

# Inter-Korean Social Integration and Challenges for Civic Societies

– Focusing on Humanitarian Assistance to the North

Yong-Sun Lee (General Secretary of Korean Sharing Movement)

## □ Preface

- Three types of civic societies' involvement with North Korea: i) humanitarian assistance; ii) national reunification movement (political exchanges); iii) socio-cultural exchanges.
- Humanitarian assistance started in 1995 in the aftermath of the great flood in North Korea. Focusing on improving fragile humanitarian situation of the North, it facilitates North-South exchanges at the private level.
- National reunification movement emerged in the wake of the inter-Korean summit meeting in 2000. Main activities include holding major inter-Korean exchange events for commemorating specific milestones such as June 15 Joint Declaration or Aug 15 National Reunification Festival etc. Mainly led by National Joint Event Organizing Committee for Implementation of June 15 Joint Declaration participated by various political parties and groups, both progressive and conservatives at home and abroad, inter-Korean exchanges are further being expanded to include a wider array of sectors such as labor, farmers, teachers, women, youth and religious groups.
- Socio-cultural exchange activities include general inter-Korean exchanges in culture, broadcasting, sports, academia etc. These are mainly event-oriented, and on a quid pro quo basis.

- Unlike government-level inter-Korean exchanges, the above three types of private and civic movements consist of grass-roots activities for trust building and various initiatives for social integration between the two Koreas.

=> This paper will focus on humanitarian assistance activities toward North Korea.

## **□ Food crisis in North Korea and beginning of humanitarian assistance**

- Emergency aid to the North began in 1995 when the massive flood hit the North, resulting in great famine.
- Main supplies to the North include food (e.g. corn, flour, etc.), clothing and medicines etc.
- Leaving behind the cold-war thinking of the past, civic groups (religious communities etc.) opened a new chapter of greater exchanges and reconciliation between the two Koreas

## **□ The 1st North-South Summit Talks and assistance to Pyongyang : Changes in roles and nature**

- Seoul's regular assistance to Pyongyang: food and fertilizer
  - 400,000-500,000 tons of rice in the form of loan
  - 100,000 tons of corn (WFP) and 200,000-300,000 tons of fertilizers are in the form of grant.
- => Growing share of the South Korean government's assistance to the North:
  - in particular, starting in 2003, the South's share out of total assistance provided to the North accounts for 30-50%, which is the largest portion.
- The South Korean government's emergency aid to the North
  - Supplied recovery equipments and materials at the event of Ryongchon explosion disaster in 2004 (worth about 50 bil. KRW; via a land route to Gaeseong etc.)

- Provided flood relief in July 2006, sending recovery equipments and materials (worth 10 bil KRW by private sector; 73 bil KRW by the government)
- Flood aid and recovery materials worth 47.9 bil. KRW supplied in a speedy manner in Aug. this year (via a land route to Gaeseong)

○ Changes in activities and roles of the private sector in humanitarian aid

- Regular exchanges tied to humanitarian assistance: 'No exchange without assistance'. The North also linked the amount of assistance to the size of delegation visiting the North.
  - Simple food aid is limited to the most vulnerable including infants and kids etc. as well as vulnerable regions. A shift from emergency aid.
  - A transition to development aid with the emergence of various agricultural and livestock farming initiatives to increase food production, medical and health care projects to promote public health, and reforestation projects etc.
  - A shift from 'giving a fish (pouring water in a bucket with a big hole in the bottom)' to teaching 'how to fish.'
- => The government continues emergency aid(humanitarian assistance), while the private sector supplies development aid(on a trial stage)

○ Key development assistance projects by NGOs

(1) Agriculture and livestock farming

- World Vision: disease-resistant seed potato production system
- International Corn Foundation: corn seed program
- Good Neighbors: poultry-farming, milk-cow and other stock-raising
- Korean Sharing Movement
  - : agricultural modernization, pilot rice farming complex
  - poultry-farming including rearing chickens, hogs (National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, Saemaul Movement etc.)
- C.C.C : dairy goat farming, innovative seed program
- KFWA(The Korean Foundation for World Aid)
  - : the molding and direct-sowing technology-based agricultural initiative
- Unification Agriculture & Fishery Association
  - : Cooperative farms pilot agricultural initiatives

(Commissioned by the government) etc.

- Gyeonggi-do province: cooperative farm(farming village) modernization and pilot farming (rice, vegetables etc.)
- Jeolla namdo, Jeolla bukdo, Gyeongnam provinces and other local government agencies: pilot agricultural initiatives growing vegetables, stock-farming

(2) Health care and medical sector

- Initiatives: modernization of medical facilities and equipments in hospitals at the central (general hospitals) and local levels i.e. in provinces, cities, counties, district, village(cooperative farms) / children's hospitals, eye hospitals, cardiology hospitals/ medical technology and academic exchanges(Inter-Korean symposium at Pyongyang Medical School etc.)/ Stop TB initiative/ IV fluid, antibiotics and other modern pharmaceutical factory program / support for the disabled.
- Key NGOs : Good Neighbors, Eugene Bell Foundation, Okedongmu, Korea Food for the Hungry International(KFHI), Health Child, Korea Foundation for International Health Care, Nanum International, International Lions Club, Korean Sharing Movement, and other Health Care Medical Association etc.

(3) Education

- Hana Training Center(IT Training) in Dandong, non-regular courses on trade and English
- Modernization of kindergartens, elementary schools, middle schools, Pyongyang University of Science & Technology(courses scheduled to open next year) and other educational institutes
- Regular symposium on medicines, science & technology

(4) Welfare

- Initiatives: operating factories producing bread, soy milk, noodle, as well as their distribution
- Target segments: support for day-care centers, child-care facilities, kindergartens, and facilities for the disabled in Pyongyang, Sariwon Pyoungbuk, Hambuk provinces

(5) Environment (reforestation) area

- Initiatives: pilot forest cultivating saplings, chestnut trees etc., safe use of fungicide and pesticide, planting trees
- Target regions: Gaeseong, Mt. Geumgang, Pyongyang, Hoeryoung etc.
- NGOs: Peace Forest, Korean Council for Reconciliation & Cooperation, National Reconciliation Movement Association,

**□ Emerging new trends after 10 years of assistance to the North(2005 marked the 10th year)**

- A shift in the North Korean authorities' policies on international aid
  - The North Korean Foreign Ministry's announcement in Sept. 2004 to UN delegates and international NGOs in Pyongyang: "We will no longer receive humanitarian aid. If you want to assist us, provide development assistance instead."
  - No more annual begging for one-time assistance at inter-Korean high-level talks. What's more important and required is structural development assistance. "Fertilizer aid is good, but an even better aid would be assistance to reconstruct fertilizer plants so that we can ultimately help ourselves."
- Changes in the international community
  - In the aftermath of the 2nd nuclear crisis (Sept. 2002), the UN fund dramatically has decreased.
  - With Tsunami in south-east Asia making big headlines, assistance to North Korea has been drawing less attention from the international community.
  - Europe balks at assisting the North, on the grounds of human rights issue
- The South Korean government and private sectors began discussing development assistance
  - Structural vicious circle of food production and chronic poverty
  - Critical reflection on the past decade's humanitarian assistance to the North, as well as a sense of helplessness and fatigue.
- Launch of the Public-Private Policy Committee on Assistance to North Korea and

## Public/Private projects

- In Sept. 2004, South Korean government agencies (Unification, Agriculture & Forestry, Health & Welfare Ministries etc.) joined forces with the Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea
- Rising need for joint efforts between the public and private sectors to substantially address humanitarian issues in the North
- Various public/private joint initiatives encompassing projects jointly conducted by various groups and projects commissioned by the government etc.
- Social development policy was envisioned, but the effort fizzled out

## **Challenges of transition to development & cooperation (assistance)**

- Currently, development assistance by the private sector is still at a trial stage, with no significant progress.
  - Key to development assistance is how to ensure reproduction structure
    - ※ e.g.) Pilot farming initiative in cooperative farms have been validated by many groups and institutions in many regions (Pyongyang vicinities, Mt. Geumgang etc.) for the past several years. Health care and medical sector has reached its limitation of private sector's financial resources and capabilities
  - With assistance from private sector alone, better quality and scale cannot be guaranteed.
  - It has become inevitable to secure increased financial resources and experts. It is high time to restructure the platform.
- New types of development assistance and morality issue
  - A shift from public assistance type(health care & medicine, education, welfare, reforestation etc.) to corporate type (agriculture, livestock farming, pharmaceuticals etc.) : the latter case has given rise to morality issue with regards to ownership in particular.
  - Red capitalist, primitive accumulation of capitals. Who has the ownership of such a corporation? And who gains the benefits? etc.

- The government's assistance to the North should shift from one-time event-oriented humanitarian assistance to sustainable development assistance
  - The government taking a reserved stance till resolution of the nuclear issue. Need to revisit its policy toward the North.
    - ※ e.g.) As for agricultural machineries, it is planned that pilot assistance will be covered by Cooperation Fund, while large-scale assistance such as production support participated by the South's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is to take place after the nuclear issue is resolved.
  - Depending on how Seoul upgrades its policy towards economic cooperation with the North, adjustment is expected in the private sector's activities.(With the recent summit talks plus a new administration to be launched next year, roles of the public and private sectors should be redefined again)

#### **□ The 2nd inter-Korean summit talks and 1004 Joint Declaration**

- Prospects of resolving North Korea's nuclear issue and improving Pyongyang-Washington ties
  - Disabling nuclear program; taking Pyongyang off the list of state sponsors of terrorism and lifting sanctions imposed under the trading-with-the-enemy act.
  - Replacing an armistice with a peace treaty, and prospects for a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula
  
- Restoring inter-Korean relationship and laying a solid foundation for a leap forward
  - Agreeing on peace agenda (the West Sea Peace and Cooperation Zone) and promoting economic cooperation
  - Facilitating exchanges and cooperation between the authorities (at the level of prime ministers, defense ministers and Joint committee on economy etc)
  - Humanitarian assistance area is included as an agenda for cooperation between the authorities (agriculture, medical and health care, education, environment, disaster relief)
  
- Need to distinguish roles of the government's policies toward the North
  - : Economic cooperation vs. social development assistance

- Mutually beneficial economic cooperation and support for social infrastructure
  - Need to formulate a policy on social development of the North to address basic human needs of the North!
  - Need to set up an organization for development cooperation to fight poverty in North Korea
- Issue of Pyongyang's attitude on the receiving end
- Efforts to share information and make data available,
  - Need to embrace international standards
  - Promote education exchanges in various sectors
  - Expand the organization and improve decision-making process

## □ **Conclusion**

- Three perspectives on North-South integration
- Integration of socio-cultural and economic sectors should come before political integration
  - Political and military sector should serve as a means for socio-economic integration
  - Inter-Korean integration should be sought in the context of peace and cooperation framework in north-east Asia
- With changes in internal and external circumstances, Pyongyang is no longer forcibly isolated in the international community, and we are opening a new chapter for true integration of the North and the South. Civic societies must play its part as an initiator as well as a watch-dog of such a process.