

Delegation: The Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Committee: The World Health Organization

Topic A: Non-Communicable Diseases



Situated in Southeast Asia, The People's Republic of Korea has the 49th largest population in the world and is committed to bettering the lives of its citizens in any way possible. More commonly known as North Korea, we currently enjoy the highest standards of living, experiencing a life expectancy of 67 years for males and 74 years for females.<sup>1</sup> As an emerging global superpower, we struggle with preventing the growth of non-communicable diseases, onsetting in the later years of an individual's life. As the quality of life increases and transmittable diseases are becoming more preventable, we face the challenges of curing these costly diseases. Because of this, we need to expand research and funding into technologies to further our knowledge and prevention of noncommunicable diseases. Some diseases, such as cancers and chronic respiratory ailments, are caused by tobacco usage by 53% of our male population, causing over 40,000 deaths per year.<sup>2</sup> With stronger education about the dangers of tobacco smoking, we can reduce these figures and bring back the strength that our country is known for.

North Korea and our supreme leader Kim Jong Un have made efforts to reduce the prevalence of smoking in our community, which has the highest lung cancer rate in the world.<sup>3</sup> Over 50% of the male population smoke, most having picked up the habit while serving their mandatory military service. Attempts at "no smoking days" have been overall unsuccessful as their campaigns are instead overridden by a massive amount of reports of the supreme leader holding a cigarette in hand, contradicting these ventures. Habits such as smoking, abusing alcohol, and unhealthy diets due to a lack of adequate, healthy food has led to NCDs causing

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<sup>1</sup> "Democratic People's Republic of Korea." *World Health Organization*, WHO, 2016, [www.who.int/countries/prk/en/](http://www.who.int/countries/prk/en/). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *Democratic People's Republic of Korea: WHO statistical profile*. World Health Organization, Jan. 2015, [www.who.int/gho/countries/prk.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/gho/countries/prk.pdf?ua=1). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Khan, Natasha. "There's a Push to Curb Smoking in North Korea, But Kim's Still Puffing Away." *Bloomberg*, 5 Mar. 2015, [www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-05/as-kim-jong-un-puffs-away-a-push-to-curb-smoking-in-north-korea](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-03-05/as-kim-jong-un-puffs-away-a-push-to-curb-smoking-in-north-korea). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

79% of the annual deaths in North Korea.<sup>4</sup> Recent food shortages can be attributed to crop failure in the past years, forcing more families to cut back on food consumption leading to further malnutrition. The amount of alcohol dependants in North Korea also exceeds the average of Southeast Asian Regions, a problem that currently has not been addressed by the government.<sup>5</sup>

Such efforts by the world's leading anti-tobacco campaigner, Judith Mackay, have been successful in changing the smoking habits of political leaders, such as former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. Once our supreme leaders habit is ceased, his influence through the media on the people will greatly reduce the popularity of smoking. Further actions down this path could result in public places being made smoke-free, just as China is considering at this time. The same can be said about the importance of education in regards to alcohol consumption. While it is unlikely that a legal drinking age would be enforced, less radical movements such as explaining the dangers that excessive drinking causes might serve the general population positively. Furthermore, it is in the best interest of North Korea to expand its agricultural output in order to feed the growing population. With the aid of the United Nations and NGOs, food related crises can be limited and less citizens will die from malnutrition and other NCDs.

#### Topic B: Global Pharmaceutical Development and Universal Access to Medication

Holding the 51st largest population in the world, The Democratic People's Republic of Korea contains over 24 million citizens. At one time, North Korea boasted one of the world's greatest health care systems, but now, due to natural disasters and food and energy shortages, hospitals are barely able to stay open as necessities such as medicines, basic equipment, and running water are scarce.<sup>6</sup> However, medicines sent by the UN can be obtained relatively cheaply and sold around in the black markets, supplying the absolutely necessary drugs and medications to citizens for the time being.<sup>7</sup> It is with great urgency that North Korea needs the

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<sup>4</sup> *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*. World Health Organization, 2014, [www.who.int/nmh/countries/prk\\_en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/nmh/countries/prk_en.pdf?ua=1). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>5</sup> *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*. World Health Organization, 2014, [www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/publications/global\\_alcohol\\_report/profiles/prk.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/publications/global_alcohol_report/profiles/prk.pdf?ua=1). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Gluck, Caroline. "N Korea healthcare 'near collapse.'" *BBC News*, 20 Nov. 2011, [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1666806.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1666806.stm). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>7</sup> "In North Korea, everyone is a doctor." *New Focus International*, 29 May 2014, [newfocusintl.com/north-korea-everyone-doctor/](http://newfocusintl.com/north-korea-everyone-doctor/). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

World Health Organization to act to give aid in order to reinvigorate the North Korean healthcare system to once again provide the best care for all citizens.

The People's Democratic Republic of Korea recognizes that several unfortunate circumstances have lead to the decrease in resources needed to run hospitals productively. In the past unfortunately, the government has spent as little as 3% of GDP on health costs. Thus, consumers in need for the medicine often times buy from black market dealers and must rely on themselves to diagnose and treat their maladies. However, if an individual buys a fake drug in the black market, they have no protection under the law, or reimbursement for the lost money or injuries acquired from the counterfeit medicine. The average box of antibiotics in North Korea costs the equivalent of 88 USD,<sup>8</sup> thus incentivizing dealers to sell fake drugs, overall hurting the healthcare system in the country. If the issue is left untouched, the health of North Korea in general will continue to fall, just as the supply of medicines will continue to decrease.

By intervening, the World Health Organization is able to ensure that the citizens of North Korea can enjoy the right to a higher standard of living as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).<sup>9</sup> With support from the WHO and other NGOs throughout the world, North Korean healthcare issues can be a thing of the past. Advancing the quality of care that hospitals can provide by implementing state-of-the-art technology can reduce the infant mortality rate of 51.3 deaths per 1,000 births<sup>10</sup> and raise the average life expectancy of citizens above the current level of 67 years for men and 74 for women.<sup>11</sup> New medicine and machinery can allow for a broader range of operations to be done with a higher success rate and return the healthcare system back to the same validity it offered in the 1960s.<sup>12</sup>

Topic C: Gender Based Inequities in Global Health

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<sup>8</sup> "Cost of living in Pyongyang, North Korea." *Expatisin.com*, [www.expatisin.com/cost-of-living/pyongyang?currency=USD](http://www.expatisin.com/cost-of-living/pyongyang?currency=USD). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>9</sup> "Universal Declaration of Human Rights." 10 Dec. 1948. *United Nations*, [www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/](http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/).

<sup>10</sup> "Infant Mortality Rates of Countries." *Info Please*, Sandbox Networks, [www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0934744.html](http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0934744.html). Accessed 29 Oct. 2016. Table.

<sup>11</sup> "Democratic People's Republic of Korea." *World Health Organization*, WHO, 2016, [www.who.int/countries/prk/en/](http://www.who.int/countries/prk/en/). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Mack, Benjamin. "I Had A Scary Encounter With North Korea's Crumbling Healthcare System." *Business Insider*, 1 June 2014, [www.businessinsider.com/north-korean-healthcare-2014-5](http://www.businessinsider.com/north-korean-healthcare-2014-5). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea contains a population of 25 million citizens, with a life expectancy of 67 years for males and 74 years for females.<sup>13</sup> Compared to other countries in the WHO region, North Korea experiences a significantly smaller ratio of maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS related deaths.<sup>14</sup> While the current healthcare system has taken several steps back from the strength that it had in the 1960s, less people perish from communicable diseases in North Korea than those in other emerging states. However, lung and liver cancer mortality rates have slightly increased since 2000, especially in the male population, as the practice of tobacco smoking has deep roots in North Korean culture. In fact, the average person over age 15 smokes 609 cigarettes per year.<sup>15</sup> However, this number is inflated for men as women generally don't smoke because it is seen as socially unacceptable.

North Korea does not have the same problems with HIV/AIDS and malaria that third world countries have. The average North Korean mother has 2 children, and women have no access to birth control devices or abortions.<sup>16</sup> While we may be stricter than Western countries with our economic customs, men generally work every day while women are expected to stay at home, according to the Workers' Party of Korea.<sup>17</sup> This may be a harsh reality, but North Korean society has thrived under these conditions and will continue to do so. Furthermore, the percentage of self-harm and suicidal actions done by our citizens has decreased as life in North Korea has become more enjoyable.

North Korean society is doing fantastically compared to other struggling countries neighboring it. Communicable disease related fatalities has continued to decrease, but we will soon face the task of defending against cancers, diabetes, and other non-communicable diseases.

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<sup>13</sup> "Democratic People's Republic of Korea." *World Health Organization*, WHO, 2016, [www.who.int/countries/prk/en/](http://www.who.int/countries/prk/en/). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>14</sup> *Democratic People's Republic of Korea: WHO statistical profile*. World Health Organization, Jan. 2015, [www.who.int/gho/countries/prk.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/gho/countries/prk.pdf?ua=1). Accessed 28 Oct. 2016.

<sup>15</sup> "Cigarette Consumption." *Tobacco Atlas*, [www.tobaccoatlas.org/topic/cigarette-use-globally/](http://www.tobaccoatlas.org/topic/cigarette-use-globally/). Accessed 29 Oct. 2016. Map.

<sup>16</sup> "North Korea Forbids Doctors To Perform Abortions, Implant Birth Control Devices." *RFA.org*, Radio Free Asia, 14 Oct. 2015, [www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/north-korea-forbids-doctors-to-perform-abortion-implant-birth-control-devices-10142015145920.html](http://www.rfa.org/english/news/korea/north-korea-forbids-doctors-to-perform-abortion-implant-birth-control-devices-10142015145920.html). Accessed 29 Oct. 2016.

<sup>17</sup> "Ask a North Korean: are women treated equally in your society?" *The Guardian*, Guardian News, 14 Feb. 2011, [www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/14/north-korean-sexism-women](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/14/north-korean-sexism-women). Accessed 29 Oct. 2016.

The future status of our healthcare system is dependent on the WHO and other NGOs in order to provide technology and resources that will increase the strength of our population. Our main priority is bringing a larger supply of food to our people and to allow for the prevention of cancers through educational programs. Our current border lockdown has allowed for the spread of HIV/AIDS to not enter our country.