PROPOSITION FOR AN EMERGENCY ACTION
IN DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

MEDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES

JANUARY 1996

From October to December 1995 Medecins Sans Frontières' teams have appreciated working with the authorities and with the medical staff of the provinces of Unpa, Huichon and Packchon.

Because Medecins Sans Frontières is a medical and humanitarian organisation, it needs to express its worries about the nutritional and sanitary situation for the coming months. Medecins Sans Frontières also proposes an action.

Nutritional situation

The floods of last summer 1995 have massively destroyed the cultures. That is mainly why there is an urgent need for food. This need is acknowledged by the government as well as in the last report of the World Food Programme.

The consequence of this lack is the rapidly increasing malnutrition among the children under 5. This pathology needs a medical treatment adapted to its different manifestations.

Now a day, some cases of malnutrition have already been identified in the hospitals where Médecins Sans Frontières has been working. The Korean medical staff has been trained to recognise malnutrition but this action is not sufficient if there is not a follow up of the nutritional status and a good care of the malnourished children. This action has to be reinforced by a food distribution to under five children to prevent the occurrence of malnutrition.

If the lack of food confirms and remains we fear that the number of malnourished children will increase.

The next crop will be harvested in September 1996, the nine coming months will be difficult to live through for the Korean children.
Medical situation

During the floods, some health structures, pharmacies and medical material have been damaged or destroyed.
The main pathology after this disaster was diarrhoeal diseases.
Médecins Sans Frontières medical teams have met the lack of essential drugs and medical material. The priority was to supply health structures which were starting their activity again and to train the Korean medical staff to the use of drugs.

Due to the very cold winter and lack of drinkable water in certain places pathologies such as respiratory tract infections and diarrhoeas are increasing.
These pathologies hit first the children and among them principally malnourished.
The winter is lasting until end of April. The food available in the three provinces where Médecins Sans Frontières has been working will last only until the end of February 1996.

The Korean medicine insure 50 per cent of the drugs need but a need for essential drugs and particularly antibiotics remain.

Propositions of action

To reduce mortality and morbidity caused by malnutrition and others pathologies worsened by the winter.

1. Care and prevention of malnutrition
   - to evaluate the malnutrition among children to obtain a malnutrition rate and to be able to follow its evolution.
   - to detect precociously malnourished children and to take care of them by training the medical and paramedical staff. To supply drugs and special food.
   - to prevent malnutrition by organising a food distribution for children under five.

2. Need of essential drugs
   - to carry on Médecins Sans Frontières 'action in the three provinces and to widen it to other parts of the country where needs are important too.

Conclusion

If Médecins Sans Frontières'teams notice that the nutritional situation is rapidly worsening Médecins Sans Frontières could be involved in a general food distribution.
Since Médecins Sans Frontières'action in emergency situation is appreciated by the International Institutions it will be able to bring awareness to donors and to the International Community about the needs in Korea.

Medecins Sans Frontières will work in collaboration with the Korean authorities and the Korean Ministry of Health.

In 1995, Médecins Sans Frontières has been working in 64 countries with 2 950 volunteers on the field and a budget of 300 millions of US dollars.