Dear all,

Further to the note below, plus to Pim’s comments that the message should not be that we want access (as it seems we now have it), but that eventually we want to prove or disprove whether there is or is not a "famine" where we are working.

Operationally it would seem to that the priority is to 1) do the nutritional survey and 2) do an analysis to see/prove where possible, if there is or is not evidence of a "famine"

From a communications point of view therefore there are two possible strategies:

A) COMMUNICATE UP FRONT FROM THE START:
1. Thank the N Korean Govt publicly for allowing us to finally do a nutritional survey/announce that MSF will do a nutritional survey (specifying when and where, with what purpose), thus putting indirect pressure on the authorities to make sure we get in
2. produce medically/nutritionally accurate report (no political conclusions/interpretations - as the facts speak for themselves). Needs to be accurate no matter what the final use will be - on / off the record etc
3. Then give out the results to shed light on the nutritional levels in the relevant provinces

or

B) WAIT AND SEE BEFORE CommunicATING
1. do the nutritional survey and collate as much data as possible
2. produce medically/nutritionally accurate report (no political conclusions/interpretations - as the facts speak for themselves) Needs to be accurate no matter what the final use will be - on / off the record etc
3. work out strategy for giving out results of the study to prove or disprove the reports of famine - taking into consideration how much access we got, how reliable the info was etc

RECOMMENDATIONS

I would recommend that MSF go for the B option - this is because:

1) MSF wants to be able to do your initial research out of the spotlight, and if it is open and on the agenda people surveyed could be more reserved with the info
2) If we announce that we are doing a survey, our professional credibility is on the line as we will then be under pressure to come out with coherent results publicly no matter what

OTHER COMMENTS

We cannot publicly in a statement comment on the "reliability" of other agencies' data (ie the monks) - this would get us into legal and other "aid agency slagging matches" - terrible for our image - especially attacking
Dear Samantha,

Well received your message cc the press release. All the team agrees with your remarks and comments.

We want to give you some comments:

1. About the information: we don't collect the data. They are give to us by the health responsible of the counties. In NK, the data is secret of state and a very touchy point. If this point is in the MoU, I think they asked for it.

2. CC the meeting with the authorities, Pim and myself: it was on Tuesday 24/3. I had an other one on Friday 27/3. The main point has been the press release. Pim explained what and why. He asked for more access, it means to do a survey among the population, like that we will be able to adapt our projects according to the needs.

For the FDRC, the press release is not a problem but they repeat that they have not been happy by the previous one and 'the collapse of the health structures'.

With a negative advice about the country (no free access, for example) we will scare the donors.

About the nutritional survey, they accept. The way to do it has to be discuss. It has not been NO as previously.

I spoke again during the next meeting, it was the same answer.

Then, as - we are a bit late to answer after the Korean Buddhist and the 2 million of deads.
- the authorities agree with the idea of a nutritional survey.

We don't think it will be necessary to do this kind of press release any more. The talks about with FDRC performed already the purpose c.q. to be allowed to do a survey.

Marie Rose