

PHYSICAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN THE DPRK

ICRC Mission in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea



Started in 2002, the Physical Rehabilitation Programme (PRP) of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is its oldest initiative in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Together with the DPRK Red Cross Society, we support two physical rehabilitation centres (PRC) in Songrim and Rakrang, and contribute to providing free and quality physical rehabilitation services to people with disabilities. We also support the centres with technical expertise, material and infrastructure assistance. Annually, around 3,000 patients benefit from our services.

Songrim PRC

- Located in Songrim city, North Hwanghae Province
- Built and inaugurated in 2002
- Managed by the Ministry of Public Health
- 60-bed patient dormitory; a greenhouse for patient nutrition
- Serves about 1,700 patients yearly
- Patients: Civilian population of southern DPRK

Rakrang PRC

- Located in Pyongyang city
- Built in 2005, inaugurated in 2006
- Managed by the Military Medical Bureau
- 60-bed patient dormitory; a greenhouse for patient nutrition
- Serves about 1,500 patients yearly
- Patients: Military veterans, families of the Korean People's Army, civilian population of Pyongyang

Free medical care and sustainable solutions

Of the three PRCs in the DPRK, two – Songrim and Rakrang centres – are supported by the ICRC, thus bridging the needs for physical rehabilitation services in the country. Our specialists visit the centres daily to support the management and staff in their diagnosis and treatment. They also provide training and support local technicians with complicated patient cases.

To make prosthetic and orthotic devices more affordable and sustainable, the ICRC introduced polypropylene manufacturing technology at the centres in 2002 and supplied equipment to produce custom-made, durable and cost-effective devices. In 2019, we introduced a combination of the ICRC polypropylene technology and endoskeleton prosthetic components made by a Chinese manufacturer at the Rakrang centre for a hybrid prosthetic system. This further improved the overall quality of prostheses.

To strengthen the patient referral system, we also work with the centres' management and local authorities to train doctors to improve patient identification and promote the services. This is aided by a "Prosthetic and Orthotic Guidebook".

Material and infrastructure support

Starting with the construction of the Rakrang PRC, we have been working over the years to upgrade the infrastructure and provide facilities and equipment for sports activities for disabled people, such as wheel-chair basketball and sitting volleyball. Better access to water and improving the heating system for winter months are some of the efforts taken to improve the quality of patients' accommodation.

To provide the patients and staff with a more nutritious diet, we supported the construction of greenhouses so that each centre would have a supply of vegetables all year round.

Training of physical rehabilitation technicians

We sponsor overseas training of prosthetist-orthotist technicians and physiotherapists to build a more professional workforce that is aware of the best practices in the field. Since 2005, we have supported the higher education of 12 diploma-level technicians in Cambodia and four physiotherapists and rehabilitation therapists in India. We have also organized regular training sessions on modern prosthetic and physiotherapy techniques for clinical staff at the centres.



Above: A technician at the Rankrang PRC receives training for manufacturing scoliosis braces from an ICRC specialist.

Right: Patients at the Rakrang PRC center during gait-training exercises.

ICRC in the DPRK

The ICRC has been present in the DPRK since 2002. Its mission is based in Pyongyang. The focus of its activities is on physical rehabilitation, *health, peri-urban water supply* and sanitation, weapon contamination, emergency preparedness, promotion of Geneva Conventions and capacity building of the National Society.

Activities are carried out in cooperation with its primary partner, the DPRK Red Cross Society, as well as with government departments concerned.



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Mission in the DPRK

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Cover photo: Patients at the Rakrang PRC participate in a sitting volleyball match as part of rehabilitation activities. ©ICRC