

## Project facts

(On-going)

### The Agriculture Recovery and Environmental Protection (AREP) Programme

Initiated in response to the food crisis, the UNDP-supported national Agricultural Recovery and Environmental Protection (AREP) provides a strategy for co-ordination between the Government and the international community to restore agricultural production and decrease dependence on external food aid. AREP has four main areas: provision of agricultural inputs such as fertiliser, seeds and farm machinery; rural rehabilitation, forestry and the environment; and capacity-building.

Forestation is the only human land use that is not erosive. Soil nutrients and soil quality increase on land that is forested. Tree roots hold the earth together and protect it from being worn away by the weather, helping soil absorb water, especially during heavy rains that might lead to flooding on unforested land. Forests also help retain soil moisture, protecting against drought.

Many trees are also able to absorb atmospheric nutrients, especially nitrogen and phosphorus, enriching surrounding soil, which is of benefit to adjacent farms, as it decreases reliance on chemical fertiliser.

Donor partner:  
CARITAS

## CARITAS/UNDP partnership bears fruit, or rather, trees

A UNDP Reforestation project is protecting agricultural land from soil degradation and erosion

### AREP Support Project for Reforestation

Recent years have seen a marked increase in deforestation and consequent soil erosion in DPRK. This has largely been caused by the increasing encroachment of agriculture on hill slopes. This encroachment has intensified as farmers struggle to boost food production. The increased pressure placed on farmers because of the food crisis has led many of them to deforest slopes to make way for crops. Forests are also under threat as people cut down trees for fuel for cooking and heating.

The problem has its roots in unprecedented flooding, which hit the country in 1995 and 1996, causing massive landslides and intensifying the problem of erosion even further. Many of these deforested slopes lie vulnerable to further landslides, should the country be hit again by heavy rainfall.

Erosion of soil will in-turn make the problem of declining food production even worse, as it decreases the amount of fertile land available, meaning that farmers have to encroach on even more forest.

Compounding the problem is the fact that many of the country's tree nurseries were destroyed or heavily damaged during flooding in the mid-nineties. Of the 90 Ministry of Forest run nurseries in DPRK, 30 were damaged. Sixteen have subsequently been rehabilitated.

In order to help stop this vicious cycle, UNDP is supporting the Government's efforts to reforest sloping land and therefore increase productivity of low-lying adjoining farmland. Plantation forests of fuel wood will also provide farmers with a viable alternative to encroaching on forests to obtain material for cooking and heating.

One of the ways that this is happening is through the rehabilitation of a county tree nursery at Tongchon, Kangwon Province, which was damaged by flooding. The rehabilitation will take place through a US\$ 189,000 contribution from UNDP's NGO partner, CARITAS and will include rebuilding and repairing damaged nursery buildings, provision of equipment and seeds for tree planting, .

The species planted at the nursery, Japanese Larch, is fast-growing, being ready to harvest in around 20 years. It can also be used as a high quality timber, providing future potential foreign currency earnings for the local authority . In all, the local authority will be able to reforest 9,500 hectares in Kangwon Province.

The project is linked to several others rehabilitating nurseries and eventually facilitating reforestation across the country. UNDP has partnered with the NGO Northeast Asia Forest Forum (NEAFF), who have facilitated other rehabilitation activities in the provincial nursery for the same province, as well as another nursery in Chagang Province.

UNDP hopes to continue this strategy of development, with similar projects planned for the future.

CARITAS Internationalis, a Catholic Church based NGO, were one of the first organisations to respond to the humanitarian crisis in DPRK in 1995.

Their programme, which focuses on food aid, agricultural inputs and health, was worth over US\$ 23 million over the last five years. CARITAS estimates that it has affected over nine million people through its programme in DPRK.

**Project No.:** DRK/01/A01  
**Location:** Kangwon Province  
**Started:** July 2001  
**Execution:** Government  
**Implementing Agency:** Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee, Ministry of Forestry  
**Budget:** US\$189,000  
**Source of funds:** CARITAS  
**Government Inputs:** one million won (in kind)