

# South Korea's Aid to North Korea from 1995 to 2016: Analysis Based on Humanitarian Diplomacy<sup>+</sup>

Kyungyon Moon\* · Alex Soohoon Lee\*\*

- I . Introduction
- II . Humanitarian Diplomacy
- III . Significance of the Aid to North Korea
- IV . 22 Years of Aid: Humanitarian Diplomacy
- V . Conclusion

주제어: Aid to North Korea, South Korea aid to North Korea, International Organization, Non-Governmental Organization, Humanitarian Diplomacy

## [ABSTRACT]

Since North Korea called for international aid in 1995 and up to 2016, the aid from South Korea added up to three trillion dollars. South Korea's aid by both state and non-state actors influenced the political, socio-cultural, and humanitarian aspects of both Koreas. In this regard, this research critically assesses the features and significance of South Korea's 22 years of aid to enrich the discussion of aid to North Korea. South Korea's aid not only contributed to enhancing the humanitarian condition of the country but also opened a door for building trust and cooperation between the two Koreas. Thus, this research employs the discussion of humanitarian diplomacy as a theoretical framework. In light of such framework, the case of South Korea's aid to North Korea proved to be an effective humanitarian diplomacy that presented the possibility of inter-Korean trust building.

✦ 『국제관계연구』 제28권 제1호(2023년 여름호).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18031/jip.2023.6.28.1.79>

✦ This paper was supported by research funds of Jeonbuk National University in 2021.

\* Main Author, Associate Professor, School of International Studies, Jeonbuk National University

\*\* Corresponding Author, Associate Research Fellow, Korea Institute for Defense Analyses

## I. Introduction

Since North Korea asked the international community for help and up to the year 2016, the accumulated amount of aid by the South Korean government and civil society to North Korea reached three trillion dollars.<sup>1)</sup> The amount especially peaked at 4.4 billion won in 2007, equivalent to 4.2% of North Korea's GDP in the same year.<sup>2)</sup> It is undoubtedly true that South Korea's aid to North Korea significantly impacted North Korea's social, economic, cultural, and humanitarian aspects. However, the evaluations of its effectiveness may vary. South Korean civil society and political parties have different views on South Korea's aid to North Korea. An assessment of the aid has been deficient since most of the previous scholarships focused on the Korean peninsula's security paradigm, usually nuclear issues.

Previous scholarship left much to be desired, this research aims to identify and critically assess the significance of the 22 years of aid to North Korea and endeavors to find a new paradigm. To do so, this article introduces works on past governments' aid to North Korea and identifies objections and approvals of civil society on the issue over the last 22 years. Then, based on the categorization of chronology, typology, and government, annalysis is conducted to identify the parameters of the aid. Afterward, the significance and limitation of direct and indirect aid by the South Korean government, private organizations, and international organizations is assessed. Lastly, the significance of South Korea's 22 years of aid to North Korea is analyzed on inter-Korean political, socio-cultural, and humanitarian aspects.

---

1) OECD CRS, "OECD Statistics," <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS> (Accessed March 18, 2018); Ministry of Unification, "Statistics," <http://www.unikorea.go.kr> (Accessed March 16, 2018).

2) UN Statistics, "National Accounts - Analysis of Main Aggregates (AMA)," (Accessed March 16, 2018). Exchange rate at \$1 = 1,000.

## II. Humanitarian Diplomacy

The main research question focuses on evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of 20 years of South Korea's aid to North Korea. Considering that most of the aid provided to North Korea by South Korea has either been initiated or implemented by non-state actors, it is critical to analyze the works of Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. Yet the issues of representativeness and legitimacy in providing international aid remain critical as well. Thus, the evaluation of the allocation of roles between state and non-state actors is necessary and, in this regard, South Korea's aid to North Korea can be interpreted and analyzed based on the concept of humanitarian diplomacy.

Hazel Smith, an expert in the field, describes humanitarian diplomacy as a contested concept. Among numerous definitions and elements constituting humanitarian diplomacy, Smith explains three notions, or ideas. First of all, humanitarian diplomacy may strike some as an oxymoron. It consists of two words, humanitarian and diplomacy where "humanitarians do humanitarian work and diplomats do diplomacy."<sup>3)</sup> The two words are different, if not, contradictory. The second notion of humanitarian diplomacy, as Smith explains, deals with its original function of humanitarian workers on an everyday basis, which is a pure definition of the term itself. The third idea, described as a necessary evil, explains the risk-taking nature of humanitarian diplomacy with the involvement of third parties where satisfying all is, most of the time, impossible.

According to Smith, both NGOs and International Organizations (IOs)

---

3) Hazel Smith, "Humanitarian Diplomacy: Theory and practice," in Larry Minear and Hazel Smith (eds.), *Humanitarian Diplomacy: Practitioners and Their Craft* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007), p. 38.

are considered actors playing mediatory and, sometimes, representative diplomatic roles in international affairs.<sup>4)</sup> Likewise, this article claims that most of South Korea's aid provided to North Korea consists of the following channels: Republic of Korea (ROK) government- The United Nations (UN)-North Korea or ROK NGO-UN-North Korea. In this framework, multilateral organizations like the UN play a diplomatic role and NGOs play a mediatory role. The following section analyzes the status and significance of South Korea's aid provided to North Korea in which humanitarian diplomacy is both theoretically embedded and empirically tested.

### **III. Significance of the Aid to North Korea**

The types of South Korean aid provided to North Korea consist of multiple means and measures. One of the means is implemented directly by the government. Others are provided by the private sector or through international organizations. Each measure is explained in order in the following section.

#### **1. South Korea's Governmental Aid to North Korea**

The South Korean government's humanitarian aid to North Korea is categorized into nutrition, disaster relief, health and medical, and development and cooperation.<sup>5)</sup> Nutrition aid is in the form of governmental direct food aid, whether at cost or free, and disaster relief aid is for disaster restoration. Health and medical aid are provided

---

4) Ibid., pp. 52-53.

5) Analysis regarding governmental aid through the private sector is excluded due to incompleteness of data and insufficient aid.

through the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), International Vaccine Institute (IVI), and other international NGOs, etc. Development aid is in the form of government direct aid.

Between 1995 and 2016, nutrition aid including rice and food assistance of 110 million won, accounted for 46.1% of the total aid, making up the largest portion of governmental aid. Regarding rice aid, after North Korea requested the international community, the Kim Young-sam government delivered 150 thousand tons of rice as immediate aid but stopped providing it thereafter due to the conflicts arising amid transportation. A large-scale aid had reopened based on the peacemaking atmosphere after the inter-Korean summit which took place in 2000. Rice aid was implemented in the form of a loan because of the South Korean public's concerns. Korean-produced rice was used due to excessive production and reserve in South Korea.

<Table 1> South Korean Government's rice aid to North Korea

	1995	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2010	2011– 2016	Total
Scale (thousand ton)	Domestic Rice (150)	Foreign Rice (30) Chinese Corn (20)	Domestic Rice (40)	Domestic Rice (40)	Domestic Rice (10) Foreign Rice (30)	Domestic Rice (40) Foreign Rice (10)	Domestic Rice (10)	Domestic Rice (15) Foreign Rice (25)	Domestic Rice (5)		Rice Domestic and Foreign (265.5)  Corn (20)
Amount (billion won)	185.4	105.7	151	151	135.9	178.7	39.4	150.5	4		1,101.6
Method	Free	Loan	Loan	Loan	Loan	Loan	Free	Loan	Free		Free (228.8)  Loan (872.8)

Source: Ministry of Unification, "The Data Except the aid channeled through the International Organization," <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 18, 2018).

Fertilizer aid was the first direct governmental aid that signaled an open aid policy and contributed to opening the first inter-Korean summit. Moreover, the fertilizer aid was not only considered an emergency aid but also a development aid that eventually enhanced food production in North Korea. Following the fertilizer aid package, the private sector's development aid accelerated. North Korea's annual requirement for fertilizer is 600 thousand tons. In the late 1990s, North Korea's supply of fertilizer was between 50 and 60 thousand tons by production and between 230 and 300 thousand tons by import, which was far less than the necessary amount. The South Korean government estimated North Korea's increased production of food to be between 500 and 700 thousand tons with 300 to 350 thousand tons of fertilizer aid; therefore, assisted fertilizer at no cost.<sup>6)</sup> Fertilizer aid was considered a suitable form of aid since it had a low risk of being misused and had a large impact on increasing food production.

<Table 2> South Korean Government's Fertilizer Aid to North Korea

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008-2016	Total
Scale (thousand ton)	115 (Private 40)	300	200	300	300	300	350	350	300		2,515 (2,555)
Amount (billion won)	33.9 (46.2)	94.4	63.8	83.2	81.1	94	120.7	120	96.1		786.2 (Free 799.5)

Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 18, 2018).

6) Jin-hee Lee, "Fertilizer aid, more important than food aid," *Radio Free Asia*, November 21, 2006, [http://www.rfa.org/korean/in\\_focus/fertilizer\\_aid-20061121.html](http://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/fertilizer_aid-20061121.html) (Accessed July 28, 2017); Jin-hee Lee, "South Korea's aid as critical factor for North Korea's food situation," *Radio Free Asia*, November 28, 2017, [http://www.rfa.org/korean/in\\_focus/nk\\_face\\_worst\\_famine\\_situation-20070205.html](http://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/nk_face_worst_famine_situation-20070205.html) (Accessed February 5, 2007).

For North Korea's disaster relief, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) provided meteorological equipment in 1997 and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assisted in flood recovery. The South Korean government, active in disaster relief for North Korea's chronic floods, aided 4.6 billion won in 2001, 1.2 billion won in 2004 for the explosion in Ryongchon station, 800 million won in 2006 for flood recovery, 4.23 million won in 2007 for flood recovery, and 72 million won for flood recovery again in 2010 during the Lee Myung-bak government <Table 3>. Nevertheless, due to rising tensions between the two Koreas because of continuous provocations by North Korea, emergency relief aid has ceased.

<Table 3> South Korean Government's Disaster Relief Aid

Year	Amount Dollar: million (Won: billion)	Type of Aid
2001	75.2 (97.6)	- Direct aid of 1.5 thousand pairs of underwear (3,530,000 dollars / 4,600,000,000 won)
2004	115.4 (131.3)	- Relief aid for Ryongchon disaster: medical and relief supplies (740,000 dollars / 900,000,000 won) - Relief aid for Ryongchon disaster: through WHO (200,000 dollars / 300,000,000 won)
2005	135.8 (136)	- Relief aid for flood damage: emergency relief supplies (193,000 dollars / 200,000,000 won)
2006	227.4 (227.3)	- Relief aid for flood damage: rice and supplies (80,030,000 dollars / 80,000,000,000 won)
2007	208.9 (198.3)	- Aid for flood recovery: 44,520,000 dollars / 42,300,000,000 won
2010	17.8 (20.4)	- Aid for Flood damage in Sinuiju: 6,340,000 dollars / 7,200,000,000 won

Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 18, 2018).

In October 1999, the South Korean government announced it would be utilizing the Inter Korean Cooperation Fund (IKCF) for assisting humanitarian aid to North Korea by private organizations. The average amount of governmental aid through private organizations for the last 20 years was only 4.9% of the net total. This was also the case, or even lower at 3.7%, for both the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments which are known to have been relatively positive in aiding North Korea.

<Table 4> Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund

(One hundred million won)																						
	'95- '96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	Total
Korea Red Cross	14	182	275	157	113	286	90	70	441	46	44	40	4	0	16	0	0	0	2	4	-	1,784
IKCF (%)	-	-	-	-	34 (1.7)	62 (6.4)	65 (2.5)	81 (3.1)	102 (3.8)	120 (3.8)	134 (5.9)	216 (6.2)	241 (55)	77 (26)	21 (10.3)	-	-	-	-	23 (16.4)	1 (100)	1,177 (4.9)
Private sector	-	-	-	66	274	496	489	696	1,117	733	665	869	721	377	184	161	118	51	52	110	28	7,174
Private	14	182	275	223	387	782	576	766	1,558	779	709	909	725	377	200	131	118	51	54	114	28	8,957
Private + IKCF	14	182	275	223	421	844	641	847	1,660	899	843	1,125	966	454	221	131	118	51	54	137	29	10,134

Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 18, 2018).

From October 1999 to 2016, the ROK government assisted 117.7 billion won of IKCF to private projects. There were seven organizations (one in a consortium) receiving 500 million won, 19 organizations receiving between 100 and 500 million won, 31 organizations receiving between 10 and 100 million won, and seven organizations receiving under 70 million won. The seven organizations which received 500 million won constituted 51.63% of the total IKCF.



**<Table 5> South Korean Private Sector's aid to North Korea**

(One million won)

Organization	Area / Product Aid	Annual Amount														
		'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11 ~ 14	'15	'16	Total
Sharing	Child's nutrition (noodles, vegetables), housing		263	361	843	535	1,014	798	1,673	1,555	1,684	156		177		9,059
Consortium of five org. including Child Fund	Infant aid in Nampo-si, Daeagn-gun, Hweryoung-si								1,080	7,826						8,906
Good Neighbors International	Cattle, chicken farm, orphanage, medical, stockbreeding aid	61	421	742	1,575	854	806	1,640	1,989	602	62					8,692
Jeu Center for Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation	Shipment cost (tangerine)			1,035	542	1,381	1,587	1,666	493	1,959						8,663
Eugene Bell Foundation	Tuberculosis medicine	792	1,000		1,305	986	585	595	934	560		254				7,011
Nanum International	Modernization of hospitals, medical center						1,047	732	2,623	1,582	277	75				6,336
Korean Sharing Movement	Hospital, pharmaceutical aid, agricultural machine aid	286	539	1,237	60	1,437	390	779	160	821	547	90				6,314
Okedongmu Children in Korea	Child nutrition, medical equipment supply, infant aid		122	372	537	1,296	634	1,213	528	747		281				5,730
World Vision	Seed improvement (potato, vegetable)	788	434	247	497	342	250	720	421	559	558					4,816
Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea	Vinyl seedbed						1,591	683	1,014							3,288
JTS Korea	Nourishing food, agricultural development, medical aid	412	311	297	265	170	218	292	499		560	171				3,195
International Corn Foundation	Increasing production of corn, developing a new variety	862	4	698	710	171	229	137	44	239	92					3,186
Nonghyup	Flower seeds and piggery aid, apple and pear transportation fee		2,419				419	159		92						3,089
KOFIH	Training medical personnel, aiding the pharmaceutical company								600	1,085	1,000	250		100		3,035
Medical Aid for Children	Medical supply and medical equipment supply				142	259	512	515	605	560	101					2,694

Source: Ministry of Unification (inside data), <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 18, 2018).

Only the private organizations with aid over 2.5 billion won were included in the table.

The fertilizer aid from 1999 to the late years of the Roh Moo-hyun government, affected increases in North Korea's food production by 500 to 700 thousand tons, improved by an additional 400 thousand tons of food aid per year. This was a massive contribution to North Korea's food production which required five million tons of food annually. Nevertheless, due to the abduction of the South Korean crew by North Korea, the South Korean government's aid to North Korea in 1997 decreased regardless of the severe food shortages in North Korea. The Kim Dae-jung government did not commit any aid to North Korea until the inter-Korean summit in the year 2000.

The Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye governments maintained the previous government's policy that humanitarian aid should not be related to political matters. However, it was the change in the security situation of the Korean Peninsula, which was ceased by North Korean provocations, that affected the level of aid. Furthermore, rice aid committed by the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments may face criticism considering the staple food for North Koreans was corn. Instead of giving locally cultivated rice, corn procured by the international society contributed more to relieving North Korea's humanitarian situation.

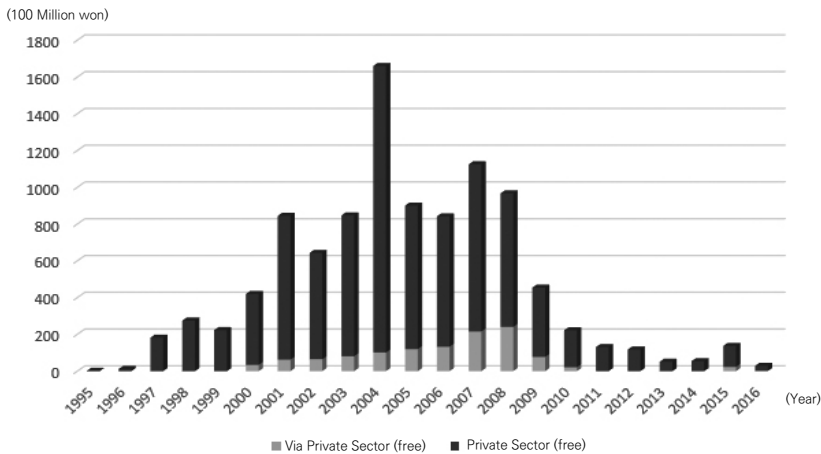
## **2. Aid by the Private Sector in South Korea**

Private organizations in South Korea also collected funds, engaged in cooperative projects, and participated in public and governmental campaigns for aiding North Korea during the period between 1995 and 2016. The private sector's level of aid to North Korea remained similar to that of the government until the year 1999. After the inauguration of President Kim Dae-jung in 1998, the size of the private sector's aid to North Korea surpassed the government's aid. Kim Dae-jung

government recognized the private sector as the foundation and partner of the 'Sunshine Policy' and therefore allowed the private sector to collect funds and directly send aid to North Korea.

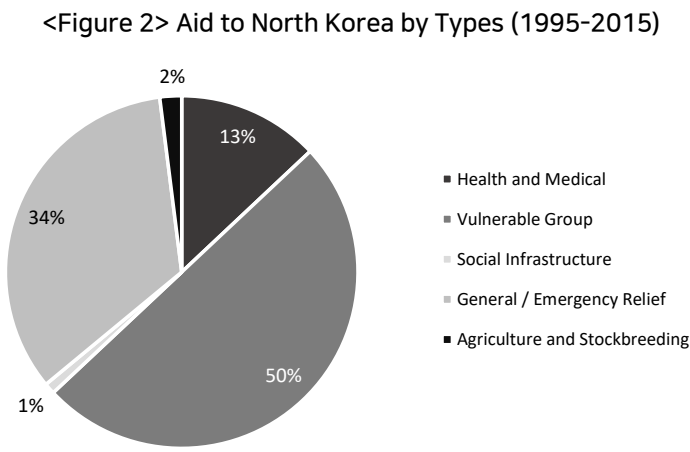
From the period of 2000 to 2016, 15 private organizations provided more than 80 billion won of aid to North Korea. The 15 organizations are Sharing, Consortium of five organizations. including Child Fund, Good Neighbors International, Eugene Bell Foundation, Korean Sharing Movement, World Vision, Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, JTS Korea, International Corn Foundation, Nonghyup, KOFIH, Nanum International, Jeju Center for Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation, Okedongmu Children in Korea, Medical Aid for Children, and Kyoreh Hana. The ones that aided more than 8 billion won are Sharing, Consortium of five organizations including Child Fund, Good Neighbors International, and Jeju Center for Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation. These large private organizations most vigorously operated in 2007 during the last year of the Roh Moo-hyun government and were downsized when most of the projects ended in 2011.

<Figure 1> South Korean Private Sector's aid to North Korea (1995-2016)



Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 16, 2018).

For the last 20 years (1995-2016), 50% of private organizations' aid was provided to a vulnerable social groups. Private organizations focused on the vulnerable groups due to North Korea's economic difficulties and the preference of individual supporters preferred for helping such groups. General and emergency relief aid constitutes 34% of the total aid. This is due to the aid demand based on consistent natural disasters and humanitarian crises like the 2004 Ryongchon station explosion. Health and medical aid consisted 13% of the total amount of aid. The aid for a child's health and medical treatment can also be categorized under the aid for vulnerable groups. If it was included under health and medical aid, the portion of health and medical aid would have been larger.



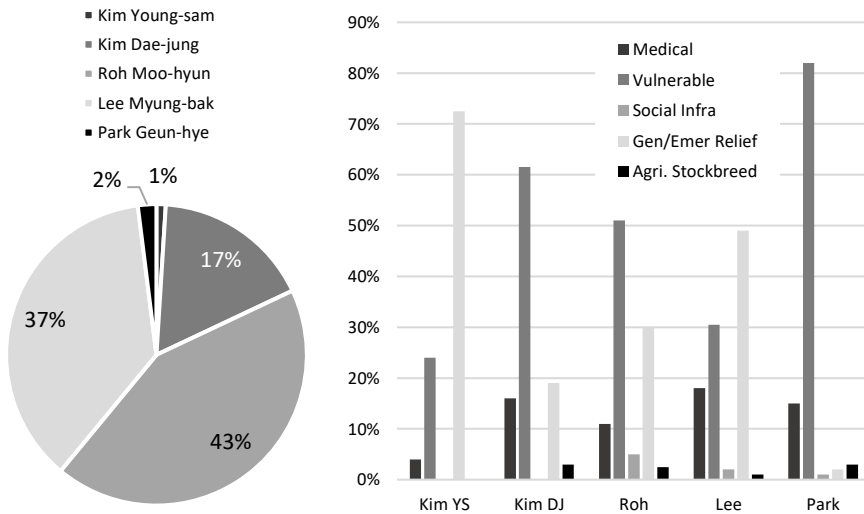
Source: Lee Wooyoung et al., *Whitepaper on Aid to North Korea* (Seoul: Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, 2016), p. 81.

Health and medical aid are relatively small compared to the combined aid for vulnerable groups and general and emergency relief aid. Health and medical aid, besides the provision of medical supplies, also includes the construction and remodeling of hospitals and pharmaceutical companies. One of the rationales explaining this small portion of health and medical aid is the tension between South and North Korea which

suspended cooperation projects. The private sector held a relatively flexible stance compared to the government despite the instability of inter-Korean relations. The private sector's supply and monitoring programs continued even during North Korea's missile launches and nuclear tests where government aid ceased for the second half of 2006. Moreover, there was swift aid during the flood damage in 2007.

However, after the Lee Myung-bak government, the evaluation process for IKCF's matching fund was altered. The size of assistance dropped from 70% to 50%, and the inspection procedure for aid was reinforced from two to four steps.<sup>7)</sup> North Korea's continued nuclear tests and provocation negatively affected fundraising and overall projects for aid in South Korea. Although the private sector's aid to North Korea was for humanitarian purposes, North Korea's continuous provocation was a primary concern for the ROK government.

<Figure 3> Aid to North Korea by governments (1995-2015)



Source: Lee Wooyoung et al. (2016).

7) Jung-soo Kim, "Humanitarian aids to North Korea and the persistence of the North Korean regime," *Unification Policy Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2010), p. 217.

In the very initial stage, private organizations started pan-national fundraising to help victims of the flood with an understanding that the humanitarian crisis in North Korea does not stem from natural disasters but is rather a structural problem based on economic inefficiencies. In this vein, they started campaigns for general relief aid such as providing food and clothing. Health and medical aid was a pillar of the aid program to North Korea during the Kim Young-sam government whereas the agricultural and stockbreeding part took a relatively small part due to the prioritization of other aid. After the May 24th measure during the Lee Myung-bak government, only emergency relief and vulnerable group aid was allowed attributing to decreases in other forms of aid. As <Figure 3> points out, vulnerable group aid was the sole category of aid during the Park Geun-hye government.

The most significant part of the private sector's aid to North Korea is that it sought development and cooperation projects. In the second half of the 2000s, the private sector expanded its projects that dealt with social infrastructure. In this respect, various experts in multiple sectors from both Koreas have had chances to meet and exchange technologies in modern agriculture, medical, and forest environment fields. Such cooperative endeavors have allowed South Korean participants to learn about North Korea's situation and North Korean participants to learn about advanced technology and recognize the necessity of cooperative exchange.<sup>8)</sup> Moreover, as one of the actors driving projects aiding North Korea, the private sector played as an intermediary when dialogue between the two Koreas ceased. The private sector truly played a valuable role in the unification dialogue.

---

8) Hyuk-Sang Sohn, *Understanding development cooperation in North Korea: theory and practice* (Seoul: Oreum, 2017), pp. 151-187; Joung Ho Song, "Governance of Unification Policy and the Role of Civil Society: A Discussion on the Development Assistance to North Korea," *Civil Society & NGO*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2010), pp. 125-157.

To prioritize aid to North Korea, the private sector opened campaigns for improving the governmental system which eventually contributed to the advancement of a civic movement. Consistent demands since 1995 by private organizations were met by the Kim Dae-jung government. In 1998, under revitalization measures of the private sector's aid to North Korea, the government allowed private outreach programs to visit North Korea for consulting and monitoring purposes, media and corporations to hold fundraising events, and an Automatic Response System (ARS) for collecting funds for aid. In 1999, by diversifying the channel, the private sector's direct aid to North Korea increased exponentially.

But North Korea's provocation affected the private sector's aid to North Korea. Not only the governmental aid through the private sector but also the private sector's standalone aid showed inconsistencies due to North Korea's provocations. The private sector's aid to North Korea added up to 230 billion won in 2004 but only recorded 280 million in 2016. This shows that the private sector's aid had largely been affected by North Korea's provocation. While international organizations and overseas Koreans still offered support, the private sector's aid in South Korea had been suspended.

### **3. The South Korean Government's aid to North Korea through International Organizations**

Kim Young-sam, Lee Myung-bak, and Park Geun-hye governments promoted aid to North Korea through the World Food Programme (WFP), WHO, and UNICEF during times when North and South Korea were in confrontation. When the two Koreas enjoyed relatively peaceful periods during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun governments, the South Korean government even expanded aid through international organizations instead of direct aid to avoid criticism by the international society. The

aid to North Korea was channeled through international organizations such as WFP (136.8 million dollars), WHO (66.48 million dollars), UNICEF (66.64 million dollars), IVI (3.14 million dollars), UNDP (986 thousand dollars), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (842 thousand dollars), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (269 thousand dollars), and World Meteorological Organization (WMO) (36 thousand dollars) in descending order of scale.<sup>9)</sup> The South Korean government's aid to North Korea through international organizations focused on humanitarian aid which involved WFP, WHO, UNICEF, and IVI.

<Table 6> South Korean Aid to North Korea through International Organizations  
(Ten thousand dollars)

	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	Total
WFP	200	2,053	1,100	-	-	1,725	1,739	1,619	2,334	-	-	2,000	-	-	-	-	-	700	210	-	13,680	
UNICEF	100	394	-	-	-	-	-	50	100	100	230	315	408	398	-	565	-	604	-	400	-	3,664
WHO	-	70	-	-	-	46	59	66	87	81	1,167	1,181	1,147	1,409	-	-	-	605	630	-	-	6,548
ETC.	5	150	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50	19	30	-	-	210	-	-	412	-	876
Total	305	2,667	1,100	0	0	1,771	1,798	1,735	2,521	181	1,397	3,546	1,574	1,837	-	565	210	1,209	1,330	1,022	-	24,768

Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 20, 2019).

Among them, the aid through WFP was the largest. Hundred thousand tons of corn aid between 2001 and 2004 was provided to avoid international criticism of the South Korean government for its direct aid as seen in <Table 7>. The Lee Myung-bak government withheld any aid through WFP and the Park Geun-hye government only focused on maternal and child health aid through WFP.

9) The values for IVI, UNDP, UNFPA, FAO, WMO are based on the data extracted from the Ministry of Unification and calculated with 1 dollar to 1,116 won ratio (2017.7.27).



&lt;Table 7&gt; South Korean aid to North Korea through WFP

Year	Aid	Amount
1996	Mixed grain (3,409 tons)	2 million dollars (160 million won)
1997	Mixed grain (18,241 tons), corn (50,000 tons), formula (300 tons)	20.5 million dollars (1.85 billion won)
1998	Corn (30,000 tons), flour (10,000 tons)	11 million dollars (1.54 billion won)
2001	Corn (100,000 tons)	17.25 million dollars (2.23 billion won)
2002	Corn (100,000 tons)	17.39 million dollars (2.35 billion won)
2003	Corn (100,000 tons)	16.19 million dollars (1.91 billion won)
2004	Corn (100,000 tons)	23.34 million dollars (2.40 billion won)
2007	Corn (12,000 tons), bean (12,000 tons), wheat (5,000 tons), flour (2,000 tons), formula (1,000 tons)	20 million dollars (1.90 billion won)
2014	Maternal and child healthcare	7 million dollars (740 million won)
2015	Maternal and child healthcare	2.10 million dollars (230 million won)
Total		136.8 million dollars (15.31 billion won)

Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 20, 2019).

As <Table 8> illustrates, the aid through WHO was dedicated to the prevention of malaria in the area of the truce line, which also benefitted South Korea. Nonetheless, since 2006, aid for infants was added, and, during the Park Geun-hye government, only maternal and child health aid through WHO resumed.

<Table 8> South Korean aid to North Korea through WHO

Year	Aid	Amount
1997	Medical equipment, etc.	700 thousand dollars (630 million won)
2001	Malaria prevention	460 thousand dollars (600 million won)
2002	Malaria prevention	590 thousand dollars (800 million won)
2003	Malaria prevention	660 thousand dollars (800 million won)
2004	Malaria prevention, Ryongchon relief kit	870 thousand dollars (1 billion won)
2005	Malaria prevention	810 thousand dollars (900 million won)
2006	Malaria prevention (1 million dollars), infant aid (1.067 million dollars)	11.7 million dollars (11.6 billion won)
2007	Malaria prevention, infant aid (9.38 million dollars), cure for measles (1.05 million dollars)	1.4 million dollars (1.3 billion won)
2008	Malaria prevention (1.2 million dollars), infant aid (1.027 million dollars)	10.4 million dollars (9.9 billion won)
2009	Malaria prevention (970 thousand dollars), infant aid (1.312 million dollars)	11.5 million dollars (14.8 billion won)
2013	Infant aid (medical supplies and equipment)	14.1 million dollars (16.7 billion won)
2014	Infant aid (remodeling medical facility 2.97 million dollars), medical supplies	6.1 million dollars (6.5 billion won)
Total		6.3 million dollars (6.7 billion won)

Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 21, 2019).

Based on the policy of resuming humanitarian aid, the Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye governments focused on aid for infants which was relatively free from the domestic criticism of ‘giving to the North without consideration.’ The two governments largely increased aid through UNICEF as illustrated in <Table 9>.

&lt;Table 9&gt; South Korean aid to North Korea through UNICEF

Year	Aid	Amount
1996	Infant (nutrition)	1 million dollars (800 million won)
1997	Infant (health and medical)	3.94 million dollars (3.5 billion won)
2003	Vulnerable group	500 thousand dollars (600 million won)
2004	Vulnerable group	1 million dollars (1.2 billion won)
2005	Vulnerable group	1 million dollars (1 billion won)
2006	Infant (vaccine, nutrition)	2.3 million dollars (2.3 billion won)
2007	Infant (vaccine, nutrition)	3.15 million dollars (2.9 billion won)
2008	Infant (vaccine, nutrition)	4.08 million dollars (4.7 billion won)
2009	Infant (vaccine, nutrition, health)	3.98 million dollars (46.6 billion won)
2011	Infant (vaccine, nutrition, health)	5.65 million dollars (65.4 billion won)
2013	Infant (vaccine, nutrition, health)	6.04 million dollars (67.4 billion won)
2015	Infant (vaccine, nutrition)	4 million dollars (44.8 billion won)
Total		36.6 million dollars (394.6 billion won)

Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 22, 2019).

The aid through IVI was greater than other organizations due to the emphasis on health and medical aid and its location being in Seoul. The South Korean government's aid through UNFPA was for population census. The South Korean government provided 800 thousand dollars through UNFPA to aid in conducting North Korea's population census in 2015.

The aid to North Korea by international organizations acted as a lifeline for North Korea during 1995 and 2000 when the humanitarian condition was most serious, and both the South Korean government and the private sector were passive in aiding North Korea. Yet the South Korean government's large-scale direct aid to North Korea, with its increased aid amount to North Korea through international organizations, had established a cooperative groundwork for South Korea and international organizations in dealing with North Korea. However, the

South Korean government's aid through international organizations was mainly conducted through WFP, UNICEF, WHO, and IVI. Furthermore, even such organizations ceased assistance during confrontations between the two Koreas.

<Table 10> South Korean aid to North Korea through other international organizations

Year	International Organization	Aid	Amount
1996	WMO	Meteorological equipment	50 thousand dollars (40 million won)
1997	UNDP	Flood recover	1.2 million dollars (1.1 billion won)
	FAO	Agricultural equipment	300 thousand dollars (300 million won)
2007	IVI	Vaccine, medical training	500 thousand dollars (460 million won)
2008	IVI	Reagent and equipment	190 thousand dollars (250 million won)
2009	IVI	Medical personnel training	300 thousand dollars (450 million won)
2012	IVI	Vaccine, medical training	2.1 million dollars (2.34 billion won)
2015	UNFPA	Census	800 thousand dollars (950 million won)
Total			5.4 million dollars (5.88 billion won)

Source: ROK Ministry of Unification, <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/unikorea/> (Accessed March 20, 2019).

To solve this issue, first, diversification of channels is inevitable. Since the South Korean government excessively focused on WFP, UNICEF, WHO, and IVI, the government seeking other organizations for aiding North Korea is inevitable. To secure international support and partners for unification, the South Korean government needs to consider a cooperative scheme with various organizations such as UNFPA, UNDP,

FAO, ILO, and IOM. Moreover, the increase in aid is inevitable considering the state of South Korea's economy.

Second, to expand leverage and secure the environment for unification through international cooperation, stable and consistent aid to North Korea through international organizations should be systematically maintained. The South Korean government's aid to North Korea through international organizations has reflected changes in inter-Korean relations. As a result, the range of fluctuation in the volume of aid to North Korea has remained large. Since international organizations are important players in unification, an aiding policy could be actively discussed with them.

Third, systematic aid programs should be provided to UNFPA, FAO, and WMO, the organizations collecting and providing essential data on population, food distribution, and climate, considering that the lack of accessibility is the most fundamental obstacle in implementing aid. In times when humanitarian and development aid is not possible due to the tension between the two Koreas, consistent aid should be provided to international organizations, namely UNFPA, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) thus enabling them to continue their missions of collecting data.

## **IV. 22 Years of Aid: Humanitarian Diplomacy**

Regardless of the dynamics between North and South Korea since 1990 regarding humanitarian aid, both the South Korean government and civil society have contributed to the North Korean humanitarian situation a great deal. Fertilizer aid since 1999 is predicted to increase food production by 500 to 700 thousand tons, along with 400 thousand

tons of rice aid, which adds up to 900 to 1.1 million tons of food aid. This considerable increase offsets the annual food shortage of 1.2 million tons, taking into account the calculated 1,630 kcal per capita diet of North Korea's 23 million population. In this light, the South Korean government's rice and fertilizer aid has largely alleviated the North Korean humanitarian crisis.

Aid has also had a great impact on laying the groundwork for Korean unification because even when normalization of inter-Korean relations eventually leads to unification, the humanitarian problems in the North such as developmental disorder, learning disabilities, human trafficking, and sexual abuses remain as issues to be resolved. South Korea's effort of enhancing the humanitarian condition of North Korean citizens facing difficulties will eventually improve the environment for unification.

Extensive participation and contact between South and North Korea through government and private sector organizations laid the foundation for forming an ethnocultural bond between the two peoples. The dominant view of South Korean civil society on North Korea during the initial bouts of humanitarian aid in 1995 was hostile. According to the survey conducted by Korean Institute for National Unification in June 1993, 74% answered that they distrust North Korea. On a question regarding the perception of North Korea, 50.3% responded they can think of images such as idolization and hereditary succession of power, 19.4% answered they can think of Juche ideology, 9.2% answered they can see a falling economy, and 3.8% responded they can think of a belligerent image. The answers consisting of a negative image of North Korea amounted to 92.4%.<sup>10)</sup>

---

10) Jae Jean Suh, Taeil Kim, Woo Young Lee, Soo young Choi, Do-tae Kim and Chun Heum Choi, *Result of Public Opinion Poll for Unification Issue in 1993* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1993).

In the year 2000, when tensions between South and North Korea eased, the Kim Dae-jung government provided an institutional framework for enhancing the private sector's direct aid, resulting in a dramatic expansion of inter-Korean cooperation based on the IKCF. The enlargement of inter-Korean contacts contributed to reestablishing NGOs aid to North Korea. As a result, the number of NGOs joining the "Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea" gradually increased and also led to an increase in the number of cooperation and exchange projects. Moreover, since the operation of the Kaesung industrial complex in 2005, the private sector's cooperation and exchange projects grew to include areas of business exchange among individuals.

The increase in people participating in the process of aid to North Korea and cooperating in the economy brought positive opinions regarding unification to both countries' citizens. Consistent aid to North Korea and private organizations' strategy of prioritizing North Korean citizens as a subject of humanitarian aid alleviated the hostile image of North Korea. In 1995, during Kim Young-sam's government, a survey by Chosun Ilbo regarding food aid to North Korea contained an index measuring the perception of North Korea. 20.3% of respondents answered that aid should be given without any condition. In another survey conducted by Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) in 1999 regarding the same question, 25% of respondents called for unconditional food aid, showing a slight increase.<sup>11)</sup>

This implies that South Korean civil society's perception of North Korea has turned in a positive direction providing a meaningful change in restoring the sense of ethnic community. Furthermore, according to

---

11) Ju-Cheol Lee, "Shift of the public opinion on the policy toward the North," *The Journal of International Society for Korean Studies in Seoul*, Vol. 10 (2007), p. 140.

a survey conducted in August 2012 by KBS Inter-Korean Cooperation Planning Team, 29.2% answered that they recognize North Korea as a 'partner for cooperation.' This is a slight increase from a 2010 survey in which only 21.7% answered as such. Regarding the question asking perception of unification, 71% in 2010, 74.4% in 2011, and 68.4% in 2012 responded that they want unification if the burden is not too heavy. A big portion of the public supports unification.<sup>12)</sup>

The research has proved the effectiveness of a functional approach over 22 years of government and societal aid to North Korea easing the inter-Korean tension and implying the possibility of unification. The core of the arguments is that as private exchange expands the South and North will be able to build 'trust' and eventually alleviate tensions between the two.

Inter-Korean relations deteriorated after North Korea's missile launch in July 2006. The Roh Moo-hyun government ceased food and fertilizer aid and inter-Korean dialogue was suspended. However, North Korea asked South Korea for assistance, through the 6.15 Joint Declaration channel held on August 9, to recover from flood damage. The South Korean Council for the 6.15 Joint Declaration, NGOs aiding North Korea, and Korean NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea executed a campaign fundraising for flood recovery in North Korea. The South Korean government eventually reopened a channel for dialogue.

---

12) Korean Broadcasting System, "2012 Public Survey on Awareness of Unification," <https://www.kbs.co.kr/> (Accessed March 20, 2018).



## V. Conclusion

The South Korean government's aid to North Korea remains significant in the sense that it contributed to alleviating the humanitarian situation in North Korea and finding a possibility of inter-Korean trust-building. However, criticisms also exist regarding the fluctuation of humanitarian aid and the lack of accountability in the distribution of aid. Moreover, Korean private organizations, despite their contribution to enlarging contacts and establishing sustainable development and cooperation projects, turned out to be vulnerable to North Korea's provocation.

Such a phenomenon contradicts and confirms Smith's notions of humanitarian diplomacy. It contradicts in the sense that humanitarians and diplomats are never separate entities in the field of humanitarian aid. It confirms the idea of humanitarian diplomacy becoming much more complicated with the involvement of third parties where satisfying all becomes almost impossible. Nonetheless, the last 22 years of aid to North Korea by both government and private organizations imply the following. First, a framework for humanitarian and development aid needs to be established and public-private partnerships must be institutionalized.

The private sector has been a meaningful agent which relieved North Korea's humanitarian crisis, awoke public opinion regarding unification, and provided information on North Korea. Therefore, the government needs to recognize private organizations as cooperative partners for unification and increase the size of the IKCF funding to humanitarian efforts within the private sector. This is important since, revitalizing governmental aid to North Korea through the private sector, increases the exposure between the Korean ethnic communities of the two countries by securing more individual contracts.

With the adoption of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the limitation of a government-centric, the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) has been spotlighted for promoting antipoverty and economic development. The recent trend of international development cooperation focuses on PPP by encouraging participation by private companies. This is due to the increasing financial burden of donor taxes and the realization of the importance of private companies' investment, technology, and experience in maximizing the effectiveness of development projects. On the same note, the developing method of public-private partnership, by considering the effectiveness of aid to North Korea, limitation of government-centric means, and the diverse ability of the private sector, is crucial.

Second, the lack of evaluation and monitoring of aid to North Korea remains a challenge. In evaluating aid projects, the international community uses OECD DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance based on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The South Korean government also implements OECD DAC criteria for its ODA projects. However, for the last 20 years of aid to North Korea, proper evaluation has not been done since a lack of awareness in implementing international standards like OECD DAC criteria and a lack of accessibility to North Korea. Likewise, this research also merely deals with the analysis of the pattern of South Korean aid to North Korea rather than assessing the changes and effects in North Korea. This is an issue of inaccessibility to North Korea; nonetheless, South Korean civil society has the right to know how the aid is being distributed and the South Korean government and private sector, should properly monitor the changes that have been made in North Korean society.

Lastly, a new paradigm must be established based on perspectives of enhancing inter-Korean relations and relieving humanitarian crises,

and enhancing economic development. At the same time, implementing principles and methods for aiding North Korea must be accompanied by the proper evaluations and monitoring of aid that the South Korean government and civil society can accept. In South Korean society, humanitarian reasons had been the motivator and sentiment for aid but the dominant public now has a negative view of North Korea due to its nuclear and missile development. Humanitarian diplomacy and aid can be resumed when North Korea's nuclear and missile development ceases.

## [References]

- Ahn, Deug Kee. "A Study on the Function and Role of Humanitarian Aid for North Korea." *North Korean Studies Review*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2008).
- Kim, Chi-kwan. "Study on the Joint Events of South and North Korea after June 15 Joint Declaration." Kyungnam University Master thesis (Changwon: Kyungnam University, 2007).
- Kim, Jung-soo. "Humanitarian aids to North Korea and the persistence of the North Korean regime." *Unification Policy Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2010).
- Kim, Sung-han and Kyungyon Moon. "Collaborating with NGOs for Korean Unification." *Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Spring 2014).
- Korean Broadcasting System. "2012 Public Survey on Awareness of Unification." <https://www.kbs.co.kr/> (Accessed March 20, 2018).
- Korean Sharing Movement. *10 Years of Aid to North Korea* (Seoul: Korea Sharing Movement, 2006).
- Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea. *White Paper: 10 Years of Aid to North Korea* (Seoul: Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, 2005).
- Lee, Ju-Cheol. "Shift of the public opinion on the policy toward the North." *The Journal of International Society for Korean Studies in Seoul*, Vol. 10 (2007).
- Lee, Wooyoung, Kyungyon Moon, and Moo-chul Lee. *White Paper: Aid to North Korea for 20 Years* (Seoul: Korea NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea, 2015).
- Moon, Kyungyon, Alex Soohoon Lee, and Myong-su Jeon. "The Analyses on the United Nations' Assistance to North Korea for the Last Two Decades (1995-2016)." *The Korean Journal of Area Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2018).
- Moon, Kyungyon, Jiyoun Park, and Young Hoon Song. "20 Years of Aid to North Korea: Searching for a New Paradigm through Critical Review." *Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Summer 2018).
- People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy. 2008 White Paper on Peace* (Seoul: Arche, 2008).
- Smith, Hazel. "Humanitarian diplomacy: Theory and practice." In Larry Minear and Hazel Smith (eds.). *Humanitarian Diplomacy: Practitioners and Their Craft* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2007).

- Sohn, Hyuk-Sang. *Understanding development cooperation in North Korea: theory and practice* (Seoul: Oreum 2017).
- Song, Joung Ho. "Governance of Unification Policy and the Role of Civil Society: A Discussion on the Development Assistance to North Korea." *Civil Society & NGO*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (2010).
- Song, Younghun, Kyungyon Moon, Jongdo Sohn, et al. *Evaluation and Development of Alternative Strategies of Humanitarian Assistance to North Korea* (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2018).
- Suh, Jae Jean, Taeil Kim, Woo Young Lee, Soo young Choi, Do-tae Kim, and Chun Heum Choi. *Result of Public Opinion Poll for Unification Issue in 1993* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 1993).
- UNICEF Central Bureau of Statistics. "Preliminary Findings of MICS 2012." A Joint DPRK/UNICEF Survey, 2012. <https://data.unicef.org/> (Accessed March 19, 2018).

〈Internet Sources〉

- OECD.Stat. <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS> (Accessed March 18, 2018).
- United Nations. <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/snaama/resQuery.asp> (Accessed March 16, 2018).
- Radio Free Asia. [http://www.rfa.org/korean/in\\_focus/fertilizer\\_aid-20061121.html](http://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/fertilizer_aid-20061121.html) (Accessed July 28, 2017).
- \_\_\_\_\_. [http://www.rfa.org/korean/in\\_focus/nk\\_face\\_worst\\_famine\\_situation-20070205.html](http://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/nk_face_worst_famine_situation-20070205.html) (Accessed February 5, 2007).
- Ministry of Unification. <http://www.unikorea.go.kr> (Accessed March 16, 2018).

[국문초록]

## 한국의 대북지원(1995년-2016년): 인도주의적 외교에 기반한 분석

문경연 | 전북대학교 국제인문사회학부 부교수

이수훈 | 한국국방연구원 안보전략연구센터 선임연구원

북한이 국제 원조를 요청한 이후 한국이 1995년부터 2016년까지 원조한 금액은 약 3조 달러였다. 한국의 정부 및 비정부 단체의 대북지원은 남북한의 정치적, 사회문화적, 인도주의적 측면에 영향을 미쳤다. 본 연구는 대북지원의 새로운 패러다임에 대한 논의를 열기 위해 한국의 지난 1995년-2016년 간 대북원조의 특징과 의의를 평가한다. 한국의 원조는 북한의 인도주의적 여건을 개선하는 데 기여했고, 남북간 신뢰와 협력의 장을 열었다. 이러한 배경에서 한국의 대북지원 사례는 남북간 신뢰구축의 가능성을 제시한 인도주의적 외교라 평가할 수 있다.

주제어: 대북지원, 한국의 대북지원, 국제기구, 비정부기구, 인도주의적 외교

투 고 일: 2023.04.26.

심 사 일: 2023.05.19.

게재확정일: 2023.06.01.