

# Democratic People's Republic of Korea

**2021** Progress Report on the Implementation  
of the Sustainable Development Goals

Chad Miller  
Hanna Song



북한인권정보센터  
DATABASE CENTER FOR NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS



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Address: 33, Changgyeonggung-ro 1-gil (Samyang Paper PW Building, 3rd Floor), Seoul 04558,  
South Korea

Phone: 82-2-723-6045

Fax: 82-2-723-6046

E-mail: [nkdb.org@hotmail.com](mailto:nkdb.org@hotmail.com)

Website: [www.en.nkdb.org](http://www.en.nkdb.org)

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## **Introduction**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 as the immediate successor to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), aiming to concentrate international efforts on the most pressing global issues. With all member states of the United Nations formally adopting the goals, each state is also given the opportunity for Voluntary National Review (VNR) to provide an update on the process of achieving each of the 17 SDGs. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter DPRK or North Korea) were scheduled to present their VNR at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2020, but postponed until July 2021 in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. As North Korea's first VNR, the review will provide a much-needed look into how one of the world's most reclusive nations is making progress toward achieving the SDGs.

The DPRK has a one-party system, which is currently led by Kim Jong Un, the grandson of the country's founder, Kim Il Sung. The government's strong control over the country has thus far prevented an independent civil society from emerging to provide critical services to the community and information to the rest of the world. Due to the non-existence of an environment appropriate for a thriving civil society organization community, an independent assessment of North Korea's progress on the SDGs has fallen to organizations outside the borders of the country. Located in South Korea with its healthy democratic environment and robust civil society, The Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) has conducted an evaluation of North Korea's progress on the 17 SDGs. Although NKDB functions primarily as a human rights organization, this report was developed with the help of relevant experts from a variety of fields related to each of the respective SDGs. The aim of this report is to provide a holistic and objective evaluation of North Korea's progress toward achieving the SDGs, as well as recommendations for how North Korea can improve its efforts toward realizing the goals.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the entire world, and the DPRK is no exception. While many countries have struggled with multiple rounds of lockdowns and restrictions, North Korea effectively sealed its borders in January 2020, taking draconian measures to prevent the spread of the virus within the country. These actions have had a devastating impact on the country's economy, in addition to deteriorating the country's diplomatic relationships as well as the receipt of humanitarian aid and projects by international organizations. As the pandemic has entered its second year, there are early signs that North Korea may be preparing to resume limited trade operations, though it is difficult to assess the timeline and scope of such activities. Like much of the rest of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic slowed or even reversed what progress had been made on achieving some of the SDGs, placing the realization of the goals even further out of reach.

## **Methodology**

Since evaluation of North Korea's progress on the SDGs is extremely difficult to carry out inside the country, researchers consulted experts in each field related to the SDGs, as well as organizations with experience carrying out projects within North Korea that were able to provide a wealth of information and insight with regards to North Korea's work toward the SDGs on the ground. Due to the sensitive political nature of working within North Korea, in order to preserve the organizations' ability to continue to carry out projects in North Korea, any organizations or individuals who wished to remain anonymous for the purposes of this report were able to do so.

After compiling a list of experts and organizations related to the SDGs and their ability to assess North Korea's progress, each goal was narrowed down to a single organization or expert. A questionnaire consisting of general, as well as specifically country-tailored, questions was created for each goal to gain as much information as possible to make an informed judgement regarding North Korea's implementation of the SDGs. Throughout the project, a total of 29 experts and organizations were contacted to consult on the progress that North Korea has made on the SDGs, often pertaining to more than one of the Goals. Although preparations were made to interview experts for all 17 SDGs, a total of only six consultative interviews took place over the course of three months; two with international governmental organizations, another two with non-governmental organizations, one with a private think tank, and one with an expert working in academia. Many interview subjects were reluctant to participate in interviews for the evaluation of the SDGs due to fears that the evaluation would have a negative impact on their organization's ability to carry out work inside or in conjunction with the DPRK, and those that did participate often chose to remain anonymous. Following the consultations, NKDB researchers made final evaluations of progress on each of the goals, taking into consideration official policies and laws, implementation effectiveness, institutional capacity, as well as the level of community awareness and participation toward achieving each goal.

## **General Observations**

As a member of the United Nations, the DPRK is committed to devoting efforts to achieving the SDGs by 2030. Since the adoption of the goals in 2015, North Korea has visibly communicated the steps they have taken to make progress toward the realization of several SDGs, while their progress in other areas has been less clear. Despite their insistence of progress on all 17 of the SDGs, it becomes clear through presentations in international fora that the North Korean state prioritizes certain goals over others. Generally speaking, the goals that relate to economic development (SDG 7, 11), improvements in the natural environment (SDG 13, 15) or access to basic survival needs (SDG 2, 6) receive the most attention among the 17 goals, while those that are vulnerable to political developments are often disregarded or only given nominal effort. The presentation given at the North-East Asian Multi-stakeholder Forum in Vladivostok provides proof of this, with their

presentation lacking any reference to SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Institutions.<sup>1</sup> When looking at the North Korean government's efforts at implementing stated policy, our research found that the political nature of the North Korean government often impedes the level of progress that can be made on any particular goal. Although numerous international organizations have successfully entered the country to carry out projects in a variety of fields, the state's insistence of absolute control of access to information, especially from outside the country, often hinders information sharing and partnerships that otherwise would accelerate progress on achieving certain indicators and goals. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic only further exacerbated this tendency, with the North Korean government shutting down all borders in early 2020 as a means to prevent the spread of the virus. As vaccine inoculation efforts progress around the world, North Korea's resumption of progress on achieving the SDGs likely depends on how quickly the country can vaccinate its population. Even in a post-pandemic world, cooperation and partnership with organizations outside the country, as well as North Korea's transparency with regards to monitoring and reporting, will likely continue to prevent accurate external evaluation of how North Korea is making progress with achieving the goals. The lack of civil space for independent monitoring and accountability within the country calls into question the veracity of the data that the state presents in a variety of areas. Therefore, any official government data presented in this report cannot be independently confirmed as factual. Even joint surveys and reporting done in concert with UN bodies, such as UNICEF, ultimately relies on state organizations and their willingness to share complete access to the data.

In addition to North Korea's own actions when it comes to implementing the SDGs, the actions of the international community also cannot be ignored. The international security concerns that accompany the North Korean nuclear program have had a devastating impact on North Korea's ability to make progress toward a number of the goals. Furthermore, due to international sanctions on the country, any sort of development aid has been cut off, only allowing for humanitarian aid to enter the country under the current circumstances. This restrictive starting point of disallowing development aid is a clear hindrance to North Korea's efforts to achieve any of the SDGs. In carrying out this project, the sensitive nature of working in North Korea immediately presented itself as an obstacle to effective participation from those outside the country. The closed nature of the DPRK limits the number of appropriate experts to a small group, further restricted by general reluctance to participate due to the possibility of jeopardizing the ability to carry out work inside North Korea in the future. While the nature of the DPRK government shoulders much of the responsibility for this reluctance due to their sensitive nature, the international community and individual experts demonstrated a higher-than-expected reluctance to participate out of concern for possible repercussions.

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<sup>1</sup> DPRK government. Presentation of the Implementation of SDGs in DPR Korea North-East Asian Multi-stakeholder Forum. Vladivostok, 2019.

## SDG 1: No Poverty

North Korea is widely recognized as a poverty-stricken state. Often compared to its counterpart to the south, the differences in development are quite striking. Despite touting itself as a socialist society where everyone is equal, North Korea maintains certain social classes of people that have significant influence on their economic status and ability. Since the early days of North Korea, the government has always presented the message that they can become a prosperous nation through their own efforts, following the Juche ideology of self-reliance, rather than fully embracing the international system. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European bloc, North Korea is one of only a handful of countries across the world that continues to tout a socialist society for its citizens, with very limited success.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

Raising the standard of living in North Korea has been a long-term goal for the North Korean government. As mentioned above, the North Korean ideology of Juche, or self-reliance, has been the modus operandi of the state, continuously encouraging its citizens to work hard for a prosperous future. The public supply and distribution system (PSDS) was created to provide for the needs of the citizens, most notably food, but also other consumer goods. The state continues to assert that the PSDS provides for its citizens, in the spirit of a true socialist state. After the famine in the 1990s, the state had little choice but to turn a blind eye to unofficial markets that had sprung up across the country, particularly in the border regions, since they could no longer provide for the population through the public supply and distribution system.

### The Reality of Poverty

Though the DPRK government continues to claim that they are able to provide for the people, in reality, the system has fallen into abject disrepair.<sup>2</sup> What little it can provide for the people is largely only given to those from the upper echelons of society, forcing those with the most need into further poor conditions. Though there are no official figures to accurately measure the death toll of the famine that occurred in the 1990s, some estimates number in the millions. The massive number of deaths from the famine led to a population of orphaned children, known as “kkotjebi,” that roamed the streets to look for food. Though the food situation in North Korea has improved, there

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 15 (A) of the Annex to Human rights Council Resolution 5/1 Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (27 August 2009), available from [undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/6/PRK/1](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/6/PRK/1), para, 55.

is still a sizable population of “kkotjebi,” who often run away when given access to accommodations due to the poor state of the facilities and meals, as well as the harsh treatment they receive.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Interview by NKDB in 2017 (NKDB Unified Human Rights Database).

## SDG 2: Zero Hunger

The decline of the Soviet Union and the consequent lack of aid led to one of the worst humanitarian crises on the Korean Peninsula. The North Korean famine that struck in the 1990s also came partly as a result of poor management of the systems in place in North Korea, including the Public Distribution System (PDS), which the citizens of the country had to rely on for their food rations. With the collapse of the PDS, the situation quickly deteriorated, resulting in no less than hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people dying from starvation. Though the food

situation has dramatically improved in North Korea since the height of the famine in the mid-1990s, there are still challenges that remain for securing food in North Korea, especially as natural disasters continue to ravage the little arable land that exists in North Korea to begin with.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

With memories of the famine still fresh in many North Korean minds, one of the first priorities of the *Strategic Framework for Cooperation Between the United Nations and the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 2017-2021* was achieving food and nutrition security.<sup>4</sup> Building on this priority, North Korea has also responded positively to a number of recommendations for improving food security and access to food that came about as a result of the Universal Periodic Review.<sup>5</sup> Since Kim Jong Un came to power, there has been a renewed emphasis on food security within the country, resulting in the country achieving a level of food security that far exceeds that of the height of the famine in the 1990s. A report submitted to the United Nations in 2017 explained that the issue has been addressed by “introducing advanced farming methods, breeding high-yielding strains that are suitable to the climatic and soil conditions of the country and increasing the proportion of farm work done by machines. As a result, cereals production steadily increased year by year, making big strides in solving food problem.”<sup>6</sup> The government has also recognized that the ecological damage done to the terrain is a factor in the recurring natural

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations DPRK, Office of the Resident Coordinator. “DPRK United Nations Strategic Framework 2017-2021,”

<https://dprkorea.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-07/DPRK%20UN%20Strategic%20Framework%202017-2021%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Kim, Sookyung, “Assessment of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the DPRK and the Ways to Improve Human Rights in North Korea,” KINU, May 22, 2019,

<https://repo.kinu.or.kr/bitstream/2015.oak/10262/1/co19-09.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (20 February 2019), available from [undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/33/PRK/1](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/33/PRK/1), para 49.

disasters, and have begun to implement measures to reduce the vulnerability of agriculture in the country.<sup>7</sup>

## **Challenges Remain**

Despite the alleviation of starvation from the levels seen in the 1990s, North Korea continues to face challenges with food security. The terrain features of the country continue to present issues with flooding, though the state has begun to implement projects in other areas to alleviate the prevalence of flooding, such as the reforestation initiative that has been underway since 2015.<sup>8</sup> In the shorter term, however, the UN Humanitarian Country Team reported in 2020 that around 10.1 million (39.6%) of North Korea's population are still food insecure, particularly impacting children, women of reproductive age, and the elderly.<sup>9</sup> A report published by the United States Department of Agriculture in August 2020 provided an even more bleak outlook, estimating that 15.3 million people are food insecure as of 2020, and that 12 million would continue to be food insecure by 2030. These estimates reflect the impact of COVID-19, but also provided context for how they differed from pre-COVID figures.<sup>10</sup> These estimates indicate that nearly 60% of North Korea's population is still food insecure, and projects that almost 45% would still be food insecure by 2030, when the SDGs are supposed to be achieved.<sup>11</sup>

## **International Support**

Even after the famine of the 90s, North Korea has continued to be a recipient of humanitarian aid that includes food. Through the efforts and partnership of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the German NGO Welthungerhilfe, millions of tons of food aid have flowed into the country since the height of the famine. Although these actors have long carried out operations within North Korea, the policy of “No Access, No Food” is one that these organizations have tried to adhere to in the provision of aid, particularly when it comes to post-delivery monitoring of where the aid is going.<sup>12</sup> With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, these organizations have since significantly reduced their operations in the country, with all foreigner workers having left the country throughout the pandemic.

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<sup>7</sup> “Concentrate on the Establishment of Agricultural Science and Technology Countermeasures,” Rodong Sinmun, September 14, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> “DPRK National Agroforestry Strategy and Action Plan,” Ministry of Land and Environmental Protection, [https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/countries/countries-content/the-democratic-people-s-republic-of-korea/en/DPRK-AE-Strategy-2015-2024\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/countries/countries-content/the-democratic-people-s-republic-of-korea/en/DPRK-AE-Strategy-2015-2024_EN.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> UN Humanitarian Country Team, 2020 DPR Korea Needs and Priorities, report, April 22, 2020, accessed on November 1, 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020\\_DPRK\\_Needs\\_and-Priorities\\_Plan.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020_DPRK_Needs_and-Priorities_Plan.pdf), 38.

<sup>10</sup> USDA, Economic Research Service, International Food Security Assessment, 2020-30, GFA-31, August 2020, accessed on June 10, 2021, [www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/outlooks/99088/gfa-31.pdf?v=63284](http://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/outlooks/99088/gfa-31.pdf?v=63284), 60.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Interview by NKDB with an official who has done work related to food in North Korea, July 1, 2021.

## **Deteriorating Pandemic Environment**

North Korea was one of the first countries to close its borders in response to the outbreak of COVID-19. Compared to countries across the globe, North Korea chose a drastic approach, cutting off any physical crossing of the border into the country, whether diplomats returning from overseas assignments or trade goods entering the country from China. The total shutdown of the border has also affected the inflow of humanitarian aid. Though the international community has recognized that North Korea is not properly equipped to respond to the pandemic from a health standpoint, the extreme measure of total closure of their borders is detrimental to an array of areas of concern, not least the food situation within the country. As of late April 2021, it was reported by a Russian official that all international aid workers, including those from the UN, had exited the country, leaving a vacuum for a variety of aid areas that the country desperately needs. With aid shipments sitting at the Sino-North Korean border, the pandemic is severely hampering efforts to reduce hunger in North Korea.

Compounding the extreme measures taken to prevent outbreaks of COVID-19 within the country, North Korea also experienced severe flooding from June to September 2020, further exacerbating an already deteriorating situation for food production. The international community has rallied to provide humanitarian aid to the disaster struck North, however, the aid has not been allowed to enter the country due to fears that COVID-19 will breach the sealed borders through the humanitarian aid.

## SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

As a socialist state, North Korea continues to tout the existence of their universal healthcare system, though in reality the system is broken and inefficient in numerous areas. As a result, the state of health in North Korea has been the center of focus for many international organizations that work in North Korea, directing their efforts toward vaccinations and providing care to the most vulnerable to address the shortcomings of the North Korean system. Prior to economic collapse in the 1990s, North Korea's performance in some areas of health actually exceeded that of South Korea, demonstrating the severity of the collapse of many aspects of the system, including the healthcare system. With the help of international health organizations, including UNICEF, GAVI, The Eugene Bell Foundation, and many others, some aspects of North Korea's health situation have significantly improved since the 1990s beyond the levels seen before the collapse, particularly when it comes to vaccinations and other health-related humanitarian aid for communicable diseases like malaria and diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, these improvements are largely the result of external aid, rather than concentrated efforts on the part of the North Korean government to adequately address their own shortcomings when it comes to realizing SDG 3.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

As a socialist country, North Korea proudly touts its universal healthcare system. The Ministry of Public Health was established in 1945, and the state claims to have embraced a complete universal healthcare policy since February 1960.<sup>14</sup> Under the leadership of Kim Jong Un, improvements have been made through the modernization of hospitals, pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities, and research institutions. More recently, the North Korean Supreme People's Assembly adopted legislation as a means to reduce the health risks associated with tobacco use, including a perceived increase in the risk of contracting COVID-19.<sup>15</sup> Though the state asserts that there are no female smokers in North Korea, there are assessments that nearly half of all adult males are smokers.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Grundy J, Biggs B-A, Hipgrave DB (2015) Public Health and International Partnerships in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. *PLoS Med* 12(12): e1001929. doi: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1001929

<sup>14</sup> National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 15 (A) of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1: Democratic People's Republic of Korea, UN doc. A/HRC/WG.6/6/PRK/1, 27 August 2009, para 62.

<sup>15</sup> Kim, Jeongmin, "North Korea worried that citizens could catch COVID-19 by smoking tobacco," NKNews, November 11, 2020, <https://www.nknews.org/2020/11/north-korea-worried-that-citizens-could-catch-covid-19-by-smoking-tobacco/>.

<sup>16</sup> Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, *UN Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights SDG 3:*

Though it is too early to assess if the legislation has been effective, it is well-known that Kim Jong Un is a heavy smoker, drawing attention to whether or not the North Korean leader will serve as an example for the citizens to emulate the recently enacted law.

### **Access to Care**

Despite the government's claims regarding the provision of free healthcare for all citizens, there are still numerous obstacles that exist that make it difficult for normal citizens to receive adequate care. Although people are free to go to the hospital to receive care, due to lack of adequate supplies of medicine and equipment, patients are often responsible for providing their own supply of medicine and equipment necessary for administration. Especially when it comes to intravenous injections, it has become common knowledge that citizens need to bring their own needles in order to receive the appropriate medicine.<sup>17</sup> Another major concern regarding access to care revolves around the reliability of medicine. Even when it comes to humanitarian aid, medicines often do not ultimately reach the places where they are most needed, whether diverted to military reserves or ending up in the unofficial open markets where anybody is able to purchase them.<sup>18</sup> The measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, namely closing off all border activity, has exacerbated this issue due to the lack of supply, whether through humanitarian organizations or through smuggling activities between North Korea and China.

### **International Cooperation**

While the North Korean government's effective implementation of policy related to good health and well-being are still lacking in a variety of areas, there are numerous international organizations and NGOs that have dedicated vast resources to improving the state of health in North Korea. Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, not only UN organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, but also NGOs such as the Eugene Bell Foundation have spent years addressing the presence of malaria and both drug effecting and drug resistant tuberculosis in North Korea.<sup>19</sup> With regards to engagement with the international community for responding to COVID-19, the North Korean government applied and was accepted into the COVAX program to receive vaccines through the program to begin inoculation of the population. According to GAVI, who co-leads the COVAX effort with the World Health Organization, vaccine shipments have been delayed as of June 2021, largely due to technical ill-preparedness and a global shortage, but delivery to North Korea could still be expected to take place during 2021.<sup>20</sup> Though

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*The Right to Health in North Korea*, (Seoul: Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, 2019), 66.

<sup>17</sup> Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, *UN Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights SDG 3: The Right to Health in North Korea*, (Seoul: Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, 2019), 77.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>19</sup> Agov, Avram, "Facing the Tuberculosis Crisis in North Korea: The Humanitarian Work of the Eugene Bell Foundation," 38North, July 31, 2019, <https://www.38north.org/2019/07/aagov073119/>.

<sup>20</sup> Shin, Hyonhee, "N.Korea says COVID-19 vaccines are 'no panacea', warns of lengthy battle," Reuters, May 4, 2021,

the 2 million doses are not nearly enough to achieve herd immunity among the North Korean population, the recognition and engagement with the international community shows a willingness to participate and address issues as a member of the international community.

## SDG 4: Quality Education

As a self-proclaimed socialist state, North Korea established a universal education system early on in its existence. Over the last several decades, the North Korean education system has undergone shifts in how it is structured, and the length of compulsory education, but never wavering from its legal provision of free universal education. Indeed, North Korea is often recognized as one of the most literate countries in the world, boasting close to a 100% literacy rate for those over 15 years old before the SDGs were adopted.<sup>21</sup> After Kim Jong Un came to power, the education system has undergone further shifts in focus, expanding to a 12-year curriculum and placing increased focus on STEM subjects in order to make “the entire people into resources for science and technology.”<sup>22</sup> However, an uneven implementation of policy across the country inhibits the true realization of many of the established educational policies as well as achieving many of the indicators of SDG 4.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

The North Korean Constitution explicitly ensures the right to education in Article 73. More specifically, North Korea’s General Education Law mandates free education for all, most recently revising the laws in 2012 to increase the period of secondary education from 11 to 12 years, with Kim Jong Un emphasizing the need for more investment in education for STEM related subjects in an effort to increase competitiveness in the international economy.<sup>23</sup> In a report submitted to the UN in 2019, North Korea stated that they had begun to implement their National Strategy for the Development of Education (2015-2032), noting that the strategy is broken down into stages, where a 5-year strategy for education development and an action plan for improving the quality of primary and secondary education are currently underway.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, North Korea proclaims that higher education is made available to all citizens. Among all universities in North Korea, only one is privately funded, the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology (PUST).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, “Literacy rate, adult total (% of people ages 15 and above) - Korea, Dem. People’s Rep.” September, 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.LITR.ZS?end=2008&locations=KP&start=2008>.

<sup>22</sup> Dang-ui Gyoyugjungsisasang-eul Cheoljeohi Guhyeonhayeo Gyoyugsa-eob-eseo Hyeogmyeongjeogjeonhwan-eul il-eukija (Let’s make revolutionary transformation in education by realizing the party’s idea of giving importance to education). (2014, September 5). Rodong Sinmun, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> William, Martyn, “Science and Technology Education in North Korea Enters the 21st Century,” 38North, October 19, 2019, <https://www.38north.org/2019/10/mwilliams102119/>.

<sup>24</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (20 February 2019), available from [undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/33/PRK/1](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/33/PRK/1), para 44.

<sup>25</sup> For more information about the Pyongyang University of Science & Technology, visit [pust.co](http://pust.co).

Additionally, adult education programs and non-university education are beginning to emerge as new sectors in Korean education.<sup>26</sup>

On an international level, North Korea has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), with the latter coming after the adoption of the SDGs.<sup>27</sup> The ratification of these conventions demonstrates North Korea's commitment to implementation for universal opportunity for education to all of its citizens, though implementation continues to meet resistance due largely to unrelated discriminatory policies.

Like many countries around the world, North Korea responded quickly in the realm of education to the COVID-19 pandemic. The government adopted a law that encouraged distance learning as an alternative, but this has met with obstacles to implementation. According to the International Child Rights Center in Seoul, North Korea is unable to implement their distance learning practices due to a lack of funds, as well as other supply issues, particularly the inconsistencies in provision of electricity throughout much of the country.<sup>28</sup>

### **Obstacles to Implementation**

Although universal opportunities for education are legally guaranteed by the North Korean state, there are numerous obstacles that prevent the realization of universal education for all North Korean children. The collapse of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the 1990s put a strain on all aspects of life in North Korea, with teachers being no exception. Students are often expected to bring money or food for their teachers as a part of attending school. Additionally, annual mobilizations for agricultural purposes, as well as for the ongoing reforestation campaign degrade the quality of education that students receive. Though the situation has improved significantly since the height of the famine, children are still faced with a choice of attending school or entering the workforce to contribute to their family's livelihoods. . While the government's official report from 2016 indicates that attendance rates are rising to over 98%, testimony from North Korean defectors indicate that this is not true, as many children in rural areas skip school in order to provide for their families.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to the challenges to providing universal primary and secondary education to Korean

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<sup>26</sup> One example of adult education of a non-degree nature are the services provided by Choson Exchange. Choson Exchange is a Singapore-based NGO that runs programs in North Korea to foster entrepreneurship. Though not equally accessible to North Korean citizens, it serves as a supplementary educational option for those chosen for the program. More information can be found about Choson Exchange at <https://www.chosonexchange.org/>.

<sup>27</sup> An overview of which treaties the DPRK has signed and ratified can be found at:

[https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=en](https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=en)

<sup>28</sup> Interview by NKDB with the International Child Rights Center, Seoul, South Korea, June 9, 2021.

<sup>29</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 4 of the Convention: Fifth periodic reports of States parties due in 2012: Democratic People's Republic of Korea, October 25, 2016, CRC/C/PRK/5, para. 201.

youth, there are also institutional challenges to providing higher education to all North Koreans. Though official North Korean law indicates that all citizens are eligible for higher education, institutional obstacles, namely the *songbun* system, often prevents many people from freely pursuing higher education, regardless of their academic abilities.<sup>30</sup> Though bribes to officials have become more common these days to skirt the *songbun* system, the most prestigious academic institutions in North Korea are still limited to those with the strongest allegiance to the North Korean regime.

Finally, some efforts to reinvigorate the higher education system are thwarted due to the nature of the North Korean system as a whole. At the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, the only privately funded university in North Korea, two employees of the university were detained, and eventually released in 2018 for unspecified charges.<sup>31</sup> While PUST stands apart from most other universities for its relatively western curriculum and access to external sources of information, instances of employee incarceration and detention send a strong negative signal to those who would consider improving the educational system of North Korea from without.

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<sup>30</sup> Robertson, Phil, "North Korea's Caste System," *Foreign Affairs*, June 30, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/07/05/north-koreas-caste-system>.

<sup>31</sup> Park, Ju-min, "Crisis-plagued Pyongyang university seeks revival after Trump-Kim summit," *Reuters*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-usa-university-idCAKBN1JF0OG>.

## SDG 5: Gender Equality

As a self-proclaimed socialist country, the North Korean state insists that it has already achieved a completely gender equal society. Furthermore, the low level of reported sexual crimes is often cited to demonstrate that North Korea has already achieved complete gender equality. However, contrary to domestic and international law, gender equality is still rather far off in North Korea, which still perpetuates a strong male-led Confucian ideology.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

North Korea has for decades asserted that men and women are equal in all areas of North Korean society. At the national policy level, the North Korean Constitution states that women hold all the same social status and rights as men, in addition to the Family Law stating that men and women have equal rights within the family. Furthermore, since 2001, North Korea has been a party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), more recently enacting their Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women in 2010, meant to cement North Korea's commitment to CEDAW and the rights confirmed within the international treaty body.<sup>32</sup> In 2016, North Korea made their second report to CEDAW to present the progress they have made in implementing gender equality across the country, demonstrating more cooperation with regards to reporting requirements than in the past.

In the realm of other organizations, the North Korean Democratic Women's League was established in 1945, and is trumpeted by the North Korean state as an organ for women of North Korea to make their voices heard. Although it has undergone name changes across the decades, most recently in 2016 to the Socialist Women's Union of Korea, it remains one of the oldest institutions in North Korea.

### A Stark Divide Remains

Although policies have been enacted by the North Korean government, the reality is that gender equality continues to face institutional challenges across the country. While the Constitution claims that women maintain the same rights as men within the family and pertaining to social status, women are not recognized as the head of households.<sup>33</sup> In addition, cultural challenges finding their origins in male-dominated Confucianism reveal that women are still expected to

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<sup>32</sup> United Nations, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, para 11.

<sup>33</sup> Korea Institute for National Unification, White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2019, (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2019), 359.

become housewives once married,<sup>34</sup> with membership in the Socialist Women's Union of Korea incumbent upon marriage and not maintaining a workplace outside the home. In interviews with women who were part of the Women's Union while in Korea, the vast majority stated that they received no education regarding the rights of women, rather describing the organization as another way for the state to elicit forced labor and mandatory education on the state's ideology.<sup>35</sup>

The Women's Union is only one example among many of North Korea's inadequate implementation of not only CEDAW, but their own domestic policies surrounding gender. While the North Korean government reports that the Women's Union operates as a civil society organization that empowers women, the reality shows that they only exist only to reinforce the state. According to the Bylaws of the Workers' Party, it is an external organization that enforces the Party's policies and in fact exploits women by imposing "social assignments," to advance the economic interests of the Party. The lack of women in positions of power within North Korea is another reason why the state appears to not have made substantial progress in achieving SDG 5. The recent elevation of Kim Jong Un's sister, Kim Yo Jong, within the party system is an outlier that does not appear to be having an effect for increasing equality between men and women within North Korea, despite the increased visibility of the leader's sister. Despite this higher profile, according to the North Korean government, the share of women in the Supreme People's Assembly barely surpasses 20%, and though there is a somewhat higher share of women in positions of power at local levels, the percentage of women appointed to positions within the government at all levels is often far less, despite quotas for women in governmental positions.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the introduction of the "2009 Guidelines on Early Detection and Management of Cervical Cancer and Breast Cancer," women are still unable to receive adequate benefits. According to an interview by Citizens Alliance for North Korean Human Rights, North Korean women said that they "received little national support from breast cancer to birth control and childbirth."<sup>37</sup> This shows a clear disparity between the policies enacted by the state, and what is being implemented at the local level.

## **Forging New Paths**

The male dominated party and official enterprises within North Korea have largely sidelined women, especially married women, from significant participation in the North Korean economy.

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<sup>34</sup> Daye Kang and Joanna Hosaniak, "They only claim that things have changed..." Discrimination against Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (Seoul: Life & Human Rights Books, 2018), 23, 26.

<sup>35</sup> Sunyoung Choi, Jina Yang, Hanna Song and Nakyeong Lee, The UN Universal Periodic Review and the DPRK: Monitoring of North Korea's Implementation of Its Recommendations, (Seoul: Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, 2017), 66.

<sup>36</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention: Second, third, and fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2014: Democratic People's Republic of Korea, June 1, 2016, CEDAW/C/PRK/2-4, para. 77, 79-80.

<sup>37</sup> Kang and Hosaniak, "They only claim that things have changed," 31.

Out of the famine and near-total collapse of the system in the 1990s, these same women began to construct a new economy in North Korea, one based on the unofficial markets. While men are still required to attend to their government provided jobs, even without pay or work to do, their wives and other women are not bound by these restrictions, and have created a more robust unofficial capitalist economy, where the women are now earning far more money than their husbands. The lack of opportunities for women to participate in the official economy has pushed them to engage in the unofficial economy where they can make a better living, but are excluded from the existing social security benefits that are theoretically provided by the state to those who work in official economic activities.<sup>38</sup> Though these benefits exist largely in name only, the exclusion of women from receiving equal benefits due to their participation in the unofficial economy amply demonstrates the practical divide between genders in North Korean society.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 26.

## SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation

One of the most persistent problems in North Korea has been access to clean water and adequate sanitation across the country. The government has readily admitted that progress toward providing safe water and clean sanitation to the population has been slow, with many people around the country, particularly in remote areas, continue to use open-air latrines and outhouses, which embody clearly unsanitary conditions for waste removal, which negatively affects the health of the population.



### National Coordination for SDG Implementation

Recognizing the slow rate of progress in the field of clean water and sanitation, the DPRK government has taken some official measures to address the issue. In October 2017, the DPRK government enacted the Law on the Control of Mineral Water as a means to improve the quality of the tap water available to the population. Officials claim that this has improved the quality through the introduction of nanotechnology that purifies and disinfects the water. Additionally, there has been construction on mineral water factories to provide people with quality drinking water. The introduction of gravity fed water supply systems has also had a positive impact on the water supply throughout the country, something the DPRK government acknowledged at the 2019 Vladivostok North-East Asian Multistakeholder Forum. In the same presentation, officials asserted the desire to strengthen international cooperation for the development of sustainable water resources, displaying a willingness to accept international assistance in the area.<sup>39</sup>

### The Reality of Water and Sanitation

In 2017, UNICEF released their Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) which shed light on a dire situation. The survey revealed that a lack of maintenance over the years had resulted in the degradation of the piped water systems that were constructed in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>40</sup> Although North Korea does have water treatment plants that have been recently renovated, due to electricity shortages, they are of little use in producing clean water for the population. Although nine in every ten people in the DPRK have access to basic drinking water, contamination has detrimental effects on the health of the citizenry.<sup>41</sup> The price of bottled water is also beyond what many North Korean

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<sup>39</sup> DPRK government. Presentation of the Implementation of SDGs in DPR Korea North-East Asian Multi-stakeholder Forum. Vladivostok, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics of the DPR Korea and UNICEF, 2017. DPR Korea Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017, Survey Findings Report, Pyongyang, DPR Korea: Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF. 154.

<sup>41</sup> UNICEF. Analysis of the Situation of Children and Women in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea 2019, 60.

citizens are able to afford, with a 500ml bottle of water costing upwards of a month's salary.<sup>42</sup> The dire state of North Korea's water systems has required the DPRK government to accept external assistance when it comes to water resources.

The DPRK has received assistance in the area of both water and sanitation, particularly from international organizations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mission in the DPRK has made substantial contributions to improving access to water in peri-urban communities. The ICRC's work in North Korea, particularly through projects in South Hamgyong and South Pyongan Province have assisted in constructing wells, pipelines, and infiltration systems for water distribution to homes, as well as the installation of gravity flow water-supply systems.<sup>43</sup>

With regards to sanitation, the lack of adequate systems to safely sanitize water resources has led to serious health impacts. UNICEF data from 2019 showed that only 61% of North Korea people had access to safe water resources, less than 50% of those in rural areas. The largest concern regarding safe drinking water is its contamination with fecal matter. Most homes are not connected to the sewer system, nor do they have a septic tank, leaving only 48% of people with properly managed sanitation. The UNICEF MICS survey revealed that even 93% of those with improved on-site sanitation facilities, such as a septic tank, disposed of their excreta in an unsanitary way, most notably by using it for fertilizer due to economic reasons. This unsanitary method of disposal continues to undermine health initiatives in North Korea as well, often causing diarrhea and stunting in children.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Mun Dong Hui, "North Koreans rely on Taedong River water instead of tap water due to poor quality." DailyNK, April 1, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Mission in the DPRK, Water Supply and Habitat Projects in the DPRK, ICRC, Pyongyang: 2019.

<sup>44</sup> UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2020 DPR Korea Needs and Priorities, 44.

## SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy

One of the most striking scenes on the Korean Peninsula is the nighttime satellite image of North Korea, and the almost complete lack of light being emitted from the country outside the capital of Pyongyang. This lack of electricity provision across the country affects numerous other SDGs with regards to North Korea, from the ability to operate production facilities to providing other essential services such as medical care through hospitals, educational services through schools, and even transportation within the country. The country has seen a massive deterioration in

production facilities due in part to a lack of resources to improve infrastructure, but also due to perennial natural disasters that continue to afflict the northern half of the peninsula. There have been numerous cases of energy infrastructure projects proposed with the international community, often resulting in cancellation or suspension due to political tensions. Despite this, North Korea has asserted in official policy that pursuing renewable energy to provide for the entire peninsula remains one of its utmost priorities, and have taken what steps they can to meet these stated goals.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

From a domestic standpoint, North Korean leadership has made public statements regarding the importance of renewable energy production since the mid-1990s, and have enacted policies pursuant to those goals. The primary domestic sources of energy for North Korea are coal and hydroelectricity, with coal also acting as a major source of energy export to China and Russia. However, in leading up to the adoption of the SDGs, North Korea enacted the Mid- to Long-Term Development Plan of Natural Energy (2014-2044), which stands out as a major national implementation mechanism for North Korea to enhance their use of renewable energy, with plans for wind energy to produce 15% of energy requirements by 2044, while also building on other sources of renewable energy including solar and hydroelectric power.<sup>45</sup> The government has also made efforts to inform the population about renewable energy resources, running a documentary that touts the merits of solar power production.<sup>46</sup>

These national plans for implementation of clean and affordable energy also take into consideration cooperation with the international community. Over the past few decades, there have been several energy projects proposed and even initiated, only to halt due to political tensions.

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<sup>45</sup> Kim, Y.-S., Yun, S.-G., & Lee, S.-H., Small scale renewable energy development as a strategy for inter-Korean cooperation. *Environmental Law and Policy*. 2018; 21, 131–165.

<sup>46</sup> Hyonhee Shin, “Cheap solar panels power consumer appliance boom in North Korea.” Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-solar-feature-idUSKCN1RT2P1>.

Notably, the offer of two 1 million kW light-water reactors in return for halting nuclear activities stands out as a major cooperation project that had potential to provide clean energy for North Korea. More recently, the Moon Jae-in administration in South Korea maintains interest in energy cooperation with North Korea, with the President of the Korean Electric Power Company (KEPCO) accompanying President Moon for his summit meeting with Kim Jong Un in September 2018.<sup>47</sup>

### **Alternative Sources of Power**

While the government has been rather vocal in its determination to pursue renewable energy, its implementation has not always achieved desired results. As mentioned above, cooperative projects with other countries and non-state actors are often suspended due to heightened political tensions on the peninsula. The light-water reactor project that came as a result of the Agreed Framework in the 1990s was suspended due to nuclear provocations, and even recent efforts at inter-Korean cooperation fell on deaf Northern ears, as relations have deteriorated once more since the thaw in relations in 2018.<sup>48</sup> The constant interruption and cancellation of energy projects, while still desperately needing sources of power, have fallen to North Korean citizens procuring their own sources of energy. Solar panels and solar water-heating systems are becoming a more frequent sight in North Korea, acting as an alternative source of power to the absent government provision of electricity. Even prior to the adoption of the SDGs, solar panel use was on the rise in North Korea, with some estimating that there were nearly 100,000 households making use of solar panels by the end of 2014.<sup>49</sup> This trend in an increased use of renewable energy as a share of North Korea total energy consumption was on the rise years before the adoption of the SDGs, and the government has begun to encourage the people to generate their own sources of power via small-scale renewable energy projects throughout the country.

### **Obstacles to Implementation**

On several occasions, energy assistance has been used as a bargaining tool between North Korea and other states in order to negotiate a cessation of North Korea's nuclear weapon ambitions. The previously mentioned light-water reactors, as well as an offer from Russia in 2018 of a nuclear power plant both came with conditions that North Korea should cease the development of its nuclear weapons programs, both offers falling short of expectations.<sup>50</sup> The political consequences

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<sup>47</sup> "Seoul expects inter-Korean energy cooperation after summit." Yonhap News.

<https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180920013200320>.

<sup>48</sup> Han H., Energy Cooperation with North Korea: Conditions Making Renewable Energy Appropriate. *The Journal of Environment & Development*. 2020;29(4):455. doi:10.1177/1070496520964524

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 460.

<sup>50</sup> Cristina Maza, "Russia Offered North Korea a Nuclear Power Plant to Interfere With Donald Trump's Negotiations With Kim Jong Un: Report." *Newsweek*.

<https://www.newsweek.com/russia-offered-north-korea-nuclear-power-donald-trump-kim-jong-un-1310010>

of North Korea's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons has had a detrimental effect on their ability to import energy sources to meet demand. Due to the potential for oil products to be diverted to the nuclear program, UN sanctions have blocked most forms of energy import, in addition to restricting provision of development aid for North Korea to overcome their energy shortage through improved infrastructure.

Additionally, North Korea's extensive reliance on hydroelectric power production leaves them vulnerable to the consequences of natural disasters and climate change. Extreme weather conditions hasten the degradation of power production infrastructure, and the chronic effects of climate change, including less rainfall, decreases the productive output of North Korea's hydroelectric power plants. Despite the efforts of the North Korean government to increase their energy production capacity from within, it appears that conditions will require assistance from outside North Korea, whether through unofficial trade with China, or through larger deals with the international community for energy assistance. Engaging other non-governmental actors, such as NGOs or private businesses, risks running afoul of UN sanctions on development assistance and imports.

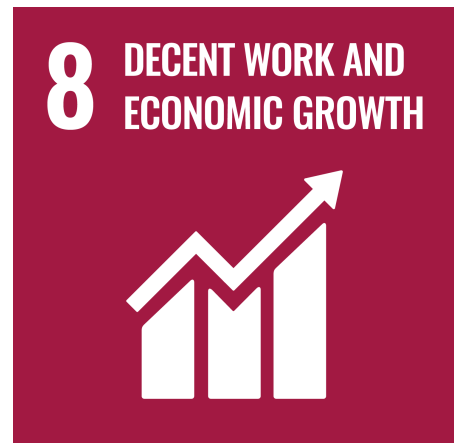
## SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea has struggled to sustain consistent economic growth. After Kim Jong Un became the leader in 2012, the country has begun to see increased growth rates, but recurring natural disasters, and especially the COVID-19 pandemic, have derailed recent efforts to sustain and increase those levels of growth.

### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

The North Korean state prides itself on reporting on its labor “battles” in which citizens are encouraged to work hard to exceed quotas set by the state. These “battles” typically last in multiples of ten, with reports of “80-day battles” resulting in more than 120% production performance.<sup>51</sup> This comes despite the North Korean Constitution explicitly stating that the working day is only 8 hours long.<sup>52</sup> From an international standpoint, North Korea reported in 2019 to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that “institutions, enterprises and organizations are under legal obligation to provide sufficient working conditions to persons with disabilities, and strictly prohibit persons with disabilities from working in case conditions for the labour safety and protection are not provided.”<sup>53</sup> The government also claims to have eliminated child labor more than seven decades ago by establishing in the Constitution that the minimum working age is 16 years old,<sup>54</sup> in compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified in 1990.

Though North Korea officially provides a government job to all of its people, many of these jobs have ceased production, and North Korean citizens are often able to provide bribes in order to be absent from their provided job so that they can pursue other economic interests. There are occasionally crackdowns on these unofficial economic activities to reassert the state’s control over the economy, but this often results in the citizenry suffering further economic hardship within the country as opposed to unofficial employment and economic development.<sup>55</sup>



<sup>51</sup> “KCNA Report on Achievements Made in First Month of 80-day Campaign,” Rodong Sinmun, November 3, 2020.

<sup>52</sup> DPRK Constitution, Article 30. [http://www.naenara.com.kp/main/index/en/politics?arg\\_val=leader3](http://www.naenara.com.kp/main/index/en/politics?arg_val=leader3).

<sup>53</sup> United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Initial report submitted by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea under article 35 of the Convention, due in 2018 (10 October 2019), available from [undocs.org/CRPD/C/PRK/1](https://undocs.org/CRPD/C/PRK/1), Para. 171.

<sup>54</sup> DPRK Constitution, Article 31. [http://www.naenara.com.kp/main/index/en/politics?arg\\_val=leader3](http://www.naenara.com.kp/main/index/en/politics?arg_val=leader3).

<sup>55</sup> “*You Cry at Night but Don’t Know Why*”: Sexual Violence against Women in North Korea. Human Rights Watch, 2018.

## **Exploitation of Labor**

Though the North Korean Constitution has officially abolished child labor, media reports from North Korean news media show that child labor is still taking place on a large, public scale. A recent report from the Rodong Sinmun, the state-run official newspaper, showed photos of graduates from a school for orphans going to work in mining operations in the country.<sup>56</sup> Though the state claims that they are volunteering for this work, it nevertheless contradicts the DPRK Constitution with regards to child labor.

In addition to the perception of the exploitation of children, the North Korean Criminal Code often imposes labor sentences on convicted criminals. Going to a labor training camp is a common sentence, with sentences typically lasting months. This sort of forced labor not only undermines the idea of decent work for all, but also undermines progress in other areas such as health and hunger.

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<sup>56</sup> “Graduates of Orphans’ Schools Volunteer to Work in Difficult Fields,” Rodong Sinmun, May 28, 2021.

## SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Though North Korea relies on rail transportation for much of its economic activity, constant power cuts make the rail system unreliable, while road conditions aren't a feasible alternative either. Despite this, the North Korean government has made innovation and technological advancements one of its priorities, largely as a response in the face of a crippling sanctions regime, hoping to overcome the quickly deteriorating infrastructure across the country. Since North Korea does not publicly post their internal economic data, figures are prone to inaccuracy and it is

difficult to know manufacturing and industry's share of the country's GDP. Since 1991, the South Korean central bank has posted their estimates of North Korea's GDP, and research has inferred that the share of value added to North Korea's GDP by manufacturing and industry has not shifted much from 20% over the last decade.<sup>57</sup>



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

The degradation of North Korea's infrastructure has not gone unnoticed by the government. Kim Jong Un, in a meeting with South Korean President Moon Jae-in remarked that if President Moon were to come to North Korea, Kim would be embarrassed at the state of the transportation infrastructure, noting that it needed improvements to make for a comfortable visit.<sup>58</sup> During the thaw in relations that began in 2018, joint surveys of two major railway routes through North Korea were examined for renovation, though the projects have stalled since a degradation in relations.<sup>59</sup>

Recognizing the importance of China as their largest trading partner, the North Korean government has invested efforts into infrastructure that increase the efficiency of official trade. The New Yalu River Bridge, which began construction in 2011, is finally set to replace the Sino-Korean Friendship bridge, which opened in 1943, and whose facilities are inadequate to handle the trade volume between North Korea and China.<sup>60</sup> The new bridge, despite recurring delays in construction, appears to finally be nearing completion, indicating that once North Korea's strict

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<sup>57</sup> Jiyeon Park "Sustainable Industrialization and Development Cooperation in North Korea," in *Development Cooperation in North Korea and the Sustainable Development Goals*, ed Jiyeon Park (Seoul: Korea Association of International Development and Cooperation), 361.

<sup>58</sup> "[2018 Inter-Korean summit] Koreas hint at possibility of high-speed railway connecting South and North," *Korea Herald*, April 27, 2018.

<sup>59</sup> "Seoul moves forward with inter-Korean railway project," *Korea Herald*, April 23, 2020.

<sup>60</sup> Wong, Sue-lin, "Bridge to nowhere shows China's failed efforts to engage North Korea," Reuters, September 11, 2016, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-nuclear-china-idUSKCN11H05F>.

border lockdown due to COVID-19 is lifted, the new bridge will facilitate the majority of the trade that occurs between China and North Korea.

Kim Jong Un has emphasized the country's need to make progress in the fields of science and technology, fearing that the country may fall behind in those areas if left unattended. Emphasizing the concept of education to encourage innovation, there have also been external organizations that have been able to carry out activities in the country that encourage such practices, particularly in the field of business.

### **Access to Information**

North Korea's reputation as the Hermit Kingdom owes in part to the fact that they do their best to stem the flow of information across their border. Though more and more people are finding ways to connect with the outside world, the state still heavily restricts use of the internet, instead providing their own closely monitored intranet for the population to use.<sup>61</sup> Global internet usage is reserved for a select few, including higher level officials and select university level students. Citing national security concerns, the North Korean government is unwilling to allow full-scale access to the worldwide web, inhibiting technological innovation that could happen otherwise. Instead, the government's strict control over access to the internet, and providing an intranet as an alternative, allows them to monopolize the flow of information that reaches the citizenry through official means.<sup>62</sup> Despite these controls, smuggling activities with China have led to more and more outside information breaching the country, with those in the border regions able to connect to the Chinese networks and make contact with those outside North Korea.<sup>63</sup> The government has responded to these developments by enacting "anti-reactionary thought" laws that punish those who are caught distributing or consuming unapproved media and information.<sup>64</sup> Depending on the type of media, punishment ranges from time in a labor training camp to life in a political prison camp or even execution. While the government monopoly on information has eroded over time, the punishment for unauthorized consumption has remained strict, which not only inhibits innovation, but actively deprives the citizenry of access to information that does not align with the state's interests.

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<sup>61</sup> United States State Department, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA 2020 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> King, Robert R., "North Koreans Want External Information, But Kim Jong-Un Seeks to Limit Access," *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, May 15, 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Smith, Josh, "North Korea cracks down on foreign media, speaking styles." Reuters, January 20, 2021.

## SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities

A self-proclaimed socialist country, North Korea proudly states that there is complete equality in the country, pointing to a lack of discrimination based on race, sex, language, religion, education, occupation, and property.<sup>65</sup> The government further asserts that there are no issues regarding minorities or indigenous peoples, as the country is completely ethnically homogenous.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

As mentioned above, the DPRK government has been very vocal about how they have achieved equality within the country. The DPRK Constitution purports the social, economic and political inclusion of all its people, and the government has reported in their National Reports that, “equality is fully ensured based on unity and cooperation between persons.”<sup>66</sup> This shows that at the policy level, the DPRK government has enacted a law that ensures equality among all people.

Additionally, the DPRK government has been very outspoken regarding the inequalities that exist between countries around the world. During a meeting at the United Nations in 2019, officials stated that, “all anachronistic and unjust economic sanctions against developing countries, which hindered economic and social development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, should be ended.”<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the DPRK asserted that the current international financial and trade system has been dominated by only a few privileged countries, meaning that any attempts at international cooperation are only bound to result in political domination and subordination.<sup>68</sup> North Korea has consistently argued that these disparities should be addressed through investment and infrastructure in less developed areas.<sup>69</sup>

### Entrenched Systemic Inequality

Despite the proclaimed equality across the country, North Korea continues to operate under a system of forced inequality. The *songbun* system, which classifies citizens into one of three major groups (core, wavering, and hostile) and one of over 50 minor groups based on loyalty to the

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<sup>65</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, National Report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 15(A) of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1\* Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, August 27, 2009, available from [undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/6/PRK/1](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/WG.6/6/PRK/1), para 32.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Second Committee Summary record of the 23rd meeting, December 16, 2019, available from [undocs.org/A/C.2/74/SR.23](https://undocs.org/A/C.2/74/SR.23), para 28.

<sup>68</sup> United Nations General Assembly, Second Committee Summary record of the 2nd meeting, October 17, 2019, available from [undocs.org/A/C.2/74/SR.2](https://undocs.org/A/C.2/74/SR.2), para 91.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 94.

DPRK government, has a profound effect on almost every aspect of a citizen's life, from where they can go to school, what job they are allowed to have, even where they are permitted to live. Those who are seen as suspicious or disloyal to the North Korean state are given a poor *songbun*, which not only affects the individual but affects the members of their family as well. While moving to a higher *songbun* is quite rare, only reserved for those who perform heroic acts, one simple misstep in the eyes of the North Korean government may result in not only being assigned a poor *songbun*, but other consequences as well.

The entrenched systems of inequality do not only affect individuals, but are designed to impact entire families. The guilt-by-association system in North Korea extends consequences for crimes to three generations of the person's family, often predetermining an entire family's chances of future success. Additionally, party membership remains an important status symbol for achieving success, though not all citizens are afforded the opportunity to join the party. Lack of party membership limits the opportunities for the individual denying them equal opportunities for success, be it in education or the workplace.

In addition to the *songbun* system, North Korea also remains a very patriarchal society. As mentioned in the section on gender equality, the ingrained patriarchal system creates large divides between men and women in North Korea. The expectation that women will become housewives has inadvertently led to women becoming the breadwinners in North Korean families, due to men still being assigned to their workplaces, even if there is no work to be done and they aren't paid for their work. Women, on the other hand, without assigned workplaces, are free to participate in the unofficial markets, where they can earn exponentially more than their spouses.

## **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities**

Although the capital of Pyongyang dominates the international discourse when it comes to discussing North Korean cities and communities, only 3 million people of the 25-million-person population live inside the capital metro area. While the progress on SDG 11 is most apparent in the capital city, there is a large disparity between Pyongyang and other major cities across the country. The DPRK government in recent years has emphasized the need to update the aging public transportation system, as well as improve the provision of universal housing for all of its citizens.



### **National Coordination for SDG Implementation**

In its presentation in October 2019 at the North-East Asian Multistakeholder Forum held in Vladivostok, DPRK officials presented some of the progress and setbacks they have faced regarding working toward the realization of SDG 11. Most notably, they acknowledged that natural disasters have had a major negative impact on the socio-economic development of the country, and that they continue to face major challenges in the area of waste management in the cities. The presentation also included further plans for improving the situation in cities by improving the transportation system, solving problems surrounding housing and drinking water, as well as enhancing their capacity to manage disasters. These stated plans at the forum in Vladivostok demonstrate that active attention is paid to the issues that face North Korea cities, as well as how they connect to the other SDGs, especially for access to water and those that concern the natural environment.<sup>70</sup>

### **Cities and Communities in the DPRK**

The DPRK government proudly states that they provide housing free of charge to all citizens across the country, but there are large disparities between those that live in urban and rural areas, particularly for those that live in Pyongyang vs. other regions around the country. Like many other sectors of North Korean society, the economic collapse in the 1990s led to marketization of real estate as well, resulting in housing becoming private property. Recently there has been an increase in the number of citizens who live in apartment buildings, increasing to 25% in 2014 from 21.4% in 2008.<sup>71</sup> While the number of tenants has increased, the adequacy and access to housing is still

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<sup>70</sup> DPRK government. Presentation of the Implementation of SDGs in DPR Korea North-East Asian Multi-stakeholder Forum. Vladivostok, 2019.

<sup>71</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics of the DPR Korea and UNPF, Democratic People's Republic of Korea: Socio-economic, Demographic and Health Survey 2014 (Pyongyang: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2015), 13.

lacking.

When it comes to public transportation, the DPRK government has increasingly invested more money into the transportation system, particularly with updates to the metro system in Pyongyang. Consisting of two rail lines, the government introduced new cars in 2016, but there are reports that the old train cars are still heavily used over the new ones. More importantly, freedom of movement is restricted inside the country when it comes to the urban-rural divide, even more so when it comes to the capital of Pyongyang. In the past, citizens would need a travel permit in order to move about the country, but after the collapse in the 1990s, it is possible to bypass such requirements with a bribe, which has spread to all sectors of North Korean society. The utilization of bribes undermines progress on several of the other goals, notably SDG 16, and SDG 5, due to the vulnerability of women to sexual violence under this illicit system.

## **SDG 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production**

The DPRK's unsustainable consumption of natural resources is one of the major factors that have led to the severe natural disasters that continue to ravage the country annually. The deforestation that took place has had cascading effects that have affected food and water resources, as well as timber and other materials. Since its recovery from the 1990s, North Korea has taken more active efforts to combat overconsumption, investing in new technologies for farming and enacting plans for reforestation and better water management.



### **National Coordination for SDG Implementation**

North Korea has had laws pertaining to recycling for decades, though there has been more robust action in recent years. In April 2020, the Supreme People's Assembly made a priority out of the new Law on Recycling, adding further force beyond the DPRK's efforts to reduce their waste production, for economic benefit. Particularly due to the closed borders brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the recycling drive by the DPRK government is more important than in the past. The lack of trade across the border has pushed the DPRK to emphasize the idea of self-reliance even more than in the past. Kim Jong Un himself, in a speech during the Eighth Congress of the Workers Party of Korea, stated that, "the light-industry sector must increase the output of consumer goods by regarding it as the main link to obtain available raw and other materials domestically and recycle wastes, and thereby bring about a fresh advance in the effort for improving the people's living standards."<sup>72</sup> This mention of increasing production and decreasing waste through recycling demonstrates the importance that the DPRK government is placing on responsible consumption and production.

### **Obstacles to Implementation**

The DPRK's unsustainable use of their natural resources has led to calamitous effects that the people continue to suffer from today. The rate of timber consumption in the past, and even to this day, for heating and cooking can partially explain the severity of natural disasters in the country, which has also led to serious soil erosion, which decreases the level of agricultural outputs. This overconsumption of timber has had a wide range of negative effects that have undermined progress toward several of the other SDGs. The state's increased emphasis on recycling has also come with its own negative effects. The border closure due to COVID-19 has choked off almost the entire supply

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<sup>72</sup> "WPK General Secretary Kim Jong Un Makes Concluding Speech at Eighth Congress of WPK," Rodong Sinmun, January 13, 2021.

of goods flowing into North Korea, while the government still imposes quotas to fill for recyclable material.<sup>73</sup> In this sense, the lack of ability to consume by the North Korean people impedes their ability to recycle and produce goods made from recyclable material.<sup>74</sup>

Additionally, concerns abound regarding the safe and environmentally sound management and removal of radioactive waste. From 2006 to 2020, North Korea has conducted a total of six nuclear tests, while not considering itself a state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This means that there have been no visits to monitor and verify the secure management of radioactive waste within the country, causing concern that unsafe management may lead to serious health risks for the civilian population, particularly if water and food products become contaminated. There already exist reports from North Korean defectors that indicate that those who live and work near the nuclear facilities are suffering from this sort of contamination.<sup>75</sup> With the DPRK nuclear program as one of the main reasons for international condemnation, the resulting sanctions regime also has dire effects on the North Korean civilian population to adequately produce and consume.

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<sup>73</sup> Kang Mi Jin, “Many N. Korean households cutting back on consumption.” DailyNK, October 12, 2020.

<sup>74</sup> Park, Minwoo, “‘The way to survive’: North Korea ramps up recycling amid sanctions and pandemic,” Reuters, June 17, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/the-way-survive-north-korea-ramps-up-recycling-amid-sanctions-pandemic-2021-06-16/>.

<sup>75</sup> Interview by NKDB in 2018 (NKDB Unified Human Rights Database).

## SDG 13: Climate Action

When compared to other countries around the world, North Korea's action in combating climate change may be considered above average. As a sign of North Korea's willingness to work on this issue with the international community, they are signatories to the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, and recognize that the Korean Peninsula is more prone to the effects of climate change than many other countries due to misguided past environmental policies, increasing the country's interest in ensuring that agreements and practices are deemed a success. As the

country continues to see devastating natural disasters strike year after year, North Korea's commitment to climate change-related issues and projects has become clearer over the years.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

As mentioned above, North Korea has shown a somewhat rare willingness to play an active part in the international community when it comes to climate change agreements. As a signatory to both the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement, the government has shown a commitment over successive leaders to making progress on climate action initiatives. Furthermore, domestic action has been relatively robust. The creation of the Ministry of Land and Environmental Protection (MLEP) in the 1990s demonstrated an early response to environmental issues, especially as the country underwent a devastating famine as a result of natural disasters that led to the collapse of much of the economic system. Since the zenith of the crisis in the 1990s, North Korea has recognized that its deforestation activities compounded the severity of the natural disasters, and have since made significant efforts at reforestation, though with limited results, as the population continues to cut down trees for fuel and food purposes. The government has begun to implement the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy 2019-2030 and the National Environment Protection Strategy 2019-2030 in efforts to reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.<sup>76</sup> Coupled with the Forest Restoration Campaign 2015-2024, North Korea's policy-level action regarding climate change has been quite strong. In their report to the UNFCCC in 2016, the DPRK government stated that, "With domestic resources, GHG emissions will be reduced by 8.0% by 2030 compared to the Business as Usual scenario (BAU)," demonstrating the government's resolve to contribute to combating climate change regardless of international cooperation. The report continues by asserting that their national contribution could be increased to 40.25% if international support would be provided to the country in the form of financial support, technology transfer, and

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<sup>76</sup> DPRK government. Presentation of the Implementation of SDGs in DPR Korea North-East Asian Multi-stakeholder Forum. Vladivostok, 2019.

capacity building.<sup>77</sup> The report also acknowledges the connections with other SDGs, notably improvements in public transportation that can lead to less reliance on private vehicles for transportation, as well as increasing the efficiency of electricity production within the country.<sup>78</sup>

### **Approach to Climate Change**

Although North Korea might appear to be making significant strides in doing their part to combat climate change, the state of the North Korean economy cannot be ignored when it comes to their contributions. North Korea's economic output is generally small, which contributes little to global greenhouse gas emissions. As a country that contributes little to global emissions, North Korea has been quick to place blame on developed countries.<sup>79</sup> In accordance with the UNFCCC agreements that they have signed, North Korea has been the recipient of aid for programs related to climate action. Particularly, the Kyoto Protocol absolved developing countries of many of their climate responsibilities, and allowed them to become recipients of sustainable development aid when it came to climate action. With the adoption of the Paris Agreement, these conditions have been modified, requiring countries that receive aid to also make contributions of their own. While North Korea was able to take advantage of the way the Kyoto Protocol was constructed to provide support for projects in the fields of agriculture and power generation, the Paris Agreement will now require North Korea to give something back in return, a difficult task given the political and economic climate that currently faces the country.

The UNFCCC agreements are largely split into two parts, adaptation and mitigation. While mitigation refers to taking proper steps to reduce emissions and proactively pursue climate change preventive measures, adaptation refers to adjusting to the effects of climate change and enacting policy and procedures to cope with the effects, rather than active efforts to reduce the effects.<sup>80</sup> North Korea's efforts to combat climate change thus far have been overwhelmingly adaptive, notably in developing methods to respond to annual flooding. The aforementioned emphasis on reforestation efforts since Kim Jong Un came to power is one example of these adaptation efforts. In fact, when it comes to emissions as compared to economic activity, North Korea is far above average in their emissions for the amount of economic activity that takes place, demonstrating that North Korea is not free of responsibility for reducing emissions.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, "Intended Nationally Determined Contribution of Democratic People's Republic of Korea," September 2016, 2-3, <https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/ndcstaging/PublishedDocuments/Democratic%20People%27s%20Republic%20of%20Korea%20First/DPRK-INDC%20by%202030.pdf>.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 7-9.

<sup>79</sup> Choi, Hyeonjung, "North Korea's Climate Change Policy in the Kyoto Protocol System," Asan Report, June 2021, 41.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 35.

### **Future International Cooperation**

As mentioned previously, North Korea has been very active in the field of climate change adaptation, but will no longer be able to receive development aid without making their own contributions. The change in circumstances for North Korea regarding climate change initiatives will demonstrate whether North Korea remains committed to meeting climate change challenges as a part of the international community, or if the regime simply seized on the opportunity to receive development aid while having few obligations in return.

## SDG 14: Life Below Water

As a country surrounded by the sea and occupied with wetlands, North Korea has a vested interest in protecting and conserving marine resources. The government has pledged to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources, as “protecting the water area ecosystem takes an important place in the development of [the] economy and in improving people’s livelihood.”<sup>82</sup> In fact, North Korea claims April and July as ‘Marine Resource Protection Months,’ as months for when activities are conducted to “to propagate the knowledge to protect the coastal resources including shellfish, sea-ear and seaweed and the controlling.”<sup>83</sup> However, despite these policies and proclamations, economic interests have undermined the effectiveness of many of these policies.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

In its national report on biodiversity, North Korea reported that the overuse of natural resources is the main threat causing negative impacts on biodiversity and is linked to marine pollution: “According to the increase of treeless lands, the flooding of soil and sand causes the destruction of the river ecosystem, followed by negative impact on the coastal ecosystem as well. It also causes the decrease of fishery resources inter alia, inland and coastal ones.”<sup>84</sup> In this way, the North Korean government has recognized the interconnectedness between improving the situation of life on land as well, namely through their robust plans for reforestation.

The strengthening of water management and marine resources was proclaimed by Kim Jong Un in 2012 to be a critical task in order to build a “socialist powerful nation.”<sup>85</sup> The government has reported that it has created artificial reefs to protect marine ecosystems<sup>86</sup> and “release[d] billions of good breed young fishes with high productivity.”<sup>87</sup>

In its efforts to regulate fishing in a sustainable manner, North Korea has stated that it has a strict system with rules for sustainable use of marine resources within the ecological limits of the coast and sea ecosystem. The importance of developing the fishery industry has been highlighted by the

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<sup>82</sup> Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, “5<sup>th</sup> National Report on Biodiversity of DPR Korea,” Convention on Biological Diversity, 2016, 26.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 43.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>86</sup> “Persistence in the Artificial Reef Creation Business,” Rodong Sinmun, August 4, 2019.

<sup>87</sup> Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, “5<sup>th</sup> National Report on Biodiversity of DPR Korea,” 42.

state-run newspaper, including ventures by fisheries units to protect and breed high-grade fish species.<sup>88</sup> At the same time, Kim Jong Un spoke about the need for national measures to boost the fishing sector in his 2014 New Year's Speech. These measures included the modernization of fishing vessels, dynamic fishing campaigns by scientific methods as well as shallow-sea farming on an extensive scale.<sup>89</sup>

In an effort to work toward this goal, the government has pledged to increase scientific knowledge, develop research and marine technology. The North Korean government has stated that it will “disseminate the developed technologies for the increment of freshwater and marine fishery and restore the inland water and marine ecosystems and increase the number and size of reserves.”<sup>90</sup> North Korean marine science research institutes and fishery stations have developed artificial proliferation and technology of making fishing grounds of marine products that are over-exploited and have decreased, demonstrating concentrated governmental action on addressing the issues facing the marine ecosystem.<sup>91</sup>

### **Obstacles to Progress**

Though the North Korean government has acknowledged the importance of protecting its marine resources and have enacted policies to restrict overfishing by North Korean fishermen, the government continues to illegally allow Chinese fishing vessels to pay the government for access to North Korean fishing grounds in the East Sea. The number of Chinese fishing vessels has dramatically increased in recent years as well, from 144 in 2004 to 2,161 in 2018.<sup>92</sup> This, in turn, pushes North Korean fishermen into foreign waters for fishing, endangering the lives of the fishermen while also depleting marine resources even further.<sup>93</sup> This emphasis on illicit revenue for the state undercuts the policies created to make progress on SDG 14, while also actively violating UN sanctions that have been placed on the North Korean state.

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<sup>88</sup> “Prospects of the Proliferation of Resources of Sea Urchins,” Rodong Sinmun, July 22, 2020.

<sup>89</sup> “Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un’s New Year Address,” KCNA, January 1, 2014.

<sup>90</sup> Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, “5<sup>th</sup> National Report on Biodiversity of DPR Korea, 27.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>92</sup> Inju Yoon, “Conservation and Sustainable Use of North Korea’s Marine Ecosystem,” in *Development Cooperation in North Korea and the Sustainable Development Goals*, ed Jiyeon Park (Seoul: Korea Association of International Development and Cooperation), 483.

<sup>93</sup> Jaeyoon Park et al., “Illuminating dark fishing fleets in North Korea,” SCIENCE ADVANCES, 22 JUL 2020: EABB1197.

## SDG 15: Life on Land

Even before the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, North Korea had taken substantial official action to improve the conditions for Life on Land. In the aftermath of the famine that ravaged the country in the 1990s, North Korea began to face chronic struggles related to maintaining and preserving their natural environment. Floods and erosion that continue to plague the country and threaten life on land owe their origins in part to the massive amount of deforestation that the country saw in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>94</sup> After the state recognized the cause, they undertook new efforts to preserve and protect the environment, joining international partnerships and conventions related to nature conservation, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the International Union for Conservation of Nature.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, as part of their efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals, they instituted their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan as a means to try and reverse their negative environmental actions and place more emphasis on conservation.<sup>96</sup> Their efforts continued with further policy prescriptions after the adoption of the SDGs, but many challenges still remain for North Korea to achieve the realization of SDG 15.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

At the policy level, North Korea has made concerted efforts to elevate the importance of environmental conservation. The introduction of the ten-year 2015-2024 DPRK National Agroforestry Strategy and Action Plan, as well as continued work with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) by acceding to the Nagoya Protocol demonstrates the state's active efforts to establish policy that aims to preserve the natural environment.<sup>97</sup> While the drafting of policy in North Korea has been a relative success in demonstrating North Korea's commitment to Life on Land, their implementation of policy has had less than stellar results, often due to conflicting governmental policy.

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<sup>94</sup> Lim, Joongbin; Kim, Kyoung-Min; Lee, Kyoo-Seock. 2019. "Does Deforestation Trigger Severe Flood Damage at Hoeryeong City in North Korea?" *Forests* 10, no. 9: 789. <https://doi.org/10.3390/f10090789>

<sup>95</sup> "Democratic People's Republic of Korea," Convention on Biological Diversity, accessed May 28, 2021, <https://www.cbd.int/countries/?country=kp>

<sup>96</sup> Democratic People's Republic of Korea, "5<sup>th</sup> National Report on Biodiversity of DPR Korea," Convention on Biological Diversity, 2016. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/kp/kp-nr-05-en.pdf>

<sup>97</sup> "DPRK National Agroforestry Strategy and Action Plan," Ministry of Land and Environmental Protection, [https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/countries/countries-content/the-democratic-people-s-republic-of-korea/en/DPRK-A-F-Strategy-2015-2024\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/countries/countries-content/the-democratic-people-s-republic-of-korea/en/DPRK-A-F-Strategy-2015-2024_EN.pdf).

## Reforestation

With particular attention paid to their reforestation efforts, the North Korean government has been rather aggressive in working to confront the issue. However, when it comes to implementation, setbacks arise as citizens continue to cut down trees for firewood, as well as to clear land to grow private crops since the people can no longer rely on the state rations, even though state officials have cracked down on this behavior, as it inhibits the reforestation efforts.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, a lack of access to outside information at the level of implementation has inhibited the government's ability to efficiently work and implement efficient reforestation methods. Despite these shortcomings, reforestation efforts have borne results that we can observe through satellite imagery, clearly showing improvements in forest cover, though the imagery is unable to capture all areas of North Korea.<sup>99</sup> According to sources that have worked inside North Korea, institutional knowledge on forestry is relatively lacking, noting that substantial amounts of knowledge are concentrated in a single person, meaning their absence would amount to a substantial loss of expertise. They also mentioned, however, that institutional knowledge has been increasing slowly over time as information and forestry techniques from outside begin to creep into the country, as well as the state's relative lenience in allowing forestry officials to attend conferences and forums outside North Korea, demonstrating a willingness to work with the international community on this issue.<sup>100</sup> However, these positive steps can only be taken so far, as the state is too reluctant to provide necessary tools, including access to GPS and satellite images required to adequately complete certain projects and activities. Additionally, the focus on reforestation efforts undermine progress in the areas of other SDGs, specifically when it comes to education and hunger. Children are often taken out of school in order to participate in reforestation mobilizations, which has a detrimental effect on making progress for SDG 4 (Quality Education),<sup>101</sup> while crackdowns on civilians clearing trees for growing food inhibits progress on achieving SDG 2 (No Hunger).<sup>102</sup>

## Wetlands

Another major aspect of North Korea's progress on this goal has been their efforts at migratory wetland preservation. After joining the Ramsar Convention in 2018, North Korea now has two reserves listed as official Ramsar sites; the Mundok Migratory Bird Reserve and the Rason Migratory Bird Reserve.<sup>103</sup> These sites are meant to protect the habitat of migratory birds as they

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<sup>98</sup> Song, Minkyung, Jong-Min Yi, and Kyung-Seok Park. "북한의 시장화 확산에 대응한 대북 산림복구 지원전략 연구." *한국산림과학회지* 106, no. 4 (December 31, 2017): 487–96. doi: <https://doi.org/10.14578/JKFS.2017.106.4.487>.

<sup>99</sup> Chung, Bruce Songhak, "North Korean Forestlands Have Rebounded in Recent Years." *38North*, December 31, 2020, <https://www.38north.org/2020/12/bchung201231/>

<sup>100</sup> Interview by NKDB with an official working in North Korea, 2021.

<sup>101</sup> KINU, *White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea 2020*, Seoul: KINU, 2020, 451.

<sup>102</sup> KINU, 2020, 288.

<sup>103</sup> Bryan Betts, "Saving North Korea's Wetlands," *The Diplomat*, July 16, 2018,

move across the globe, demonstrating the DPRK's interest in this aspect of protecting the natural environment as well. North Korea's entrance into the Ramsar Convention, as well as participation in other multilateral forums for environmental causes demonstrate North Korea's interest in participating as a member of the international community, in stark opposition to their moniker as "The Hermit Kingdom." One source that has worked extensively inside North Korea on these issues noted that North Korea is generally interested in participating in an array of multilateral institutions, but due to many multilateral organizations only allowing one representative per country to participate, it immediately elicits conflict with North Korea's policy of always traveling with at least one other person.<sup>104</sup> They noted that in the end, unrelenting North Korean governmental policy in unrelated areas prevents them from making substantial and measurable progress in a variety of other areas, including environmental objectives like preserving and protecting life on land.<sup>105</sup>

### **Obstacles to Implementation**

Although North Korea has slowly built partnerships with international organizations and non-governmental organizations around the globe in order to protect and foster life on land, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a debilitating effect on external organizations' ability to carry out work within the country. With strict border closures and extreme virus prevention measures in place, work with the international community, and even internal stakeholders, has become difficult to carry out. However, even with such restrictions, international organizations are still carrying out some of their core work, albeit remotely, through conferences and other forums by way of the internet, a strictly limited service in North Korea, further demonstrating the importance that North Korea places on such projects. Furthermore, though institutional knowledge is relatively weak overall, there is enough momentum and knowledge in the North Korean system for officials to carry out projects independently until international organizations are once again allowed to enter the country and continue with joint projects after the pandemic has subsided. Even though North Korean officials are able to independently carry out projects on the ground without assistance, participation in overseas activities requires months of preparation and assistance given the number of legal obstacles that stand in the way of North Korean participation in many international forums.<sup>106</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic brought all overseas activities to a halt, resetting the amount of time needed for North Korean officials to properly participate. Therefore, North Korean participation may remain absent once overseas events resume, given it will take months for

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<https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/saving-north-koreas-wetlands/>

<sup>104</sup> The North Korean government regularly only participates in official activities outside the country when at least two people are able to attend events, so that they can monitor each other and reduce the risk of defection while abroad. Many conferences organized by international organizations only allocate funding for one representative of each country to attend, creating conflict with North Korean domestic policy.

<sup>105</sup> Interview by NKDB with an official working in North Korea, 2021.

<sup>106</sup> Interview by NKDB with an official working in North Korea, 2021.

North Korea to gain approval to participate in such events while complying with political constraints.

## SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Since the Korean War began on June 25, 1950, the Korean Peninsula has been in a technical state of war, despite the signing of an armistice agreement on July 27, 1953. The lack of a formal end to the Korean war has provided the North Korean state reason to mobilize the country for the sake of the defense of the country, often at the expense of the civilian population. Over the past few decades, the North Korean state has firmly concentrated governmental power in the hands of the Kim family, currently led by Kim Jong Un, grandson of the founder of North Korea, Kim Il Sung. With

this hereditary lineage of power in North Korea, institutions in the state have been consolidated with the aim of supporting the Kim family leadership, often eliminating opposition and undermining the proper dispensing of justice.



### National Coordination on SDG Implementation

The North Korean government has developed its own state institutions over decades, often modifying the names of certain bodies, but leaving their functions mostly intact. The overly strong security institutions within North Korea, including the Ministry of State Security (MSS) and the Ministry of People's Security (MPS) excel at preventing most forms of civil conflict, often delegating duties to neighborhood watch groups known as *inminban*, where citizens are encouraged to self-police and report on activities that can be perceived as anti-state. Additionally, the established laws surrounding the justice system are often very clear regarding the punishment for certain crimes, while often leaving the criteria for the crime itself vague and subject to wide interpretation by officials. Additionally, the conditions afforded to those held in detention facilities are quite clear in policy, but often do not reflect the reality.

The elaborate system that the North Korean state has constructed is believed to enhance the state's ability to collect data. An official from the UN with experience in other states with similar governmental institutions believes that the data collection done by the North Korean state is quite thorough for a variety of different sectors due to the strict control they have over all aspects of the system. They went on to say that while data collection is likely thorough and accurate, the delivery and transparency of data outside the country becomes less clear due to political reasons.<sup>107</sup>

### Justice System and Corruption

Defector accounts regarding the judicial process in North Korea reveals a system that often does

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<sup>107</sup> Interview by NKDB with a UN official that focuses on North Korea, 2021.

not comply with its own established laws. While the North Korean state adamantly denies the existence of political prison camps, estimates for the number of prisoners in such camps reach into the hundreds of thousands.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, there are an overwhelming number of accounts that detail the process of interrogation, often being held without being charged with a crime, which stands in stark opposition to established North Korean law. Although peacekeeping institutions in North Korea have well established rules and regulations regarding their operation, corruption runs rampant across the country. Since the collapse of the economic system in the 1990s, issues are often resolved with bribing officials, even when it comes to committing crimes. This corruption extends in the other direction as well, as mentioned above, with citizens being detained for long periods of time without ever being charged with a crime, often subject to harsh conditions and abusive behavior by investigators. An official from the UN explained that corruption has become so ingrained into the system in North Korea that there is often little choice for officials but to engage in corruption and take bribes for their own survival. With this tacit acceptance of bribery and corruption as a part of doing business, he explained that there is a certain understanding that

### **Rights and Freedoms**

Although the North Korean Constitution has explicitly codified the rights of its citizens, in practice, many of these rights remain unfulfilled. Though the Constitution does not specifically guarantee property rights for its citizens, through an article amended in 1998, citizens are allowed to own private property, especially in the aftermath of the economic collapse and famine in the 1990s. However, this is often not the reality, as North Korean citizens fall victim to confiscation of their property, as well as extortion by state officials.

In addition to violations of property rights, the rights of children are constantly violated through forced mobilizations by the state. As mentioned in a previous section, children are taken out of school for the planting and harvesting seasons, and have been mobilized as the country focuses on the reforestation of the country. More recently, there are reports that children are “volunteering” to work in coal mines, objectively extremely dangerous work.<sup>109</sup> This comes despite North Korea’s ratification of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1990. These reports of children “volunteering” to work in coal mines and farms, undermines other goals as well, most importantly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education).

### **International Response**

The international response to the state of North Korea’s institutions has met with almost universal condemnation, going so far as the UN establishing the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in 2013, and the release of the shocking report the

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<sup>108</sup> Hawk, David. “The Hidden Gulag.” 4.

<sup>109</sup> “Graduates of Orphans’ Schools Volunteer to Work in Difficult Fields,” Rodong Sinmun, May 28, 2021.

following year. The North Korean state vehemently rejected the results of the investigation, despite refusing to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry. The recommendations put forth by the Commission reflected recognition that crimes against humanity were being committed inside North Korea and for the first time, recommended referral to the International Criminal Court as a means for accountability for said crimes.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> “Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea”, report to the Human Rights Council, 7 February 2014, A/HRC/25/63, 20.

## SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

Although there are areas in which the North Korean government is eager to cooperate with the international community, cooperation in working toward achieving the SDGs is generally haphazard in nature. As a nominally socialist country, the government proudly proclaims itself as a tax-free country. In line with the Juche ideology of self-reliance, the state is often reluctant to receive assistance in a variety of areas, instead preferring to resolve issues and build prestige on their own merits.



### National Coordination for SDG Implementation

Measuring the proportion of the domestic budget funded by taxes is one of the indicators providing data on the strengthening of domestic resource mobilization. However, in official terms, this indicator is not applicable to the DPRK. In 1974, the North Korean government officially abolished taxation in the country declaring itself as the “first tax free country.”<sup>111</sup>

The proportion of individuals using the internet is an indicator for the level of operationalization of technology and innovation in the country. In 2018, the DPRK government created an internet portal containing (as of November 2020) 38 North Korean websites.<sup>112</sup> The government also began to roll out their own Wifi service called Mirae (Future), providing further access to the intranet.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, Pyongyang hosts North Korea’s Internet Communication Bureau headquarters, an agency set up to link North Korea to the global Internet.<sup>114</sup>

Technical cooperation and assistance, an essential part of the cooperative efforts between UN agencies, international organizations, and the DPRK government, has a direct relation to achieving the targets of SDG 17. The DPRK UN Strategic Framework (2017-2021) outlines that the UN and the North Korean government have reached an agreement to also focus on SDG 17 among other sustainable development goals as a cross-cutting consideration.<sup>115</sup>

### Perceptions and Reality

Although the DPRK government has proclaimed itself as a tax-free state, citizens are still subject to other forms of duties that must be paid to receive services. As mentioned elsewhere, patients are

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<sup>111</sup> “DPRK First Tax Free Country”, *KCNA*, March 21, 2009.

<sup>112</sup> The portal can be found at <http://www.dprkportal.kp/>.

<sup>113</sup> Jakhar, Pratik, “North Korea’s high-tech pursuits: Propaganda or progress?” BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46563454>.

<sup>114</sup> The exact role of the Bureau has not been explained in detail by the North Korean government.

<sup>115</sup> United Nations DPRK, Office of the Resident Coordinator. *DPRK United Nations Strategic Framework 2017-2021*, 14.

expected to spend their own money on medicine despite the claims of universal healthcare. Likewise, schoolchildren are expected to provide funds for renovations at schools, as well as providing their own materials. While the state portrays the abolition of taxes as something to be proud of, the reality is that this has only led to an unregulated system that has fostered an environment of corruption and bribery.

### **Pandemic Effects on Partnership**

The DPRK was one of the first countries to close its borders in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, choking off almost all official trade and human exchange outside the country. These drastic measures taken by the government have had a significant impact on the quality of life for many North Korean citizens due to lack of imports to sustain lifestyles, and many unofficial businesses suddenly under extreme pressure to cease operations due to government restrictions and economic supply issues. From an aid standpoint as well, the border closure has all but cut off flows into the country, with the last of UN and NGO staff leaving the country in early 2021.<sup>116</sup>

While this severance of person-to-person contact has had debilitating effects in a number of areas, it has also pushed the DPRK to innovate in other areas. Access to the internet is very restrictive, only afforded to select groups. However, the pandemic has also encouraged increased use of the internet, electronically maintaining correspondence with NGOs outside the country,<sup>117</sup> as well as importing electronic pre-recorded presentations used for educational purposes.<sup>118</sup>

### **Future Challenges**

The DPRK response to the COVID-19 pandemic was among the most severe across the world. Not only did NGO work on the ground in North Korea come to a grinding halt, but numerous countries' embassy staff were compelled to exit the country, leaving only a small foreign presence in the country for any continued cooperation.<sup>119</sup> While response to the onset of the pandemic was swift, a relaxation of restrictions by the DPRK government is expected to be much slower than other countries around the world, due in part to a slow vaccination rollout as well as the nature of the government. Encouraging the government to make reasonable adjustments to pandemic prevention measures for the sake of resuming economic activity and international cooperation will be paramount for the DPRK to continue to make progress toward fulfilling SDG 17.

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<sup>116</sup> O'Carroll, Chad, "No UN or NGO workers left in North Korea after more expats depart Pyongyang," NKNews, March 18, 2021,

<https://www.nknews.org/2021/03/no-un-or-ngo-workers-left-in-north-korea-after-more-expats-depart-pyongyang/>.

<sup>117</sup> Interview by NKDB with an official working in North Korea, 2021.

<sup>118</sup> "Preparing for the future of service innovation in North Korea," Choson Exchange, May 15, 2021, <https://www.chosonexchange.org/our-blog/pcm2>.

<sup>119</sup> Roth, Andrew, "Dire situation in North Korea drives 'collective exit' of diplomats," The Guardian, April 1, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/apr/01/foreign-diplomat-collective-exit-from-north-korea-russian-embassy-staff-strict-covid-restrictions>.

## Conclusion

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has shown a relatively unusual willingness to engage with the international system with regards to working toward the Sustainable Development Goals, consistently participating in SDG-related events such as the North-East Asian Multi-stakeholder Forum in Vladivostok in 2019 and the High Level Political Forum in July 2021. The presence of domestic legislation in support of achieving particular Goals, dubbed as the "National Development Goals," as well as the state's willingness to cooperate on an international scale not only with international organizations, but also with external civil society organizations, to achieve the SDGs, show positive signs that the DPRK government is making a sincere effort to achieve the SDGs. However, these positive signs are overshadowed by the government's preference for enacting policy that effectively only assists to maintain the regime's leadership inside the country, rather than pursuing the goals as part of an independent global effort to achieve the goals as an end in themselves. The near complete lack of progress in several areas, often relating to civil rights and economic growth amply demonstrate the government's lack of interest in evenly pursuing each of the SDGs, and are cause for concern that the goals related to these areas will continue to go unfulfilled.

With less than ten years remaining for the 2030 Agenda, the DPRK faces mounting obstacles to achieving the SDGs, not least of which involves the country's prolonged closure of their borders due to the COVID-19 pandemic to not only movement of people across the borders, but to nearly all trade activity as well. If the DPRK hopes to make continued progress toward attaining the SDGs, revisiting and revising these draconian policies in response to the pandemic will be the first priority in resuming any substantial progress. Resuming cooperation with international organizations and humanitarian civil society groups is then an appropriate next step to working toward realizing the SDGs.

The DPRK's willingness to participate in the Voluntary National Review in July 2021 is a welcome development in the state's participation as a member of the international community. Moving forward, continued cooperation with the international community is strongly encouraged, not only specifically with regards to the SDGs, but to the array of other global efforts and bodies to which the DPRK is a member state. Additionally, encouraging the DPRK to further integrate into the international system by becoming a party to more international conventions is a welcome step, and will further assist in achieving many of the goals in which the DPRK has shown less substantial progress in the first six years of the 2030 Agenda. The pursuit of the 17 SDGs is a global effort, and by further integrating with the international community, the DPRK can make further headway on achieving the goals not only for domestic benefit but also in a way that contributes to the global pursuit of "transforming our world."

## NKDB Publications

	Title	Author	Year of Publication	Cost
<b>Annual Publications</b>				
<b>White Paper on North Korean Human Rights (Korean)</b>				
	2007 북한인권통계백서	윤여상 외	2007	20,000원
	2008 북한인권백서	북한인권기록보존소 윤여상 외	2008	20,000원
	2009 북한인권백서	북한인권기록보존소 윤여상 외	2009	20,000원
	2010 북한인권백서	북한인권기록보존소 윤여상 외	2010	20,000원
	2011 북한인권백서	북한인권기록보존소 윤여상 외	2011	30,000원
	2012 북한인권백서	북한인권기록보존소 윤여상 외	2012	30,000원
	2013 북한인권백서	북한인권기록보존소 윤여상 외	2013	30,000원



2014 북한인권백서

북한인권기록보존소  
윤여상 외

2014

30,000원



2015 북한인권백서

북한인권기록보존소  
윤여상 외

2015

30,000원



2016 북한인권백서

북한인권기록보존소  
윤여상 외

2016

30,000원



2017 북한인권백서

북한인권기록보존소  
최선영 외

2017

30,000원



2018 북한인권백서

북한인권기록보존소  
임순희 외

2018

30,000원



2019 북한인권백서

북한인권기록보존소  
임순희 외

2019

30,000원



2020 북한인권백서

북한인권기록보존소  
임순희 외

2020

30,000원

## White Paper on North Korean Human Rights (English)







White Paper on North Korean  
Human Rights Statistics 2007

YOON Yeo-sang, et al

2008

20,000 KRW

	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2008	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2008	20,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2009	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2009	20,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2010	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2010	20,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2011	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2011	30,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2012	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2012	30,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2013	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2013	30,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2014	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2014	30,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2015	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2015	30,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2016	North Korean Human Rights Archives YOON Yeo-sang, et al	2016	30,000 KRW

	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2017	North Korean Human Rights Archives Choi Sun-young, et al	2017	30,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2018	North Korean Human Rights Archives LIM Soon-hee, et al	2018	30,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2019	North Korean Human Rights Archives LIM Soon-hee, et al	2019	30,000 KRW
	White Paper on North Korean Human Rights 2020	North Korean Human Rights Archives LIM Soon-hee, et al	2020	30,000 KRW

## White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea (Korean)

	2008 북한종교자유백서	윤여상, 한선영	2008	10,000원
	2009 북한종교자유백서	윤여상, 한선영	2009	10,000원
	2010 북한종교자유백서	윤여상, 한선영	2010	10,000원
	2011 북한종교자유백서	윤여상, 한선영, 윤중근	2012	10,000원

	2012 북한종교자유백서	윤여상, 한선영, 장은실	2013	20,000원
	2013 북한종교자유백서	윤여상, 정재호, 안현민	2013	20,000원
	2014 북한종교자유백서	윤여상, 정재호, 안현민	2014	20,000원
	2015 북한종교자유백서	윤여상, 정재호, 안현민	2015	20,000원
	2016 북한종교자유백서	정재호, 안현민, 윤여상	2016	20,000원
	2017 북한종교자유백서	안현민, 윤여상, 정재호	2017	20,000원
	2018 북한종교자유백서	안현민, 윤여상, 정재호	2018	20,000원
	2019 북한종교자유백서	안현민, 윤여상, 정재호	2019	20,000원
	2020 북한종교자유백서	안현민, 윤여상, 정재호	2020	20,000원

## White Paper on Religious Freedom in North Korea (English)



White Paper on Religious Freedom in  
North Korea 2009

YOON Yeo-sang,  
HAN Sun-young  
JANG Eun-sil

2009

10,000원



White Paper on Religious Freedom in  
North Korea 2012

YOON Yeo-sang,  
HAN Sun-young  
JANG Eun-sil  
CHOI Sun-young

2012

10,000원



White Paper on Religious Freedom in  
North Korea 2013

YOON Yeo-sang,  
CHUNG Jai-ho  
AN Hyun-min

2013

20,000원



White Paper on Religious Freedom in  
North Korea 2014

YOON Yeo-sang,  
CHUNG Jai-ho  
AN Hyun-min

2014

20,000원



White Paper on Religious Freedom  
in North Korea 2015

YOON Yeo-sang,  
CHUNG Jai-ho  
AN Hyun-min

2015

20,000원



White Paper on Religious Freedom  
in North Korea 2016

YOON Yeo-sang,  
CHUNG Jai-ho  
AN Hyun-min

2016

20,000원



White Paper on Religious Freedom in  
North Korea 2017

YOON Yeo-sang,  
CHUNG Jai-ho  
AN Hyun-min

2018

20,000원



White Paper on Religious Freedom in  
North Korea 2018

YOON Yeo-sang,  
CHUNG Jai-ho  
AN Hyun-min

2019

20,000원

## Trends in Economic Activities of North Korean Defectors (Korean)



2006 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향 - 취업, 실업, 소득

엄홍석, 윤여상,  
허선행

2007

5,000원



2007 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향 - 취업, 실업, 소득

윤여상, 허선행

2008

5,000원



2008 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향 - 취업, 실업, 소득

북한인권정보센터

2009

5,000원



2009 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향 - 취업, 실업, 소득

허선행, 임순희

2010

5,000원



2010 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향 - 취업, 실업, 소득

서윤환, 이용화

2011

10,000원



2011 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향 - 취업, 실업, 소득

서윤환, 이용화

2012

10,000원



2012 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향 - 취업, 실업, 소득

서윤환, 신호선

2013

10,000원



2013 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향 - 취업, 실업, 소득

서윤환, 신호선,  
박성철

2014

12,000원



2014 북한이탈주민 경제활동  
동향- 취업, 실업, 소득

임순희, 안현민

2015

12,000원



2015 북한이탈주민  
경제사회통합 실태

윤여상, 임순희

2016

17,000원



2016 북한이탈주민  
경제활동실태조사

임순희, 윤인진,  
양진아

2017

17,000원



2017 북한이탈주민  
경제사회통합 실태

임순희, 윤인진,  
김슬기

2018

17,000원



2018 북한이탈주민  
경제사회통합 실태

임순희, 김석창

2019

17,000원



2019 북한이탈주민  
경제사회통합 실태

임순희, 김성남

2019

17,000원



2020 북한이탈주민  
경제사회통합 실태

김성남, 김소원

2020

17,000원

## Trends in Economic Activities of North Korean Defectors (English)



2009/2010 Trends in Economic  
Activities of North Korean Defectors

SEO Yoon-hwan,  
LEE Yong-hwa


2011

15,000원

## South Koreans' Perception of North Korean Human Rights (Korean)

	북한인권에 대한 국민 인식 조사	윤여상, 임순희	2014	15,000원
	2015 북한인권에 대한 국민 인식 조사	윤여상, 임순희	2015	15,000원
	2016 북한인권에 대한 국민 인식 조사	임순희	2016	15,000원
	2017 북한인권에 대한 국민 인식 조사	임순희	2017	10,000원
	2018 북한인권에 대한 국민 인식 조사	윤여상, 임순희	2018	10,000원
	2019 북한인권에 대한 국민 인식 조사	윤여상, 임순희	2019	10,000원

## Other Publications

	Are They Telling Us the Truth?	Hiroshi Kato, KIM Sang-hun, YOON Yeo-sang, Tim Peters	2003	₩ 2,500
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북한 정치범수용소  
완전통제구역  
세상밖으로 나오다

신동혁

2007

13,000원



서독 잘쓰기터  
인권침해 증앙기록보존소

Heiner Sauer, Hans-Otto  
Plumeyer(이건호 譯)

2008

12,000원



북한 인권 문헌 분석

윤여상 외

2008

20,000원



국군포로 문제의 종합적 이해

오경섭, 윤여상,  
허선행

2008

15,000원



북한의 반인도적 범죄에 대한  
국제사회의 긴급대응

세계기독교연대(북한인  
권정보센터 譯)

2011

15,000원



북한 정치범수용소의  
운영체계와  
인권실태

윤여상, 이자은,  
한선영

2011

30,000원



북한 구금시설 운영체계와  
인권실태

윤여상, 구현자,  
김인성, 이지현

2011

25,000원



















Political Prison Camps in North  
Korea Today

YOON Yeo-sang,  
LEE Ja-eun  
HAN Sun-young

2011

\$20

	Prisoners in North Korea Today	YOON Yeo-sang, KOO Hyun-ja, KIM In-sung LEE Ji-hyun	2011	\$20
	북한인권사건리포트: VICTIMS' VOICES 제 1권	북한인권정보센터	2013	비매품
	North Korean Human Rights Case Report: VICTIMS' VOICES Volume 1. English	Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB)	2013	Not for Sale
	North Korean Human Rights Case Report: VICTIMS' VOICES Volume 1. Japanese	Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB)	2013	Not for Sale
	북한인권사건리포트: VICTIMS' VOICES 제 2권	북한인권정보센터	2013	비매품
	North Korean Human Rights Case Report: VICTIMS' VOICES Volume 2. English	Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB)	2013	Not for Sale
	North Korean Human Rights Case Report: VICTIMS' VOICES Volume 2. Japanese	Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB)	2013	Not for Sale
	중국의 탈북자 강제송환과 인권실태	윤여상, 박성철, 임순희	2013	20,000원

	North Korean Defectors in China - Forced Repatriation and Human Rights Violations-	YOON Yeo-sang, PARK Seong-cheol. LIM Soon-hee.	2014	\$20
	Nordkoreanischer Menschenrechtsfallbericht VICTIMS'VOICES	Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB)	2014	\$20
	Cahiers d'observations des droits de l'Homme en Corée du Nord VICTIMS'VOICES	Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB)	2014	\$20
	북한 해외 노동자 현황과 인권실태	윤여상, 이승주	2015	17,000원
	Human rights and North Korea's Overseas Laborers: Dilemmas and Policy Challenges	YOON Yeo-sang, LEE Seung-ju	2015	17,000 KRW
	북한 구금시설 총서I: 북한 구금시설 현황과 개선방안	북한인권정보센터	2016	10,000원
	북한 구금시설 총서I: 개천 1호 교화소	이승주	2016	10,000원
	북한 구금시설 총서I: 강동 4호 교화소	유혜정	2016	7,000원



북한 구금시설 총서I: 함흥 9호  
교화소

안현민

2016

10,000원



북한 구금시설 총서I: 증산 11호  
교화소

임순희

2016

10,000원



북한 구금시설 총서I: 전거리  
12호 교화소

김인성

2016

10,000원



북한 구금시설 총서I: 오로 22호  
교화소

서윤환

2016

10,000원



2014 유엔  
북한인권조사위원회(COI)  
보고서 발간 이후 북한 인권  
평가보고서:  
북한인권정보센터의 DB 분석을  
중심으로

북한인권정보센터

2016

비매품



An Evaluation Report of the North  
Korean Human Rights Situation  
after the 2014 UN Commission of  
Inquiry Report-Based on an Analysis  
of NKDB's Database

북한인권정보센터

2016

비매품



북한 밖의 북한

윤여상, 이승주

2016

20,000원



북한 정치범수용소 근무자,  
수감자 및 실종자 인명사전

북한인권정보센터

2016

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North Korean Political Prison Camps  
A Catalogue of Political Prison Camp  
Staff, Detainees, and Victims of  
Enforced Disappearance

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北朝鮮政治犯収容所  
勤務者、収監者および失踪者  
人名事典

북한인권정보센터

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Campos de Concentración para  
Prisioneros Políticos Norcoreanos

북한인권정보센터

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러시안 드림: 러시아 지역 북한  
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박찬홍

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	스토리북 : 나의 세 번째 집	김동주	2019	비매품
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스토리북 :  
푸르른 삼각산아

박용석

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초기 정착  
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내 마음의 보물섬

한나라

2020

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북한의 SDGs와 인권연계  
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송한나, 테오도라  
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The Human Rights Guide to  
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Hanna Song, Teodora  
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Ahn

2021

Not for Sale

## About NKDB

The Database Center for North Korean Human Rights (NKDB) is a non-political, non-religious, non-governmental organization that was established in 2003 in Seoul, South Korea. NKDB has dedicated its work to the advancement of the human rights situation in North Korea through the investigation and documentation of human rights abuses perpetrated in the DPRK. Through its North Korean Human Rights Archives, NKDB performs systematic investigations and documentation of cases of human rights violations in the DPRK and manages the NKDB Unified Human Rights Database, the largest repository on North Korea in human rights cases in the world. The North Korean Human Rights Watch Functions conduct effective monitoring of specific human rights issues and publishes regular reports and publications. The Resettlement Assistance Headquarters gives specialized support services to North Korean defectors resettled in South Korea by providing education on integration, resettlement, and psychological counseling services to victims of torture, returned prisoners of war, and abductees. The Education Center for Korean Integration designs education programs targeting the general public to improve the knowledge of the human rights situation in the DPRK and emphasize the importance of social integration between the two Koreas.

For more information on NKDB's work and how you can contribute to the betterment of the North Korean people, visit our website and our social media platforms.

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Democratic People's Republic of Korea  
2021 Progress Report on the Implementation  
of the Sustainable Development Goals

