

Humanitarian Aid Toward North Korea: A Global Peace-Building Process

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INTRODUCTION

North Korea has been receiving unprecedented long-term humanitarian aid from the international community for the past six years. The diversity of sources of the humanitarian aid includes United Nations organizations, international organizations, individual nations, such as South Korea, the United States, Japan, China, and European nations, as well as South Korean and foreign NGOs. Moreover, aid to North Korea is comprehensive in scope: food aid, agricultural and forest restoration, livestock aid, public health and health care aid, and educational assistance, among others.

This paper is a comprehensive review of the current situation regarding humanitarian aid to North Korea in recent years. By understanding problems that surfaced in the process of giving aid,

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these problems can be identified and resolved in order to further humanitarian efforts for North Korea.

THE BEGINGING OF HUMANITARIAN AID TO NORTH KOREA

Humanitarian aid to North Korea began as early as 1990. The South Korean religious community, for example, launched a campaign to send rice to North Korea in July 1990, followed by another move to send medical supplies in 1991. Then, from June to October 1995, the South Korean government, according to an agreement with the North Korean government, donated 15 tons of rice. In addition, every year for five years, beginning in 1990, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) gave one million dollars in aid.

It was not until August 1995, however, that humanitarian efforts towards North Korea began in earnest, when North Korea, suffering from flood damage, requested emergency relief to the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA) through the mission to the UN. It was around this time that North Korea also made a request to the World Health Organization (WHO) to dispatch a medical team, and another request to UNICEF for 50,000 dollar worth of soybeans.

The miserable situation in North Korea and the promotion of humanitarian efforts by UN organizations were the factors that galvanized South Korea and other countries into launching a campaign to send humanitarian aid to North Korea. By the late-1990s, that assistance, which had began with the South Korean religious community, included the participation of civic groups, governments of various nations, as well as international NGOs.

THE MOTIVE BEHIND HUMANITARIAN AID AND NORTH KOREA'S ATTITUDE

Providers of humanitarian aid to North Korea can be categorized under three headings: UN organizations, NGOs, and individual countries. The primary motive for aid to North Korea by UN organizations and NGOs is purely humanitarian. However, government-level aid to North Korea by individual countries, while carried out in the name of good will, is in fact, being used as a means to resolve political, diplomatic, and security issues.

Moreover, although UN organizations and international NGOs are motivated by for purely humanitarian concerns, that does not mean that they have no guidelines for their actions. Regarding aid to North Korea, UN organizations adhere to the humanitarian principles established in 1998 to ensure that the mission is carried out according to humanitarian objectives, and these humanitarian principles provide the following guidelines for humanitarian actions: (a) The overall humanitarian crises shall be assessed according to required standards of appraisal; (b) It shall be guaranteed that humanitarian aid will go to the most vulnerable and needy; (c) The humanitarian assistants shall have access to the prospective beneficiary area for appraisal, monitoring, and analysis of Humanitarian crises; (d) Humanitarian aid shall be distributed only to areas where access for appraisal is granted; (e) Human rights of the residents of the beneficiary area must be guaranteed and protected; (f) Organization of local-level task force shall be supported; (g) Beneficiaries' participation in the planning and delivering of aid shall be guaranteed; (h) Means to solidify the capacity of international humanitarian assistants shall be sought; (i) Requests for preservation of health and personal safety of international humanitarian organizations shall be accommodated; and so on.

North Korea deemed that these humanitarian principles

infringed on its sovereignty and they were thus, met with extreme caution. In certain cases, the North Korean government ever expressed staunch disapproval. Nevertheless, as a result of continued efforts, UN organizations and NGOs were able to expand the number of resident humanitarian assistants and the area for observation, conduct research on actual conditions of some sectors of the society, gain participation of some beneficiaries in the mission, and so forth.

In early 1996, the number of resident humanitarian assistants of international organizations dispatched to North Korea for monitoring and operation was a mere 30 people; however, the number is currently close to 100, including 44 staff members of the World Food Programme (WFP). Currently, WFP has access to 167 cities and counties for monitoring out of the total of 211 cities and counties in North Korea and carries out on average 300 rounds of monitoring per month. Moreover, WFP does not give humanitarian aid to areas inaccessible to monitors. The monitoring system has so far been primarily quantitative; however, WFP is in the process of reaching an agreement with the North Korean Great Flood Damage Task Force Committee to shift the monitoring system to a qualitative evaluation.

Every year, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP jointly conduct a survey and evaluation of the crop yield in North Korea, and in 1998, UNICEF, WFP, and EU, in cooperation with North Korean Department of Public Health, surveyed the nutritive conditions of children under 7 years of age in North Korea. Currently, WFP, UN organizations, and international NGOs give aid to some 8 million North Koreans. Children in daycare, preschools, orphanages, pediatric wards, elementary schools and middle schools, pregnant and nursing women, the elderly, and flood victims are the primary beneficiaries of humanitarian aid.

*Rigidity of the North Korean Government
Towards Donor Organizations*

Harboring suspicions about monitoring as a form of espionage, the North Korean government initially restricted the monitoring activities of donor organizations. It also refused to allow aid in sensitive military zones and barred any agents of international organizations who were fluent in Korean from working as resident humanitarian aid assistants.

To this day, North Korea continued to show rigidity in such matters. Permission must be obtained to carry out monitoring, and it was possible only during designated periods and in designated areas which were overseen by North Korean government officials. Unattended entry into other than those areas designated, was absolutely forbidden. Channels of contact for agents of international organizations and NGOs were limited to the North Korean Great Flood Damage Task Force Committee and Department of Public Health. Moreover, emergency relief food from international organizations cannot be distributed only through the North Korean public distribution system.

Because of such excessive restrictions and lack of free access by the North Korean government, several international NGOs, including Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF), Oxfam, and Association of Charitable Foundation (ACF), pulled out of North Korea, abandoning their aid programs. However, most of the international organizations and NGOs, accepted the excessive restrictions of the North Korean government as inevitable and maintained amicable relations with North Korea with a view to improving the working relationship through sustained negotiations. Recently, the North Korean government has begun to realize the practical necessity of procuring outside aid and has gained a better understanding of international organizations and NGO activities. As a result, it becoming more accommodating to donor organizations' demands.

Using State-led Humanitarian Aid for Political Means

In providing state-led humanitarian aid to North Korea, individual countries differ in their purpose and method. In the case of the United States, humanitarian aid has been provided as a result of UN organizations' appeal; At other times, the aid was given either in exchange for accepting the expansion of U.S. security measures or as an outcome of political bargaining. While the U.S. government has given aid through the WFP or through UN organizations, it channels direct aid through U.S.-based NGOs. The Japanese government, following the trend of the international community, also participates in aid efforts; however, it has tied certain conditions to it—political issues, such as visits by Japanese wives living in North Korea to their home towns in Japan, negotiations on Japan-North Korea normalization, and other Japan-North Korea situations. Moreover, rather than using NGOs based in Japan, the Japanese government gives aid to North Korea in the form of grants and credit, through UN organizations.

There are two motives for the South Korean government to give aid to North Korea. On one hand, it is seen as a humanitarian gesture as well as an obligation to fellow Koreans; On the other hand, giving aid is a practical means for improving inter-Korea relations.

The methods and amount of aid have varied. For example, during the Kim Young-sam administration, 150,000 tons of rice was sent directly to North Korea for a dual purpose—humanitarianism and inter-Korean relations. Afterwards, the South Korean government expressed intentions to actively provide aid as a mean to call North Korea to the international community, such as the Four-Party Talks. However, that aid did not lead to any visible improvement. Since then, there has been no direct aid to North Korea other than indirect small-scale emergency relief activities through UN organizations between 1996 and 1997.

The Kim Dae-Jung administration also provided emergency food relief aid to North Korea in early 1998 through UN organizations.

However, after changing its North Korea policy, the administration sought to improve inter-Korea relations through direct aid. During the inter-Korea vice-ministerial level talks held in Beijing from 1998 to 1999, South Korea, under the principle of reciprocity, sought to resolve issues, such as the reunion of separated families, by linking them fertilizer donations to North Korea. In this way, South Korea utilized humanitarian aid as a means to resolve issues involving inter-Korea relations. Furthermore, as part of its engagement policy to foster inter-Korea reconciliation and cooperation, humanitarian aid to North Korea became a useful tool, and, expanding on the principle of reciprocity, the South Korean government adopted a “give-first-and-get-later” attitude in promoting the humanitarian aid program for North Korea. The government also took steps to implement measures to support civilian humanitarian activities for North Korea.

At the same time, South Korea was careful to protect its interests. In order to let North Koreans know that aid was being sent by fellow Koreans in the South, and to foster the atmosphere of reconciliation by alleviating antagonism towards South Korea, South Korean government sent primarily Korean products with Korean labels. Moreover, to enhance transparency in distribution, the government selected items that would not be suitable for military use and that would easily promote the transparency of distribution.

In addition, the resident International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) representative took part in the distribution process. To ensure the proper distribution of goods, either the North Korean Red Cross reported the distribution activities to its South Korean counterpart, or NGO members were dispatched to North Korea to confirm the distribution activities.

North Korea's Increased Requests for Aid

Fully aware that neighboring countries are providing aid as a means to resolve pending political issues, North Korea is taking full advantage of the situation. In fact, it has been attempting to expand

the scope of foreign aid in order to relieve the continuing economic crises and food shortages. Unlike the past, North Korea now even makes prior official proposals to South Korea about the actual amount of aid, seeking the latter's active support.

In the beginning, because of propaganda about its superiority over South Korea, the North tried to conceal facts about South Korea's aid from the public. As a result, North Korea either rejected goods with South Korean labels or removed the labels before distributing them. Furthermore, requests by South Korean NGO agents to enter North Korea were denied, and admission to North Korea was only allowed for overseas Koreans and foreigners. As for North Korean donor consultants, they were limited to the North Korean Red Cross and other Worker's Party organs that handled matters related to South Korea, such as the Korean Asia-Pacific Committee and National Reconciliation Council.

However, because of continued economic hardship and food shortages, as well as due to the qualitative development of South Korea's aid, including technology support, South Korean aid has become essential. Realizing the impossibility of concealing South Korean aid, North Korean authorities are distributing South Korea goods with the South Korean labels intact.

In addition, North Korea has gradually increased the number of South Korean NGO personnel allowed into North Korea: 34 people in 1998, 49 in 1999, 144 in 2000, 344 South Korean NGO personnel as of December 2001, and the number continues to rise. As a result, North Korean people are aware of South Korean aid to North Korea and have expressed their gratitude to South Korean Red Cross assistants and NGO personnel.

With both quantitative and qualitative expansion of aid to North Korea, North Korean beneficiary organizations have become more directly involved. Such organizations as the Ministry of Agriculture, Institute of Agricultural Science, Ministry of Public Health, North Korean Medical Association, and Research Institute of Children's Nutritional Health are now active.

<Table 1> UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Humanitarian Assistance Appeals to North Korea (Unit: million dollars)

Implementation period	Sep 1995- Jun 1996	Jul 1996- Mar 1997	Apr 1997- Dec 1997	Jan 1998- Dec 1998	Jan 1999- Dec 1999	Jan 2000- Dec 2000	Jan 2001- Dec 2000
Requirements	20.32	43.64	184.39	383.24	292.08	313.76	383.98
Contributions	9.27	34.70	157.81	215.87	189.80	152.63	228.43
Requirements covered	45.6%	79.5%	85.6%	56.3%	65.0%	48.6%	59.5%

Source: <http://www.reliefweb.int>

While North Korea, according to its needs, has become gradually more tolerant in accommodating the demands of South Korean government and NGOs, rigidity, which is rooted in the political system itself, is still a source of discontent for donor organizations. For example, reports on the distribution of goods from South Korean Red Cross are often delayed, and scheduled visits by NGO personnel to North Korea are often arbitrarily postponed for reasons such as domestic functions. As in the past, the visits are limited to designated area and visitors are accompanied by North Korean officials, making it difficult for the NGO personnel to accurately survey the areas receiving aid.

RESULTS AND OUTLOOK OF HUMANITARIAN AID TO NORTH KOREA

The total humanitarian aid to North Korea in the last six years from the international community amounts to over 2.1 billion dollars. Of this, UN organizations gave in total about 930 million dollars (including the South Korean portion of the aid), and international NGOs (including the South Korean Red Cross) gave a total of 145.55 million dollars. As for individual government aid to North Korea, the South Korean government gave about 450 million

<Table 2> WFP Food Support to North Korea		(Unit: million dollars)				
Period	Dec 1995- May 1996	Jun 1996- Mar 1997	Apr 1997- Mar 1998	Apr 1998- Jun 1999	Jul 1999- Dec 2000	Jan 2001- Oct 2001
Amount (tons)	21,000	70,000	400,000	600,000	876,933	733,834
Value (Million dollars)	9.76	25.9	170.7	345.8	357.6	219.75
Beneficiaries	500,000	1,600,000	4,700,000	6,700,000	8,000,000	8,000,000

Source: <http://www.reliefweb.int>

dollars, while the total amount of all government aid from the remaining countries is about 427 million dollars. Of the total amount of aid from the international community, South Korean aid accounts for 28.6 percent. Among the main donor countries, combining the amount of direct aid and that was given via UN organizations, the United States gave 550 million dollars, Japan, 255 million dollars, China, 215.6 million dollars, and the EU, 182.9 million dollars.

The annual amount of aid given to North Korea by UN consolidated appeal is shown in <Table 1>. Through seven joint appeals by UN organizations, the international community has donated a total of 989 million dollars. WFP ranks first in aid amount given among the organizations participating in the joint UN appeal, and in terms of the type of aid, food ranks the highest.

Looking at the actual composition of organizations that gave aid for the 2001 joint appeal, FAO/UNOCHA (the WFP trust fund, support coordination) make up 0.3 percent, UNFPA (emergency relief food), 0.2 percent, WFP (emergency relief food), 82.3 percent, WHO (treatment of tuberculosis, manufacturing medical supplies, public health systems, prevention of epidemics, and so on), 2.2 percent, and NGOs (nutrition, producing seed potatoes, and others) take up 1.9 percent. In terms of areas of contribution, food makes up 94.3 percent, nutrition 0.7 per cent, education 0.1 per cent, and support coordination 0.4 per cent.

<Table 3> Direct Aid by International NGOs to North Korea

(Unit: million dollars)

Period	Jun 1995- Feb 1998	Mar 1998- Dec 1998	Jan 1999- Dec 1999	Jan 2000- Dec 2000	Jan 2001- Oct 2001	Total
Contributions	72.01	17.69	19.08	15.73	21.04	145.55

Source: <http://www.unikorea.go.kr>

UN organizations' aid to North Korea has so far focused primarily on providing emergency relief food supplies, and WFP has been the main organization in charge. <Table 2> shows WFP's activities in providing food supply to North Korea.

<Table 3> indicates international NGOs' humanitarian activities in giving direct aid to North Korea.

Finally, <Table 4> shows assistance by the South Korean government and private sector.

UPWARD TREND IN FOOD AID

In terms of the amount of aid given to North Korea by the international community, the following characteristics can be observed. First, the amount targeted for collection by UN organizations' joint appeal continues to increase. This indicates that the general welfare of North Korea has not improved and remains vulnerable. On the other hand, North Korea, as the designated primary beneficiary of UN's humanitarian aid, has been the focus of concentrated support.

Second, the primary area of aid from UN is in food supplies, and, as shown in the WFP humanitarian activity, the amount of food aid is increasing every year. This signifies that there has been no improvement in food supply in North Korea, and, in fact, that North Korea suffers from a chronic food shortage. The heavy concentration of food aid for WFP's humanitarian activity is due to the fact that

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	Total
Governmental	232.00	3.05	26.67	11.00	28.25	78.63	70.07	449.67
Private	.25	1.55	20.56	20.85	18.63	35.13	55.45	152.42
Total	232.25	4.60	47.23	31.85	46.88	113.76	125.52	602.09

Source: <http://www.unikorea.go.kr>

food is the primary item of aid coming from the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and other countries via the UN.

Third, the recent performance record of fund-raising (actual amount collected/target amount) for international community shows a downward trend. While an increase in the target amount may have contributed to the downward trend, donor fatigue caused by protracted humanitarian aid could be the primary cause.

Fourth, direct aid to North Korea from individual nations as well as from international NGOs continues to decrease. This is due to decreased interest among those countries and also because NGOs that have no political stake in North Korea. On the other hand, direct aid is being absorbed by UN organizations that have the administrative skills to handle the task.

Fifth, seventy-two per cent of humanitarian aid to North Korea comes from the concerned UN-member states with political, diplomatic, and security interests on the Korean peninsula, such as the United States, South Korea, Japan, and China, an indication that these countries are giving aid in order to resolve pending issues in their bilateral relations with North Korea. Accordingly, humanitarian aid to North Korea is heavily dependent on the government finances of the aforementioned countries rather than on funds raised by international NGOs.

Sixth, as for South Korea, the size of aid to North Korea, both at the government and civilian level, continues to increase. The upward trend can be explained in terms of policy; i.e., the need to improve

inter-Korea relations as well as South Korea's obligation to North Korea as fellow Koreans.

A SHIFT FROM FOOD-CENTERED AID TO DEVELOPMENT RELIEF PROJECTS

Over the seven years that North Korea has received aid, the items donated as well as the overall purpose of the aid has changed. First, while food is the primary item of aid, there has been a gradual diversification in aid items. In addition to such emergency relief food supplies as food, cooking oil, powdered milk, and sugar, other relief items now include clothing, blankets, seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, vinyl covering, farming tools, livestock, medical supplies and equipment, nursery plants, and educational tools and materials.

Second, there is a shifting trend from the initial food-centered aid to developmental aid. UNDP is promoting restoration programs for agriculture and environmental protection, and since 1998, has undertaken several projects, such as double-cropping, diversification of the lumber industry, and forestation. In 1997, at North Korea's request, the agricultural recovery and environmental protection (AREP) plan has been discussing the possibility of implementing a sustainable, large-scale development program whose basic purpose is to enable a transition in the type of aid from food to agricultural aid, given that there would be no need for food aid if there was a sufficient output of grain and vegetables through mid-term agricultural and environment restoration projects.

As part of a project to provide jobs, WFP is working on agricultural restoration, relief work for flood damage, reforestation, and restoration of saltpans, plant nurseries, and rural roadways. The project not only helps to encourage participation of beneficiaries, but it results in infrastructure improvements as well. In 1999, about 3,770 million people participated in 68 job-producing projects, 4,984 million people in 115 job-producing projects for the year 2000, and

187 job-producing projects are slated for the year 2001.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is promoting a sericulture project as well as grain and livestock restoration programs, followed by a long-term agricultural loan program to secure a food supply for mountain regions. The IFAD project, a program for cooperative farms, not only provides interest-free loans but accepts goods as payment. Those goods are in turn converted into financing for agricultural development projects. Then, the project is channeled back into supporting agriculture. The project not only gives support in providing needed farming material and facilities, but it also enhances people's will to produce by providing financing to individual farmers as well as support for autonomous development in decentralized agricultural regions.

International NGOs are working on providing seeds, vinyl coverings, and raw materials to manufacture fertilizers, as well as supporting a project for potato cultivation. In addition, the South Korean division of the WFP is currently working on developmental relief projects, including a joint research project with the International Corn Foundation to produce "a super-corn" suitable for the North Korean climate, Korean Sharing Movement's project to increase the potato output, an hydroponics project sponsored by World Vision, a technological support project for agriculture of the Join Together Society (JTS), a dairy farming development project through the Good Neighbors, and a tree nursery restoration project of the Forest for Peace.

An additional part of the shift towards developmental relief project, there has been increased aid in technology support, going beyond humanitarian aid. Examples of the shift are support for improving seeds for cultivation, providing technical know-how in agriculture and livestock, as well as in medical technology.

In terms of food manufacture, there has also been continued building of factories that produce food at the local level to provide emergency food relief. WFP, for example, has constructed eighteen food-processing factories in Pyongyang and other areas in order to

support local production of fortified biscuits and blended foods. South Korean NGOs are also participating local processing of food: World Vision operates six factories in the Pyongwon area of South Pyongan Province, and the One Korea Buddhist Movement opened a factory in the Sariwon area of North Hwanghae Province. JTS is operating a blended food factory in Najin-Sunbong for children, and the Korean Welfare Foundation operates a bread factory in Pyongyang which distributes to schools.

With increased awareness of its importance, medical care is gradually increasing. In the initial stage, medical support was limited to expendable medical supplies for tuberculosis treatment and vaccines; however, there are now projects to manufacture pharmaceutical products as well as to modernize hospitals. Organizations such as WHO and UNICEF are primarily in charge of vaccination programs. The Eugene Bell Foundation is concentrating its efforts to eradicate tuberculosis, while the Korean Welfare Foundation operates projects to build pharmaceutical factories and to modernize hospitals.

In yet another development, there has been an increased delivery of surplus agricultural and meat products to North Korea. Recently, Japan donated rice; Switzerland and Germany, beef; and South Korea gave eggs, fruits, carrots, and seaweed. The provision of surplus products is a positive trend that not only maintains the balance of supply and demand in the donor countries, but also makes it possible to give humanitarian aid to North Korea.

NGOs are the primarily leaders in establishing local projects. InterAction, a U.S.-based NGO coalition organization, Children's Aid Direct (CAD), Cooperazione e Sviluppo (CESVI), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Mercy Corps International (MCI), and South Korean NGOs, such as Korean Sharing Movement, One Korea Buddhist Movement, JTS, and KADECO (an NGO coalition for inter-Korean agricultural development and cooperation), and the International Corn Foundation are the main actors in promoting local projects.

PROBLEMS ARISING IN THE PROCESS OF PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN AID

Problems have arisen in the last six years in the process of aid provision to North Korea. Firstly, despite protracted efforts, no improvement has been seen in the conditions in North Korea. Although it insists that it is a transitory crisis caused by a natural disaster, the country will not recover any time soon unless there is a quick rejuvenation of the stagnant economy. Unless it finds solutions for the shortages of food, energy, and foreign reserves, North Korea will continue to suffer.

To make matters worse, UN organizations and NGOs have been unable to reach their fund-raising goals for North Korea. This sluggishness is partly caused by donor fatigue after long-term fund-raising efforts. Meanwhile, UN organizations such as WFP, WHO, IFAD, and FAO have been requesting help from the South Korean government; however, the request is incompatible with South Korea's policy. The South Korean government has been taking advantage of direct aid to North Korea to improve inter-Korean relations. Moreover, South Korean NGOs, suffering from a shortage of fund, are requesting government to help finance their projects, which runs against the very spirit of the NGO as an organization independent of the government.

Additionally, there has been too much focus on emergency relief food support, which cannot provide long-term relief of the food shortage in North Korea; the current support system needs to make a transition, that is, to concentrate on developmental projects and agriculture restoration. However, because of the shortage of funds for development projects, this area of support has been rather slow. Although the cooperative development project backed by the UN is currently underway in diverse fields; it is still in the elementary stages and limited to small-scale development projects.

Another problem is that there may be too much focus on the food

shortage. The predicament in the North stems from several factors, including malnutrition caused by shortages in food and medical supplies, lack of clean drinking water, and poor health care and sanitary facilities. The North Korean government has been more interested in the food shortages, however, showing little interest in other areas. Therefore, due to lack of aid for these areas, fundamental problems besides food have been ignored and there is no sign of improvement in the basic living conditions of North Korean people.

The lack of accurate statistical data makes it difficult to conduct useful surveys of the general living conditions, especially the data on health care, sanitation, and drinking water. Consequently, it is difficult to establish appropriate measures to make improvements in such areas. In some cases, confusion is caused by variations in the statistical data provided by central or local government organs. Reliability of statistical data, therefore, is an issue.

Monitoring is also a difficulty. Although it allowed distribution monitoring staffs' visit to North Korea, the areas are limited to those pre-designated areas. Moreover, the North Korean government's arbitrary decision about the number of the personnel and postponements on monitoring hinders NGO's activities. Indeed, although South Korean NGO personnel pay a brief annual visit to North Korea for monitoring, it has become a mere formality considering the infrequency and the length of the stay.

Another relates to efficiency problem. The benefits of humanitarian projects are questionable since there is no participation of beneficiaries other than the partial participation of governmental organs, in establishment, execution, and evaluation of humanitarian activities. Interested only in receiving aid, the North Korean government shows little interest in post-evaluation of the activities, which then lowers the effectiveness of follow-up plans by donor organizations.

Meanwhile, South Korean NGOs' support projects for North Korea were unplanned, sporadic, and disorganized in the beginning. Fierce competition among numerous NGOs for funds and

subsequent wide dispersion of those funds reduced the effectiveness of the aid projects. Moreover, NGOs have been secretive, with no information-sharing among them, and this has been a leading cause of failure for individual NGOs. Furthermore, A lack of cooperation among organizations has led to overlapping projects and wasted human and material resources. However, there has been a vast improvement in information-sharing and mutual cooperation.

TASKS AHEAD

Despite prolonged aid from the international community, humanitarian support to North Korea is far below the satisfactory level for overcoming the present predicament. One reason is that fund-raising efforts for North Korean food relief projects backed by the UN and NGOs worldwide has been sluggish in recent years. Of the total contribution made by the international community, 70 percent comes from countries such as the United States, South Korea, Japan, and China, whose size of contribution is determined by to their strategic and political interests. However, the crisis in North Korea is likely to continue unless the North Korean government becomes more aggressive in tackling the current crisis and implementing measures for the efficient utilization of its limited resources.

Several tasks lie ahead if problems pertaining to the current humanitarian aid to North Korea are to be overcome. First, the current North Korean crisis basically stems from structural defects that resulted in shortages of food, energy and foreign reserves. North Korea, however, continues to maintain the politics of confrontation, spending most of its budget on military defense. That policy is a major source of criticism voiced by the international community, and has resulted in a negative image of North Korea around the world, leading to symptoms of donor fatigue. Hence, the most pressing task confronting North Korea is to initiate efforts to revive the economy

on its own. Without taking such an initiative, North Korea will not be able to alleviate the chronic situation.

Second, in order to provide supplementary aid to North Korea's self-initiated efforts, the international community needs to broaden the scope of its support. In addition to the emergency relief aid, the support needs to expand so as to encourage sustainable development. The UN should increase its involvement in the North Korean developmental relief efforts by making systematic adjustments in its planning. The South Korean and international NGOs should also shift their focus to developmental relief projects.

Third, information-sharing among the UN organizations, South Korean and international NGOs, and other developing countries needs to be encouraged to achieve mutual cooperation and effective distribution of responsibilities. This is a priority for attaining the most desirable results without wasting unnecessary human or natural resources. By utilizing the UN Coordination Committee, the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG), international NGO conferences, and policy-planning meetings between civilians and government officials in South Korea, and through information sharing and mutual cooperation, more efficient task distribution must be implemented as soon as possible.

Fourth, North Korean humanitarian aid should be implemented in various areas concurrently. The humanitarian crisis in North Korea persists through the nation, especially in terms of food, security, health, medical care, environment, and education. Therefore, a balanced distribution of the limited resources to different areas of need should be achieved. Specifically, the amount of aid for health and medical care needs to be increased.

Fifth, continued diplomatic efforts are needed to inform the North Korean authorities of the humanitarian principles upheld by the UN. North Korea has become relatively more accommodating of the demands made by the UN as well as South Korean and international NGOs. However, the level of governmental cooperation is still not satisfactory. Since an accurate evaluation of

the conditions, uncensored monitoring, support of the local community, and direct involvement of the beneficiaries are a prerequisite to effectively utilizing humanitarian aid to North Korea, the most pressing task is to convince North Korean authorities of what needs to be done.