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The Narrative Report on 2008 Humanitarian Aid Programs to North Korea

Generally speaking, the year 2008 was one of the most difficult times to do humanitarian aid projects to North Korea. After the conservative administration came into power, existing communication channels have been blocked and furthermore the symbols of reconciliation between South and North Korea, tourism to Keumkang Mountains and Gaesung City, were stopped.

As the governmental level of dialogues was deteriorating, the huge scale of humanitarian aid projects which have been supported by the government was not done. Fortunately, some aid program which was initiated by non-government organizations was continued. However the scale of the aids became minimal because the South Korean government reduced its funds to the NGOs.

The heightened tension in the Korean peninsula affected negatively fund raising activities for North Korea. The participation of both the big companies and grass roots for helping the aids declined significantly. The companies feel constraint to the government and ordinary citizens turn their shoulder toward North Korea who keeps treating South Korea with military forces. Of course, the unprecedented economic recess around the world can't be ignored.

Originally TOPIK planned to launch children's nutrition aid projects around Keumkang mountain area and Gaesung City. TOPIK chose these areas because they were easily accessible and many NGOs already have done numerous humanitarian aid projects. And TOPIK decided that nutritional aid programs for pregnant women and children in these areas were urgent.



The program was aimed at providing pregnant women and children under five years old with milk and other nutritional products two times in 2008. However, when TOPIK contacted North Korea authorities who supervise Keumkang Mountain and Gaesung City areas, they asked TOPIK to send rice and briquettes rather than milk and nutritional products. At that time, rice was very urgent to North Korean people because the rice subsidy from the South Korean government was halted. As far as briquettes are concerned, North Koreans were using them for cooking and warming their houses.

By responding to North Korean authorities presiding Keumkang Mountain and Gaesung City areas, TOPIK sent 28 tons of rice on July 9, 2008 and 100,000 briquettes on July 24 and Nov.

28. Particularly the rice meant a lot because it was the first and last subsidy sent by South Korean private organization. These projects have been done together with other NGOs, for example, Korean Sharing Movement and Sharing Coal Briquettes Movement.



The humanitarian aids to North Korea by TOPIK were not possible without cooperation with ERD, ABM and CMS. With generous contribution from these organizations, \$70,400 from ERD, \$10,000 from ABM, \$3,900 from CMS and \$190 from NSKK, the Korean Anglican Church raised the rest of the amount.

TOPIK help an evaluation workshop for its activities in 2008 on Feb. 11, 2009. Some evaluations of its activities in 2008 are as follows.



1. It is extremely meaningful that TOPIK continued to its humanitarian aid projects for North Koreans even from difficult South and North Korean relation.

2. When other NGOs were hesitant to help North Korea due to a negative public opinion about humanitarian aid programs in South Korea, TOPIK successfully finished its programs for North Korea with determination and specifically helped North Koreans.

3. TOPIK built some credible relationship with North Korean authorities

who presides Keumkang Mountain and Gaesung City areas.

4. Through Lambeth Conference, TOPIK could led out great attention and concern from the Anglican Communion.

5. It was an exemplary case that TOPIK allured a co-operation from the Anglican Communion in humanitarian aid project for North Korea. TOPIK expressed its gratitude toward ERD, ABM, CMS, and NSKK for their cooperation.

6. TOPIK should develop an alternative channel in the border region near China in case that the iced relation between the two Koreas continues.

7. The foundation for TOPIK in South Korea is weak. So it needs to expand its membership. In 2009, TOPIK plans to recruit about 100 members who will support humanitarian aid projects for North Korea.

8. The finance of TOPIK is vulnerable so it needs to develop some cash cow businesses. TOPIK should form a project team for this.

There are so unpredictable variables in humanitarian aid projects according to sensitive political situations of the two Koreas. And there are lots of difficulties in monitoring the beneficiaries. So TOPIK couldn't on site monitor aid materials in 2008. Since last Dec. 1, ordinary people's visit to North Korea but a few staff has been blocked. It is also almost impossible to contact North Korean people in North Korea. Fortunately, TOPIK could be told that the aid materials sent by TOPIK were distributed to the targeted population through Hyundai Asan staff.

TOPIK went inside Keumkang mountain area with 50,000 briquettes on Dec. 1, 2009. This area used to be so busy because of many tourists and frequent visit by NGOs by the first half of 2008 but it looks desolate due to a partial stopping of South and North exchange. Furthermore, the North Korean authorities are developing Onjung village area, which means that old houses were torn down and several families were living in a miserable condition. TOPIK was told that food shortage was getting worse. Due to a phenomenal economic crisis, international subsidy for North Korea is shrinking. If there is no massive help to North Korea by South Korean government, the food crisis in North Korea will be severe.



TOPIK is campaigning for helping North Korean with milk and briquettes during the Lent. It sent 2 million milk packs (200ml) to North Korea on Mar. 20, 2009. And after the Lent, 50,000 briquettes will be followed.

