



DPR Korea and Family Planning: An Overview

Background

The promotion and protection of people's health is a key government policy in the Democratic People's Republic (DPR) of Korea. All health facilities in DPR Korea are state-owned and the health care network spans the entire country. Government hospitals and clinics can be found even in the mountainous areas. DPR Korea has a population of 22.7 million. In 2002, the country's annual population growth rate was .7%, and in 2003 60% of the population lived in urban areas. In 2002 the crude birth rate (CBR) was 16.2. More than a quarter of the population is under 15 years of age (see Figure 1).

The collapse of the socialist market in the early 1990s and the natural disasters, which have badly hit the country, have had a serious impact on DPR Korea's health and economic status. Eighty percent of the country's land mass is mountainous and mining is an important industry. A large number of people work in the coal and mineral mines, and forest stations.

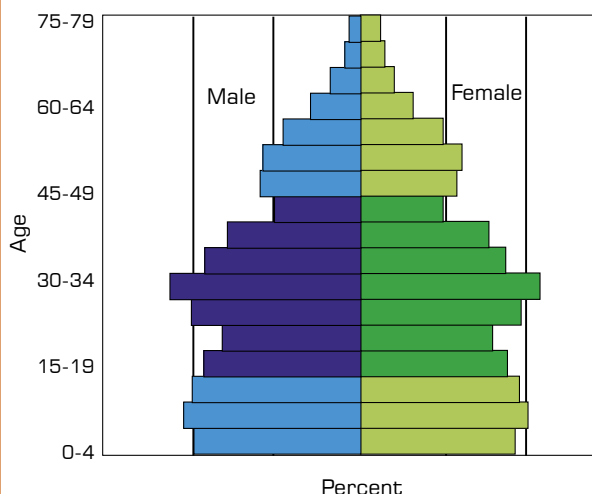
Situation Analysis

DPR Korea has reached replacement level fertility.

The 2002 Reproductive Health Survey found that **98% of male and female respondents are aware of at least one modern contraceptive method**. The more commonly known modern contraceptive methods are the IUD, female sterilization, male sterilization and condoms. The report found that awareness of the oral pill and of foam is relatively lower.

Findings also show that **68.6% of married women are currently using a contraceptive method; 6.8% do so in order to space their births and 61.8% to**

Figure 1: **Population Pyramid DPR Korea**



Source: UNAIDS, 2002

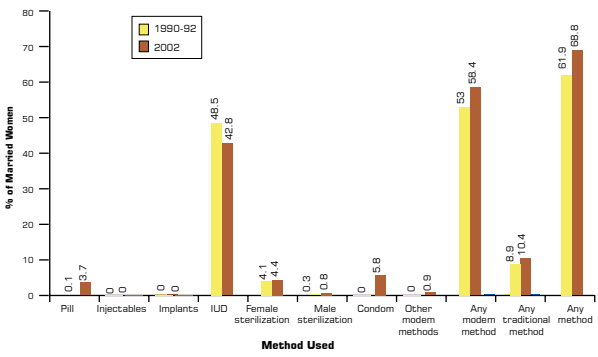
limit their births. The most commonly used modern methods are the IUD (52.5%), condoms (19.7%), and the oral pill (13.8%). The study also found that older women tend to use the IUD, while younger women prefer various short-term methods, including condoms, foam, and the oral pill in addition to the IUD.

The contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) slightly increased from 67.3% in 1997 to 68.6% in 2002. This modest increase is mainly

attributed to women aged 45-49. Among other age groups the CPR in 1997 was actually higher than that in 2002. The chart below shows the change in contraceptive method mix from 1997 to 2002. Modern method use increased by 2.1% over this period; while there was a decline in IUD use, there was a rise in use of other modern methods (see Figures 2 and 3).

The fundamental principles of the national health policy include universal and free medical care services, maintaining preventive and curative health services, and the development of Juche-oriented medical science and technology.

Figure 2: Trends in Contraceptive Method Use



Source: 2002 Reproductive Health Survey

The report indicates that **the majority of women, 41.3%, who had undergone an induced abortion did so in order to limit their births.** Thirty-three percent of women cited unwanted pregnancy and an additional 7.9% cited contraceptive failure as the reason for undergoing an abortion. These three reasons, which could be addressed through adequate provision of family planning, account for 82.5% of all induced abortions.

Most men (83.6%) agree with family planning, with only 5% in disagreement. Still, **16.7% of married women have an unmet**

The Government of DPR Korea promotes smaller families based on economic and health benefits.

need for family planning; 6.3% would like to space their births and 10.4% would like to limit their births. Therefore, the total need for family planning found among current married women was 85.3%. Eighty percent of this need is currently being satisfied.

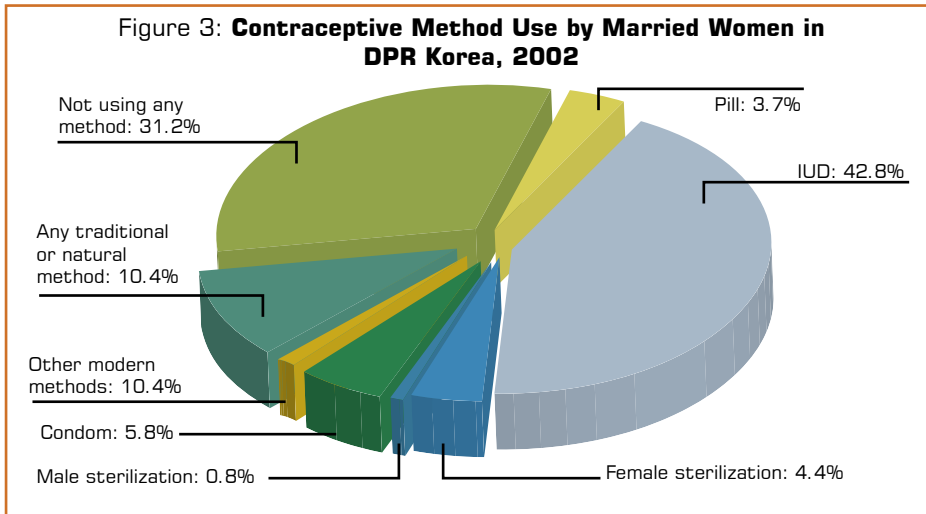
The mining region, where a large number of people live and work, is characterized by higher fertility rates, low rates of contraceptive use, insecure or unavailable contraceptive commodities, and lack of trained personnel.

Current Family Planning Efforts

Family planning services are provided free of cost by hospital gynecological and obstetric departments. Abortion is legal and accessible in the country. Primary Health Centres (PHCs) are organized around the "section doctor" system and utilize the "household doctor" system as an outreach component. The PHC health worker is a doctor who is qualified to deliver health services at the household level. He or she is supported by a referral system linked to higher levels of care. This approach has significantly improved health coverage.

DPR Korea is intensifying the training of health workers.

Figure 3: Contraceptive Method Use by Married Women in DPR Korea, 2002



Source: 2002 Reproductive Health Survey





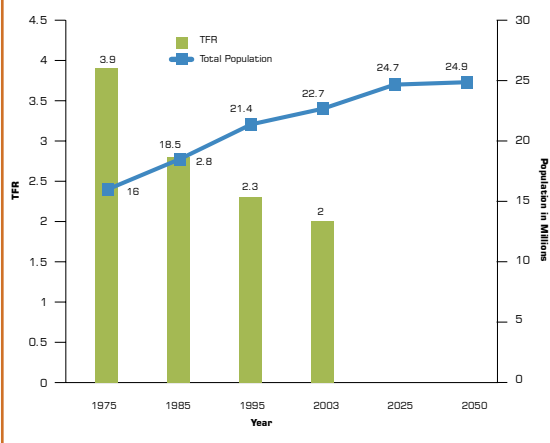
Training units within the Ministry of Public Health and the Planning Commission are responsible for meeting human resource needs for health, implementing training programmes, distributing health workers equitably, and evaluating their activities. The regular medical education system produces an adequate number of health workers. It also provides in-service and re-orientation training as well as specialized postgraduate education. The system gives special attention to the role and functions of household doctors and secondary health care workers.

With regard to counseling, the 2002 Reproductive Health Survey found that **more than 80% of current contraceptive users were informed about possible side effects or problems with**

Key Indicators:

Total Population, 2002 (in millions)	22.7
Population Growth Rate, 2002	0.7%
Population Density, 2002 (people per square km)	190
Urban Population, 2003	60%
Population <15 years of age, 2003	27%
Total Fertility Rate (TFR), 2002	2.0
Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR), 2002	68.6%
- Pills	3.7
- Injectables	0
- Implants	0
- IUD	42.8
- Female Sterilization	4.4
- Male Sterilization	0.8
- Condom	5.8
- Other Modern Methods	0.9
- Traditional or Natural Methods	10.4
Unmet Need 2003	16.7
- For spacing births	6.3
- For limiting births	10.4
Average age at first marriage, 2002	24.8
Average age at first birth	N/A
Crude Birth Rate (CBR) (per 1,000 population), 2002	16.2
Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR), 2001	87
Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), 2001	21
HIV adult prevalence, 2001	<0.01%

Figure 4: **Population Projection: DPR Korea**



Source: World Population Policies, 2003

the method they chose as well as alternative methods, including that sterilization is a non-reversible method.

Most users (77.5%) are provided with contraceptives at the district/ county hospitals, and 12.6% at *ri/ dong* hospitals. This reflects the important role district/county hospitals are playing in delivering contraceptives.

Challenges and Opportunities

While the basic health care system is fairly good, there is a serious shortage of equipment and supplies. Information and education about family planning has taken a back seat to issues



such as famine relief and the high cost of fuel. Furthermore, the general lack of transport and poor external and internal communication hamper the provision and accessibility of family

planning services throughout the country. Son preference is still strong, informed consent is weak, and the majority of men still believe that contraception is a woman's responsibility.

Sources

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