of hard currency producing industries, and mechanised farming ground to a halt. Military budget maintained.</p>		
1992		Beginning of food shortages.	
1994 JULY 1994	<p>22 July 1994 <u>USA and North Korea</u> agree to resume talks</p>	<p>7 July 1994 Death of <u>Kim Il Sung</u>. His son <u>Kim Jong Il</u> takes over as head of state.</p>	
NOV. 1994		<p>21 November 1994 <u>North Korea announces</u> a freeze on its nuclear reactor program.</p>	
1995 APRIL 1995		<p>23 April 1995 <u>North Korea threatens</u> to reactivate its nuclear program.</p>	
JUNE 1995	<p>13 June 1995 <u>USA and North Korea agree</u> on deal for nuclear reactors. South Korea will provide 2 nuclear reactors to North Korea.</p>		
AUG. 1995		<p>28 August 1995 Extensive floods in North Korea; <u>government appeals</u> for international aid.</p>	

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1995 SEPT. 1995			4-9 September 1995 MSF exploratory mission in North Korea.
OCT. 1995			3 October 1995 Press release by MSF Belgium, MSF France, MSF Holland: 'Médecins Sans Frontières Responds to North Korea's Call for Aid'.
			5 October 1995 MSF operational sections meeting to organise international intervention operations in North Korea.
NOV. 1995			21 November 1995 AFP (France) 'North Korea Devastated by Floods, Humanitarian Group Reports' (MSF quote).
DEC. 1995	11 December 1995 <u>WFP director in North Korea</u> says the country faces danger of famine.		Late December 1995 End of agreed MSF 3-month programme in North Korea. New programme of negotiations with the government begins.
1996 JAN. 1996	4 January 1996 South Korean President <u>Kim Young Sam</u> reports concern over a possible famine in North Korea.		January 1996 No agreement between MSF and North Korean government on a nutritional survey. <u>MOU not extended.</u>
FEB. 1996		8 February 1996 North Korea tells <u>foreign relief agencies</u> not to organise new appeals for flood victims.	

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1996 FEB. 1996			Late February 1996 Last MSF international staff leave North Korea. MSF coordinator to the press: "We can't yet talk about a famine but the situation is potentially serious and must be taken into consideration."
APRIL 1996	16 April 1996 US President <u>Bill Clinton</u> visits South Korea; he proposes four-party talks for a permanent peace agreement replacing the 1953 armistice.		April 1996 DPRK representative in Paris (<u>M. Kim</u>) invites MSF to visit North Korea again.
APRIL-MAY 1996			20 April-22 May 1996 MSF International exploratory mission in North Korea.
MAY 1996	15 May 1996 US and <u>Japan</u> rule out sending food aid to North Korea.		17 May 1996 MSF leadership declines the explo team's suggestion to implement a programme in DPRK with no international personnel.
	29 May 1996 <u>IFRC appeal on famine</u> in North Korea		31 May 1996 <u>MSF France Board of Directors discussion</u> on North Korea: some members opposed to "collaboration with a totalitarian regime."

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1996			
JUNE 1996	11 June 1996 <u>Japan and South Korea pledge aid to North Korea.</u>		
JULY 1996		Late July 1996 <u>Storms and floods in North Korea.</u> Authorities report starvation	
AUG. 1996	25 August 1996 <u>US Congressman visiting North Korea says it is in desperate need of food and asks USA for more aid.</u>		
SEPT. 1996			11 September 1996 <u>MSF awarded the Seoul Peace Prize.</u>
	30 September 1996 <u>North Korea and American-led consortium agree to the elimination of North Korean nuclear arms program and the construction of 2 new reactors.</u>		
		In 1996 <u>Kim Jong Il publicly declares that only 30% of the population is needed to survive to reconstruct a victorious society.</u>	
1997			
JAN. 1997	26 January 1997 <u>Signs of a thaw between North Korea and South Korea; preliminary talks on formal end to Korean war.</u>		
FEB. 1997		3 February 1997 <u>North Korea says floods have cut grain supply in half.</u>	

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1997			
FEB. 1997	<p>23 February 1997 US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visits American front line near the <u>demilitarized zone</u> between North and South Korea, and declares peace is dependent on North Korea.</p>		
FEB.-MARCH 1997			<p>25 February-8 March 1997 MSF <u>barley seeds delivery</u> programme in several North Korean counties.</p>
MARCH 1997	<p>4-26 March 1997 <u>ECHO visit</u> to North Korea; small scale nutritional assessment reveals seriousness of nutritional situation.</p>	<p>29 March 1997 North Korea <u>officially requests</u> food aid from South Korea and USA.</p>	
APRIL 1997		<p>8 April 1997 <u>North Korea makes deal</u> to buy US wheat.</p>	<p>20 April 1997 MSF proposal to North Korean representative in France to send a medical team to assess medical and nutritional aid needs.</p>
MAY 1997	<p>8 May 1997 <u>Japan, USA and South Korea make food aid conditional</u> on North Korea joining peace talks.</p> <p>12 May 1997 <u>South Korean Red Cross announces shipping</u> of 15,000 thousand tonnes of food to North Korea.</p>		

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1997 MAY 1997			14 May 1997 North Korean representative in Paris tells MSF that North Korean government doesn't want any more assessments but wants concrete aid.
MAY - JUNE 1997			24 May-4 June 1997 MSF exploratory mission in Ichon, Unpa, Pakchon, Huichon and Pyongyang maternities.
JUNE 1997			5 June 1997 Start of a one-month joint programme of MSF France/MSF Belgium/MSF Holland in Unpa, Pakchon and Huichon counties, with MSF France as the lead programme manager.
			June 1997 MSF France food unit visits North Korea to assess the barley crops.
		18 June 1997 North Korean Ministry of Armed Forces spokesperson says that Pyongyang is ready for the final battle against the US and South Korea.	
JULY 1997	1 July 1997 North Korea agrees to hold talks with South Korea, USA, and China to negotiate peace.		3 July 1997 MSF signs an MOU with the government of North Korea valid for 1 year: large-scale nutritional rehabilitation, drug and medical equipment distribution, and training in South Pyongan, North Hwanghae, Kangwon.

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1997			
JULY 1997	<p>15 July 1997 <u>USA agrees to donate \$27 million worth of surplus grain to help North Korea cope with food shortages.</u></p>		
AUG. 1997	<p>5 August 1997 <u>Relief teams say North Korea faces vast drought emergency.</u></p> <p>6 August 1997 <u>North Korea joins talks with South Korea, USA, and China to formally end war and ease tensions in Korean peninsula.</u></p> <p>8 August 1997 <u>The New York Times (USA) editorial says USA should take lead in famine relief efforts for North Korea.</u></p> <p>14 August 1997 <u>US congressmen visit to North Korea:</u> - <u>Say some food aid diverted to military;</u> - <u>Will seek measures to ensure future US food aid goes to hungry people;</u> - <u>Agree on more food aid.</u></p> <p>20 August 1997 <u>Western nations give North Korea two nuclear reactors. North Korea gives up older reactors that could be used to make nuclear arms.</u></p>		
SEPT. 1997	<p>15 September 1997 <u>World Vision reports North Korean famine may be killing 15% in towns.</u></p>		

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1997 OCT. 1997			<p>3 October - 11 November 1997 William Claus, MSF Belgium programme manager, visit to DPRK.</p>
		<p>9 October 1997 Kim Jong Il new Secretary of Peoples' Labour Party.</p>	<p>22 October 1997 Decision of explo mission in North Hamgyong to extend the programme under <u>MSF Belgium</u> (with FDRC agreement) but <u>MSF France</u> and <u>MSF Holland</u> disagree.</p> <p>Late October-Early November 1997 <u>Intersectional debates</u> on geographical extension and possible external communication.</p>
NOV. 1997			<p>24 November 1997 <u>Extension officially authorised:</u> 59 counties, 12 international staff.</p> <p>November 1997 <u>MSF team discovers</u> 'socially deprived children'.</p>
			<p>Late November-Early December 1997 Eric Goemaere, <u>MSF Belgium Executive Director</u>, visits North Korea.</p>
DEC. 1997			<p>7 December 1997 <u>Press conference</u> with Eric Goemaere in Hong Kong. Press release: 'The Health System in North Korea has Collapsed – Help is Needed Urgently but Needs Careful Distribution and Training of Staff'.</p>

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1997 DEC. 1997			<p>9 December 1997 <u>Press conference with Eric Goemaere</u> in Brussels.</p> <p>December 1997 <u>MSF France China team starts receiving information</u> on the North Korean refugees on China-North Korea border.</p>
1998 JAN. 1998	<p>7 January 1998 <u>WFP appeals for \$378 million</u> to feed nearly a third of North Korea's people.</p>		<p>January 1998 <u>Argument within MSF</u> about an article on North Korea in <u>MSF France</u> internal newspaper.</p> <p>31 January 1998 <u>MSF France Board advises</u> an evaluation of programmes in North Korea.</p>
FEB. 1998	<p>5 February 1998 <u>USA announces \$75 million food aid</u> to 1/3 of North Korean population.</p> <p>February 1998 <u>First massive arrivals</u> of North Korean refugees on the North Korea/China border. <u>Korean Buddhist Sharing Movement</u> publishes North Korean refugees accounts reporting a large-scale famine in North Korea.</p>		<p>February 1998 <u>Letter from Tony Hall, US Congressman to MSF</u> asking for support of his campaign to increase US food aid to North Korea.</p> <p>February 1998 <u>MSF programme starts</u> in North Hamgyong province.</p> <p>11 February 1998 <u>MSF Hong Kong</u> suggests an assessment on the China/North Korea border and in North Korean hospitals where MSF is working.</p>

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1998 MARCH 1998		3 March 1998 <u>North Korean officials say food stocks will run out by mid-March and risks of famine.</u>	8 March 1998 <u>Start of MSF/DPRK negotiations on possible activities after end of current MOU.</u> 10-20 March 1998 <u>Pierre Salignon, MSF France Programme Manager and Philippe Biberson, MSF France President of Board of Directors visit North Korea. They announce to DPRK that MSF will not continue working under the current conditions.</u> Last two weeks March 1998 <u>MSF China team collects testimonies from refugees on the China/North Korean border. Report transmitted to press correspondent in Beijing.</u> Late March 1998 <u>Pim de Graaf, MSF Holland Director of Operations visits North Korea.</u> Late March 1998 <u>Draft of external communication plan on North Korea by MSF Belgium and MSF International - finally abandoned.</u>
APRIL 1998			1 April 1998 <u><i>Libération</i> (France): 'North Korea, a Manipulated Famine', quotes Philippe Biberson, MSF France President of Board of Directors.</u>

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1998 APRIL 1998			<p>8 April 1998 <u>Refugees' accounts transmitted to MSF France programme manager, then to MSF Belgium and MSF Holland programme managers.</u></p> <p>9 April 1998 <u>Programme managers decision to stop distribution and to renegotiate programmes and freezing of refugee accounts circulation.</u></p> <p>9 April 1998 <u>MSF Belgium Executive Director's letter to DPRK: "...this news is not produced by any official MSF press release."</u></p> <p>11 April 1998 <u>South China Morning Post (Hong Kong), Le Figaro (Paris): Refugees' accounts published with MSF quote in articles; cannibalism mentioned.</u></p> <p>23 April 1998 <u>US NGOs ask MSF for more coordination on North Korea and criticise its public statements.</u></p> <p>24 April 1998 <u>FDRC letter to MSF disagrees with MSF statements.</u></p> <p>24 April 1998 <u>MSF China coordinator report to MSF France Board of Directors. Decision: "MSF stays and speaks out."</u></p>

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1998 APRIL 1998			29 April 1998 Decision of programme managers of MSF Belgium, MSF France and MSF Holland: MSF must stay, support the team, and follow up the issues raised by refugee accounts.
MAY 1998	Late April 1998 North Korea principle agreement on <u>WFP</u> , <u>UNICEF</u> , and <u>ECHO</u> nutritional assessment.		May 1998 MSF Belgium & MSF France directors visit donors (EU). <u>François Jean (MSF France Foundation)</u> starts research on food aid to North Korea.
	19 May 1998 <u>WFP</u> director announces aid to North Korea will stop if there is no access to the entire country.		16 May 1998 <u>MSF France President of Board of Directors</u> gives detailed <u>annual report</u> to the annual general meeting on North Korea.
JUNE 1998	14 June 1998 <u>WFP</u> and <u>FAO</u> say that food situation in North Korea remains precarious and that authorities don't distribute food aid.	Mid-June 1998 <u>Médecins du Monde MOU not renewed</u> – <u>MDM</u> leaves North Korea.	29 May 1998 <u>MSF France Board of Directors</u> discusses North Korean strategy to be applied.
			9 June 1998 <u>MSF France Foundation conference</u> on North Korea.

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1998 JULY 1998			<p>Early July 1998 <u>William Claus, MSF Belgium Programme Manager drafts proposal</u> to DPRK for working in a smaller area with closer cooperation.</p> <p>July 1998 MSF team discovers <u>'27/9' status earmarking people 'rejected by society'</u>.</p> <p>20-21 July 1998 <u>MSF North Korea team</u> discusses achievements and prospects of the programmes.</p> <p>24 July 1998 MSF receives a <u>one-month extension</u> on the MOU and proposal from DPRK to deliver raw materials to rehabilitate North Korean pharmaceutical industry.</p> <p>29 July 1998 <u>MSF Holland recommends</u> that MSF continue to try and gain access to the most vulnerable and create a threshold for departure.</p>
AUG. 1998			<p>10 August 1998 MSF North Korea coordinator <u>puts forward plan</u> to close the mission.</p> <p>13 August 1998 <u>MSF programme manager decision</u> to close the mission at the end of the current MOU.</p>

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1998 AUG. 1998	<p>19 August 1998 After a 4-day visit to Pyongyang, a <u>US congressional delegation</u> stated to CNN that, since 1995, 10% of the North Korean people might have died from hunger.</p>		<p>19 August 1998 <u>MSF programme managers and comms departments</u> reflect on an external communication strategy regarding MSF withdrawal from North Korea.</p>
			<p>18 - 25 August 1998 <u>MSF France China team</u> collects refugee accounts on China /North Korean border.</p>
			<p>24 August 1998 <u>DPRK letter</u> asking MSF to consider the proposal to help rehabilitation of pharmaceutical industry.</p>
		<p>26 August 1998 <u>Bad weather</u> ruins north Korean crops.</p>	
	<p>31 August 1998 <u>North Korea</u> fires a missile over Japan. <u>Japan</u> suspends all food aid to North Korea (lifted in December 1999).</p>		
SEPT. 1998		<p>September <u>Kim Jong Il</u> gets full power.</p>	<p>9 September 1998 <u>South China Morning Post</u> (Hong Kong) publishes refugee accounts with allegations of cannibalism; MSF quoted. <u>MSF USA</u> challenged by UN agency and US NGOs.</p>
			<p>11 September 1998 Circulation to authorities and aid agencies of <u>MSF report</u> on 'socially deprived children'.</p>
	<p>15 September 1998 <u>US government</u> says that supposed North Korean missile was a failed satellite.</p>		

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1998 SEPT. 1998	<p>21 September 1998 Start of a nutritional survey by <u>UNICEF</u>, <u>WFP</u> and the <u>EU</u> in the third of North Korean territory accessible to foreigners.</p>		<p>20 September 1998 <u>Programme managers</u> put an embargo until 30 September on MSF message regarding withdrawal from North Korea.</p>
	<p>30 September 1998 <u>USA promise</u> to provide more oil to DPRK; <u>asks North Korean</u> authorities to solve the issue of access so that MSF can resume its activities.</p>		<p>28 September 1998 Letter of <u>MSF Belgium/ MSF France /MSF Holland</u> executive directors to <u>FDRC</u> informing that MSF will <u>issue a press release</u> to explain its retreat from NK.</p>
OCT. 1998	<p>2 October 1998 <u>UNICEF/WFP statement</u>: there is no evidence that aid is mishandled.</p>		<p>30 September 1998 Last MSF international staff leave North Korea. <u>Libération (France)</u> and <u>The International Herald Tribune (USA)</u> leak of refugee accounts collected by MSF.</p> <p>1 October 1998 <u>MSF press conference</u> in Hong Kong and <u>MSF press release</u>: 'MSF Calls on Donors to Review their Policy in DPRK – Urgent Needs in North Korea but MSF Forced to Pull Out'.</p> <p>5 October 1998 <u>DPRK statement</u>: MSF accusations are “incoherent”.</p>

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1998 OCT. 1998	<p>13 October 1998 WFP Deputy Executive Director says North Korea denies UN workers access to many counties.</p> <p>20 - 25 October 1998 Peace negotiations between North Korea and South Korea in Geneva.</p>		<p>14 October 1998 <i>Le Figaro</i> (France), 'Humanitarian Aid Frozen': article by Philippe Biberson, MSF France president of Board of Directors.</p> <p>21 October 1998 MSF round table on North Korea in Amsterdam.</p>
1999 FEB. 1999			<p>February 1999 <i>Esprit</i> (France), 'North Korea: A Famine Regime': article by François Jean, MSF France Foundation.</p>
APRIL 1999			<p>April 1999 MSF France China team 'business' assessment trip from Beijing to Hamhung province (North Korea).</p>
MAY 1999		<p>12 May 1999 DPRK acknowledges 220,000 deaths due to famine.</p>	<p>3-6 May 1999 South Korean NGO meeting in Beijing asks MSF to resume aid to North Korea.</p>

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2000 APRIL 2000			24 April 2000 <i>Newsweek International</i> (US), 'The Mystery Children': article by Marie Rose Pecchio, ex-MSF coordinator in <u>North Korea</u> .
SEPT. 2000			29 September 2000 <u>MSF France Board of Directors meeting</u> update on North Korean refugee programme.
2001 MARCH 2001			10 March 2001 <i>Japan Times</i> (Tokyo) interview with <u>Fiona Terry, MSF France Foundation</u> , on North Korea.
JUNE 2001	June 2001 Chinese authorities organise a major crackdown on refugees on the North Korean border.		
JULY 2001			23 July 2001 <i>The Guardian</i> (UK) and <i>The Washington Post</i> (USA) articles on <u>MSF appeal to Chinese government</u> to stop crackdown and forced repatriation of North Korean refugees. 25 July 2001 <i>South China Morning Post</i> (China) article on <u>MSF appeal to Chinese government</u> to stop crackdown and forced repatriation of North Korean refugees

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2001 JULY 2001			30 July 2001 <i>Libération</i> (France): Interview with Fiona Terry (MSF France Foundation) on the manipulation of the famine in North Korea. Interview with Catherine Bertini (WFP) overturning MSF statements.
AUG. 2001			6 August 2001 <i>The Guardian</i> (UK): article by Fiona Terry (MSF France Foundation) on the manipulation of the famine in North Korea.
2002 FEB. 2002			February 2002 Opening of MSF France office in Seoul , South Korea, and gradual extension of the programme toward North Korean refugees in Asia.
MAY 2002			2 May 2002 MSF France co-coordinator in South Korea, Sophie Delaunay , testimony to the US House Sub-Committee on International Relations for East Asia and the Pacific , regarding the plight of North Koreans inside DPRK and on the fate of North Korean refugees in China.
AUG. 2002			30 August 2002 MSF France Board decision to support the refugee activities (including the sensitive human rights aspects) of MSF South Korean team (in China) .
DEC. 2002	December 2002 The Chinese authorities launched a surge of repression against North Korean refugees.		

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2003 JAN. 2003			19 January 2002 MSF South Korea press release 'Urgent Appeal for the Protection of North Korean Refugees in China.'
FEB. 2003			24 January 2002 MSF France Co-Coordinator in South Korea, Marine Buissonnière, testimony to the <u>Japanese Parliament</u> : 'MSF Pushes for Rights of Fleeing North Koreans.'
JUNE-JULY 2003			27 February-27 March 2003 MSF France in South Korean <u>campaign</u> of humanitarian diplomacy toward western politicians and international agencies.
OCT. 2003			June-July 2003 MSF Holland ' <u>North Korea Research Explo</u> ' document.
2004 MAY 2004			October 2003 Chapter on North Korea by <u>Fiona Terry</u> in MSF France book, <i>In the Shadow of Just Wars</i> .
2006 JAN. 2006			18 - 22 May 2004 <u>Delegation of MSF Holland, Dirk van der Tak and Michiel Hofman</u> , visit North Korea; no programmes result.
2007 MARCH- APRIL 2007			January 2006 <u>Closure of MSF France programme</u> in South Korea.
			March-April 2007 <u>MSF Switzerland exploratory mission</u> on China/North Korea border and Far Eastern Asia: decision to open a programme for North Korean refugees.