
HUMANITARIAN/DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP¹

POSITION PAPER ON REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN DPR KOREA

1. BACKGROUND

This paper aims to consolidate the views of the DPR Korea Humanitarian/Development Working Group (HDWG) on the issues of rehabilitation and development programming in DPR Korea. The paper is provided for the information of the Government of DPR Korea, donor nations, international and non-governmental organisations. It is hoped that the paper will facilitate discussions between all parties as DPR Korea recovers from the problems it has faced during the 1990s.

2. CURRENT STATUS AND ANALYSIS

Negotiating a 'humanitarian space' in DPR Korea has been a long and difficult process. There have, however, been significant developments. Various advocacy methods have been employed in finding common ground between the Government and in-country operational agencies. It should be noted that the Government's initial lack of familiarity with humanitarian operations has made this form of engagement particularly important. Through a process of mutual patience and the slow development of understanding about the constraints and requirements of the other party progress has been, and continues to be, made.

The response to the humanitarian crisis in DPR Korea continues to ensure the survival of a considerable percentage of the population (WFP provides food rations to some 30% of the population). At the same time the Government of DPR Korea maintains very considerable constraints on humanitarian agencies operating in the country. The continued generosity of donors is crucial to the continued welfare of the population. Concurrently the transfer of large amounts of resources with little demanded in return can be argued to be one of the reasons inhibiting transition to development.

Humanitarian to Development Transition

For a number of years the UN Consolidated Appeal for DPR Korea (regarded as the main joint planning tool for the humanitarian agencies in DPR Korea) has included as one of its goals 'encouraging transition and rehabilitation activities' and, in 2001, made direct reference to the introduction of development programmes. Different agencies are attempting to work on development at different levels.

- Some NGOs and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation have been attempting to use development frameworks for project implementation, including the requirement for greater stakeholder involvement in planning, implementation and monitoring, longer programming cycles and output oriented programming strategies.
- The European Commission has supported agricultural rehabilitation and water and sanitation. Projects currently being designed by the Directorate-General for Foreign Relations are likely to provide substantial technical assistance in the future.
- UNDP has been providing training and capacity-building support to the Government, as well as more direct input provision. Several UNDP interventions, particularly in the environmental sector, have focused on 'upstream'² assistance.
- WFP, through its food for work programmes has provided considerable assistance to the national effort to rehabilitate agricultural infrastructure. Through the joint WFP/UNICEF Local Food Production programme, good progress has also been made in the rehabilitation of food processing facilities which had previously been closed down.
- UNICEF has elaborated a 3 year programme of cooperation focusing on a wide range of short, medium, and longer-term interventions.
- WHO carries out capacity building support to the system and also provides direct inputs to the national health system

¹ The HDWG consists of UN Agencies, donors, bilateral organisations, and NGOs. The Flood Damage Rehabilitation Commission of the Government of DPR Korea is invited to its meetings but has not attended since 1999. The Group meets on a regular basis to monitor implementation of the CHAP and to oversee the development of Consolidated Appeals as well as to consider issues pertinent to international programming in DPR Korea.

² 'Upstream' denotes assistance provided to central government on broad policy issues and how to deal with them, with a view to bringing about an enabling environment for human development and the alleviation of poverty.

For humanitarian activities a set of working tools have been established upon which the programme is based. These include the Humanitarian Principles, a set of Consensus Statements and the annual exercise for formulation of the Common Humanitarian Action Plan as part of the Consolidated Appeals Process. A similar framework is now required for rehabilitation and development programming. The most appropriate tool may be the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). However, elaboration of these documents will require the provision of more extensive data by the Government and improved access for United Nations system agencies and their partners to the population and line institutions and ministries. To date the Government has been reluctant to move ahead with this process. A UNDP mission in May 2001 briefed the Government on the process required to prepare a national Human Development Report. Should the Government decide to embark on this process it would be considered a very significant development. However, considerable distance still needs to be traveled in order for development agencies to have confidence that meaningful rehabilitation and development programming is possible in DPR Korea. Steps towards this goal could include the following:

- Mutual appreciation of the need for increased transparency by the Government and enhanced dialogue between donors and the Government in relation to the identification of rehabilitation and development programmes, aiming to assist in the mitigation of the current economic problems.
- Provision by the Government of comprehensive economic and social data or the provision of assistance by international organisations in the compilation of such data.
- Improved cooperation and coordination between the various arms of Government involved in economic and social rehabilitation activities.
- Closer dialogue between donors, agencies and line ministries.

Facilitation of these issues could be achieved through the UNDP-planned Aid Coordination Programme, which aims to support the Government in better identifying rehabilitation and development needs and enhancing its capacity to develop relations with the donor community.

The geo-political climate also plays a considerable role in determining donor response:

- The north-south rapprochement process, which was so dynamic during 2000 has presently slowed;
- The current status of the country, which has established diplomatic relations with many European nations, is still complicated by international concerns about production and sale of military hardware as well as relations with Japan.

While not a geo-political issue the natural disasters the country has faced over the last 6 years have contributed to a deterioration of infrastructure, and has increased DPR Korea's vulnerability to further natural calamities.

Without resolution of these issues, as well as the problem of outstanding debts to international banks and institutions, the possibility of DPR Korea gaining membership of and support from international financial institutions remains uncertain as does accessing meaningful development aid.

3. NEXT STEPS

The HDWG sees the following issues as requiring attention:

(i) Immediate Issues:

- (a) There is currently no clearly defined 'space' for the implementation of rehabilitation/development programmes. However, there are positive signs from the Government and the HDWG should aim to build on these, with an initial focus on UNDP's proposed Aid Coordination Programme. Concurrently, humanitarian programming must continue in order to safeguard the population, focusing on reaching the most vulnerable through agreed assessment methodologies.
- (b) One objective of moving towards rehabilitation and development programming, to the limited extent that it is currently possible, should be to assist the Government to better understand and prepare to meet the requirements that donors will place upon it for this form of programming.
- (c) The Government needs to deal more openly with in-country international organisations and NGOs. Concurrently donors and development agencies should ensure that the Government is familiar with their requirements in order to access development assistance.

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- (d) Discussion on rehabilitation and development programming should be undertaken in the same way that has been employed for the current humanitarian programmes – focusing on cooperation and transparency by all parties.

(ii) Coordination:

- (a) A coordination mechanism needs to be established for rehabilitation and development programming. The UNDP's proposed Aid Coordination Programme should form the basis. At the same time in-country agencies would like to see the Government embark on the preparation of a National Human Development Report and/or the establishment of a Common Country Assessment and the formulation of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework as a way to develop common plans with the Government and better understand the wider rehabilitation and development needs of the country.
- (b) Coordination mechanisms, which should be led by the Government, should be inclusive, with sector-based meetings and consultations as well as a wider forum including relevant line-ministries and the in-country agencies interested in supporting rehabilitation and development programming.

(iii) Advocacy Issues:

- (a) The HDWG will more widely share information on the rehabilitation and development activities under implementation in the country. To this end the OCHA Bulletin will provide separate sections for humanitarian and development programmes. Additional materials will be developed to ensure that the wider international community is fully apprised of rehabilitation and development work being undertaken in-country.
- (b) Given the recent establishment of diplomatic relations between DPR Korea and a number of states it is suggested that donor countries and institutions meet at the policy level and determine a way forward concerning interaction with DPR Korea. To date this has been achieved through the UNDP Round Table process. This forum has proved useful for dialogue with DPR Korea. However, the HDWG now considers that the time is right for donor nations to more clearly articulate the requirements they will have in order to engage in rehabilitation and development in DPR Korea.
- (c) Media visits to DPR Korea should be encouraged to highlight the needs of the country.
- (d) UNDP's proposed Aid Coordination Programme should form the basis of advocacy work.