

Working at the People-to-People Level Recommendations for United State Government Involvement

Humanitarian Assistance, Development
Assistance and Exchange Programs with
The Democratic People's Republic

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Introduction

This briefing paper was written in support of “U.S. Strategy towards North Korea: Rebuilding Dialogue and Engagement,” (hyperlink) a Ploughshares Fund project convened by Joel Wit that reviews current developments in North Korea and proposes a realistic set of objectives and recommends U.S. government actions in support of those goals.

This paper discusses food assistance, development assistance, and technical and cultural exchanges, also known as “knowledge-sharing” activities. Each section concludes with a recommendation for U.S. government involvement in these fields.

Expanding or inaugurating the U.S. government’s roles in these areas will be possible only as U.S.-DPRK relations improve. Wit’s paper outlines three phases of the negotiation process, and activities appropriate for each stage: Phase I (restarting dialogue); Phase II (when the DPRK stops expansion of its nuclear program and begins rollback); and Phase III (as rollback of the DPRK’s nuclear program continues and denuclearization begins.) This paper follows Wit’s format for stages, although some activities, such as the provision of food aid, could take place before the resumption of dialogue on nuclear issues.

Under current law, the U.S. government can fund humanitarian assistance. However, many of the activities below would be considered non-humanitarian assistance; certain provisions of various laws would have to be waived for the United States to provide funding for such activities. In the meantime, the U.S. government should continue to provide political support and maintain the legal environment in which U.S. NGOs active in the DPRK can continue their activities. NGO activities should remain delinked from political developments between the two countries.

With the exception of food aid, the US government’s experience in these fields is limited or non-existent. Much of the rationale for these recommendations is drawn from the experiences of US NGOs and UN agencies as well as NGOs and agencies from other countries. However, background information on the experiences of these groups is

¹ Many thanks to Nancy Lindborg, Dr. Randall Ireson, and Yeri Kim who made many valuable comments on sections of an earlier version of this paper.

provided only insofar as it relates to the recommendations.

Humanitarian Assistance

Background

North Korea, which has insufficient arable land to grow enough food to feed its population, has relied on outside sources of food and fertilizer, perhaps since its founding. The 1989/1990 dissolution of the Eastern Bloc and the subsequent disappearance of favorable trading terms, access to sufficient fertilizer, parts and fuel for farming equipment contributed to growing food shortages.² The DPRK requested humanitarian assistance after the 1995 flooding, and wide scale international assistance to the DPRK began in 1996.³ Food assistance has continued, at varying levels and through different agencies, since that time.

Response to the food shortages in 1996 was the starting point for the U.S. government and most U.S. NGOs to build relationships with the DPRK. Soon after food assistance began, UN agencies and NGOs also became involved in small-scale development projects, and began or expanded training and capacity building programs with the DPRK. Several useful studies have been written on the US NGO and UN experiences, particularly on the delivery of food assistance.⁴ These books and articles provide a comprehensive discussion of these issues from a variety of perspectives. This paper includes only information relevant to recommendations for future U.S. government activities.

The USG has also had limited involvement in medical assistance through the provision of medicines and the provision of generators to hospitals.⁵ Thus, with the exception of

² Daniel Schwegendiek, "The North Korean Standard of Living During the Famine," *Social Science and Medicine*, (2008) 596-608, p. 597

³ Although the WFP had been in the DPRK since the 1980s, there was no full-scale program until the famine in 1995. Dr. Hazel Smith, "Minimum Conditions for Humanitarian Action in the DPRK: A Survey of Humanitarian Agency Involvement and perspectives," Dec. 2001.

http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa79392.000/hfa79392_0.htm

⁴ See Andrew S. Natsios, The Great North Korean Famine: Famine, Politics and Foreign Policy (United States Institute of Peace: 2001); Gordon Flake and Scott Snyder, editors Paved with Good Intentions, (Prager, 2003), Edward P. Reed, "Unlikely Partners in the Quest for Juche: Humanitarian Aid Agencies in North Korea," in Choong-yong Ahn, Nicholas Eberstadt and Young-sun Lee, eds., A New International Framework for North Korea? Contending Perspectives (Washington, D.C.: Korea Economic Institute of America, 2004); Michael Schloms, North Korea and the Timeless Dilemma of Aid, (LIT, Münster: 2004), Hazel Smith, Hungry for Peace: International Security, Humanitarian Assistance and Social Change in North Korea, (United States Institute of Peace Press Books: 2005); Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland, Famine in North Korea: Markets, Aid and Reform (Columbia University Press: 2007); and John Feffer, "The Right to Food: North Korea and the Politics of Famine and Human Rights," in Human Rights in North Korea: Toward a Comprehensive Understanding, Kie-Duck Park and Sang-Jin Han, eds. (The Sejong Institute: 2007).

⁵ The United States government has also contributed significant energy assistance, first as part of the Agreed Framework and then under the Six Party Talks. See "Assistance to North Korea," Mark E. Manyin

energy assistance provided as part of denuclearization agreements,⁶ most U.S. assistance has been limited to food aid. The U.S. government’s funding of or involvement in development and exchanges has been constricted by both law and policy.

1996-2004

As shown in the chart below, United States humanitarian assistance to the DPRK began modestly in 1996 with a contribution of 19,500 metric tons (MT) in response to reports of severe flooding.⁷ USG food aid jumped to 200,000 MT in 1997, peaked in 1999 at nearly 700,000 MTs and, although dropping in 2000 as the need declined, stayed at a fairly high level through 2004.

Fiscal Year	Food Aid Per Year Metric Tons	Food Aid Per Year -- Commodity Value (\$ million)	Medical Supplies and Other (Per FY; \$ million)
1995	0	\$0.00	\$0.20
1996	19,500	\$8.30	\$0.00
1997	177,000	\$52.40	\$5.00
1998	200,000	\$72.90	\$0.00
1999	695,194	\$222.10	\$0.00
2000	265,000	\$74.30	\$0.00
2001	350,000	\$58.07	\$0.00
2002	207,000	\$50.40	\$0.00
2003	40,200	\$25.48	\$0.00
2004	110,000	\$36.30	\$0.10
2005	25,000	\$5.70	--
2006	0	\$0.00	\$0.00
2007	0	\$0.00	\$0.10
2008	148,270	\$93.70 ⁸	\$0.00
2009	21,000	\$7.10	\$4.00

and Mary Beth Nikitin, Congressional Research Service Report R40095, Updated April 1, 2009, http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/CRS_Assistance_to_DPRK_April_09_R40095.pdf, p. 15.

⁶ Ibid and “Twin Brothers Light up Hospital,” on the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Website, March 21, 2009

(http://ibew48.com/index.cfm?zone=/unionactive/view_article.cfm&homeID=106849.) See also North Korea Economy Watch’s Mercy Corps archive, <http://www.nkeconwatch.com/category/organizaitons/mercy-corps/>.

⁷ Mark E. Manyin and Mary Beth Nikitin, op. cited, page 2. Compiled by CRS from USAID, USDA, and the State Department. Used with Permission. The full chart also shows KEDO Assistance, fuel and nuclear disablement costs.

⁸ Estimate.

Total	2,258,164	\$706.75	\$9.40

Before large-scale humanitarian assistance began in 1996, the DPRK had been a recipient of bilateral assistance from China and the Soviet Union.⁹ This assistance could be used at the North Korean government’s discretion; there were no “designated recipients,” as there are in food aid programs. When the DPRK first asked the United States for food, they asked that it be government-to-government, even naming the legislation under which such aid is donated.¹⁰ But the aid was not bilateral. Instead, US assistance was delivered through both the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and a US NGO consortium known as the Private Voluntary Organization Consortium (PVOC).

This marked the first time that food was given through intermediary organizations rather than directly to the government. The donors (the US, ROK and Japan, among others), required that the food be delivered according to humanitarian criteria, and that it be used solely for those populations determined to be most at risk. The UN and NGOs were charged with determining which populations were most in need. Initially targeted recipients were defined as ‘flood victims;’ in the second appeal the populations deemed most vulnerable were the very young, the very old, and pregnant and nursing women.,¹¹ The WFP also fed workers participating in rural reconstruction projects in “food-for-work” programs.

Both the WFP and the PVOC pushed for extensive monitoring throughout the country. However, North Korea, apparently suspicious of U.S. and WFP motives, resisted demands for information and access, such as lists of all intended beneficiary institutions, the ability to make visits to distribution points without prior notice (“random access”) and the ability to bring in Korean-speaking monitors. The working relationship was very challenging for both the aid workers and their DPRK counterparts. At times the DPRK rationale was seen as legitimate by the WFP and NGOs (for example, there was a general acceptance of the fact that the DPRK would not want monitors to visit sensitive military areas), but the refusal to meet other monitoring demands was at times confusing and frustrating to the aid workers.

It was challenging, both for organizations delivering food aid and NGOs working in areas of medical assistance and food security. Some NGOs left, saying there was no “humanitarian space” to work effectively in the DPRK. Others stayed and forged very effective programs over time. The PVOC was laid down in 2000, after the conclusion of

⁹ Scott Snyder, *China’s Rise and the Two Koreas: Politics, Economics, Security* (Lynne Rienner Publishers: 2009), pp. 9, 33; Daniel Schwekendiek, “Determinants of well-being in North Korea: Evidence from the Post-Famine Period,” *Economics and Human Biology* 6 (2008) 446-454. P. 447.

¹⁰ Ambassador Thomas Hubbard, personal communication.

¹¹ Haggard and Noland, p. 90.

one its most innovative – and most challenging - projects, which combined the delivery of potato seed with the provision of food aid.¹²

Subsequent US food aid during this period was delivered through the WFP, which instituted a policy of ‘no food aid without access,’ and continued to push for improvements in monitoring in the accessible counties. Monitoring conditions gradually improved over time, but progress was slow. However, optimum standards were never reached during this period.

There are different, potentially overlapping explanations for lack of DPRK acquiescence to donor demands. One argument points out the steep learning curve: North Koreans, used to bilateral assistance that they were free to distribute at will, hypothetically needed several years to learn and understand Western demands. At the same time, food monitors needed to learn how to negotiate the North Korean system. This argument also draws from the perspective that in Korean culture – North and South – relationships and oral agreements are as important, or even more important than written agreements.¹³ The “learning curve” argument is substantiated by the fact that relationships built during this period have contributed to marked improvements in monitoring and program management of both food assistance programs and other NGO activities since those initial years.¹⁴

Another perspective builds on the perception that food was given for a combination of humanitarian and political motives, and that the political motives weakened the humanitarian rationale. Stephen Haggard and Marcus Noland hypothesize that all food assistance given during the Clinton administration was linked to their policy of engagement, to the point that food was given in exchange for North Korean political concessions, including attending meetings. They claim that there were “food for meeting” or “food for inspection” quid pro quos in at least eight cases.¹⁵

Some NGO staff, implicitly agreeing with Haggard and Noland, have commented that in retrospect, it was challenging to implement a monitoring system that met international standards in part because of the multiple purposes (or conflicting views of the purpose) of U.S. food aid. According to this argument, the US government gave food aid 1) to meet

¹² There is a lack of consensus regarding the multiple reasons for the dissolution of the PVOC, as well as an evaluation of its achievements and weaknesses. For two descriptions, see Scott Snyder, “The Experience of US NGOS in North Korea,” pp. 15-46, in *Paved with Good Intentions*, op. cited, pp. 30-31 and Thomas McCarthy, “CARE’s Withdrawal from North Korea,” Nautilus Policy Forum Online, PFO 00-03A: April 26, 2000, accessed at http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0003A_McCarthy.html.)

¹³ See “Korean Concepts of Negotiating,” Tom Coyner, Seoul-based American business consultant (<http://www.softlandingkorea.com/Korean%20Concepts%20of%20Negotiating.htm>)

¹⁴ Karin Lee, “International Standards and the US NGO Experience in North Korea, 1996-2005” paper presented at “The European Union Policy towards North Korea and its Role in Northeast Asia,” Daegu, Korea, June 23, 2006. For an excellent list of some of the lessons that have been learned, particularly as they apply to development programs, see Reed, “Unlikely Partners,” pp. 18-23 op. cited.

¹⁵ Haggard and Noland, op. cited, pp. 130-136. They also say that the Bush administration attempted to use food in a quid-pro-quo for political concessions, but that they were unable to do so.

humanitarian needs 2) to create good will and 3) as an incentive to the DPRK to participate in negotiations. In this framing of US food aid, the DPRK hypothetically considered that the food was given as a quid pro quo for a DPRK concession and therefore it was not reasonable to expect the DPRK to give it only to “intended beneficiaries” under a strict monitoring regime. Thus it was difficult for NGOs and the WFP to achieve better monitoring standards: the DPRK was unwilling to improve the terms of the delivery of assistance when the requisite non-humanitarian conditions (for example, attending a meeting or allowing the inspection of a suspected nuclear site) had already been met.¹⁶

Dr. Mika Aaltola also contends that the food aid was offered by the United States with a political motivation, but in this case, it was given to weaken the image of the DPRK government in the eyes of its citizens as the all-powerful beneficent provider of food.¹⁷ Arguing that food aid in general is used as a “propaganda tool” inside famine-stricken states, Aaltola uses this hypothetical US motivation to explain and justify DPRK resistance to monitoring efforts. In the DPRK case, the donors’ insistence on monitoring, as well as requiring bags of aid to be printed with the flag of the donors’ countries, was politically motivated, in part to drive home the strength of the donor governments and the weakness the DPRK government. He frames diversion – which he calls theft – as a defensive and understandable measure practiced by the recipient government to diminish the political impact of the gift:

The ‘theft’ of the donated food is the antithesis of effective political persuasion because it would boost the North Korean regime’s attempts to maintain its own unique characteristics, which are contrary to the interests of the USA and its allies in the region. Thus . . . the effectiveness of food aid as a tool for political persuasion in this case depended heavily on the easiness [sic] with which the North Korean government could conceal the relationship between donated food and the food distributed among its population.¹⁸

Many might question Aaltola’s assumption of the motives of both parties. However, reports that the food aid from the United States was announced in the DPRK to be a gift in recognition of Kim Jong Il’s greatness lends credence to this theory.

Regardless of which framework(s) created the dynamic, the attempt to transition from unconditioned food aid to a need-based program -- with intended recipients determined by age and gender -- was only partially successful during this time.

¹⁶ These reflections – shared in personal communications over time – assume that the U.S. government didn’t intentionally create this dynamic.

¹⁷ Mika Aaltola, “Emergency Food Aid as a Means of Political Persuasion in the North Korean Famine,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (April, 1999), pp. 371-386.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

However, despite the challenges confronted in delivering and monitoring the aid, the food aid given during this period conferred immediate benefits – it met urgent humanitarian needs, it created good will, and it gave us a small window into understanding humanitarian conditions inside the DPRK. It introduced the DPRK to the expectations and demands made by those providing international assistance. It also gave insights into how the DPRK addressed inherent obstacles to food security. And it forged many of the relationships between North Koreans and US NGO workers that continue to this day.

2005-2009

By the late 1990s, congressional critics of the Agreed Framework were skeptical about the provision of US food aid.¹⁹ They demanded better monitoring in order to ensure that US aid was not being diverted by the DPRK government to the elite or the military. Although the WFP saw no evidence of diversion, neither could they guarantee that all food was reaching the intended beneficiaries. The North Korean Human Rights Act (NKHRA), which became law in October 2004 (PL 188-333), contained a 'Sense of Congress' provision declaring that "significant increases above current levels of United States support for humanitarian assistance provided inside North Korea should be conditioned upon substantial improvements in transparency, monitoring, and access to vulnerable populations throughout North Korea."

Beginning in 2002, the U.S. government made a clear linkage between the extent of the monitoring and whether food aid would be provided. US Food aid dropped to 40,200 MT tons in 2003, rose to 110,000 MTs in 2004 and dropped to 25,000 in 2005. In 2005 and 2006, food production in the DPRK increased and at the end of 2005, the DPRK said they no longer needed humanitarian assistance. WFP staffs were cut and WFP aid dropped significantly. No US food aid was delivered in 2006 and 2007.

Meanwhile, however, ROK bilateral assistance increased significantly during the Roh Moo Hyun administration. The Roh administration monitoring requirements were not very demanding, and some people hypothesize that the DPRK preferred ROK's aid, with fewer strings attached, to the USAID/WFP aid. In 2008, with the Lee Myung Bak administration in office, ROK assistance abruptly disappeared.²⁰

In 2007 incessant rains in North Korea led to wide-spread flooding, and loss of homes and crops, raising fears of water-borne infectious diseases. Over \$72 million dollars was provided in assistance, the majority by the ROK. The U.S. government provided an initial response of \$100,000, which was used by U.S. NGOs Mercy Corps and Samaritan's Purse to provide antibiotics. That August, the State Department issued a

¹⁹ For more information on congressional responses to US food aid to North Korea, see Karin Lee and Adam Miles, "North Korea on Capitol Hill" in John Feffer, ed., The Future of U.S.-Korean Relations: The Imbalance of Power (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 160-178.

²⁰ Some observers believe that ROK food aid was terminated at USG request in order to give the U.S. more leverage, but there is no evidence to back up this hypothesis.

press release stating that the U.S. government is "prepared to engage with North Korean officials on arrangements for a significant food aid package."²¹

At first the DPRK did not respond. However, negotiations took place in 2008 between US officials from USAID, the National Security Council and the Department of State, and the DPRK Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Agreement was eventually reached on a protocol to deliver 500,000 MTs of food assistance over a 12 month period, 400,000 MT through the WFP and the remaining 100,000 MT through a new US NGO consortium. In the words of one NGO leader, the "ground-breaking protocol served to significantly normalize humanitarian assistance programs."²² For the first time since US food assistance to the DPRK began, shipments of food aid were contingent on implementation of the monitoring protocol, and shipments were suspended when protocol conditions weren't met.

It was challenging for both NGOs and the WFP to implement the protocol. However, it was notably more difficult for the WFP and their DPRK counterparts (the National Coordinating Committee or NCC) to come to agreement on interpreting and implementing the protocol than it was for the US NGOs and their DPRK counterparts (the Korea-America Private Exchange Society or KAPES) to overcome similar challenges. Most significantly, the WFP was not granted visas for the number of Korean-language monitors deemed by the U.S. government to be adequate, nor was it able to carry out a nation-wide nutrition survey that was to have been completed by October 2008. The last shipment USAID shipment destined for distribution in the DPRK by the WFP arrived on September 30, 2008. With the pipeline suspended, there was nothing for WFP monitors to do, and they started taking extended furloughs.

The NGO- program delivering U.S. assistance proceeded comparatively smoothly during this period. Although some parts of the protocol were difficult to implement, problems were addressed and food continued to be delivered on schedule throughout the program's duration. Nevertheless in early March the DPRK asked the US NGOs food aid monitors to leave by the end of the month.²³ When the program ended, 169,120 MTs of food aid had been shipped to the DPRK, nearly 75,000 MT for distribution by the NGOs.

Why was the program ended by the DPRK? At the most basic level, according to the DPRK, the US broke its promise to deliver 500,000 MTs of food and therefore the program was shut down. The U.S. says that food aid wasn't delivered because the DPRK

²¹ I do not know if direct communication with the DPRK supplemented this public announcement.

²² Nancy Lindborg, "Statement of Nancy Lindborg," Testimony to Senate Foreign Relations Committee, June 11, 2009. Lindborg explained that the provisions of the new DPRK-US agreement "included an initial needs assessment effort, signage at all distribution points that indicated the food was a gift from the American people and USAID, an agreed upon list of institutions and individuals targeted to receive food, the ability to track the food as it went from port to warehouse to distribution point, all the way to the beneficiary's home with a minimum of 24 hours notice; and the inclusion of Korean speakers on our team."

²³ Although the US NGO based in the DPRK to deliver the U.S. government food assistance were asked to leave, other US NGO activities continued.

failed to implement the protocol for the 400,000 MT tons that was to have been delivered by the WFP. There are multiple explanations for why and how this standoff occurred, and additional reasons for asking the NGO staff to leave provided by the DPRK. The larger political landscape, with the change in the U.S. administration, and decisions in the DPRK to launch a rocket and conduct a second missile test may have played some role. However, despite the premature ending of the program, US NGO participants deem the program a success because it was implemented according to international standards and with the involvement of over 100 county officials.

Recommendations: Food Assistance – the Future

Food shortages will persist in the DPRK for the foreseeable future, and food aid is likely to be part of any package offered by the administration. The FAO/WFP calculated a shortfall of 836,000 tons for the 2008/2009 marketing year, leaving 8.7 million people in need of food assistance. The FAO/WFP crop assessment/food shortage estimate for 2009/2010 has not yet been released. While some early reports say that 2009 crop yields are high,²⁴ others are more pessimistic. The Seoul-based International Corn Foundation estimates that this year's corn crop will drop by forty percent (the worst harvest in twelve years), due to lack of rain and fertilizer.²⁵

As the Obama administration considers food assistance, it will need to determine the nature and extent of the program. The administration's first goal should be to make "need-based" assistance the norm so that food aid is provided only after an evaluation of needs and a negotiated agreement with the DPRK regarding intended recipients.²⁶ There are a few reasons for this approach. The most basic one is that USAID ordinarily makes gifts based on need, and in the long-run it should adhere to its own standards and guidelines. In addition, the experience of the last NGO program was positive – both the DPRK and the US were satisfied with the level and type of monitoring.

Secondly, the long-term goal of some humanitarian agencies is to contribute to a process by which the DPRK can join the community of nations in multiple arenas, such as agriculture, commerce, education, health, finance, science and technology, and so on. Participation in each of these fields requires the ability to interact with other nations according to international standards. To abandon the 2008/2009 protocol for a less vigorous one would be a step backwards on this path.

The administration's second goal should be to transition from food aid to food security programs. Aid agencies seek to make communities as self-sufficient as possible in meeting their needs for food and shelter. Food aid for too long a period creates a host of

²⁴ Personal communication based on satellite analysis, September 29, 2009.

²⁵ "N. Korean Corn Crop to fall by 40 percent: agronomist" Yonhap News, September 22, 2009, accessed September 25, 2009 at

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/09/22/0401000000AEN20090922004600315.HTML>

²⁶ Here "need-based" means aid that is granted according to need demonstrated by a needs assessment based in part on-site visits with intended populations, distribution according to the results of the needs assessment, and monitoring to ensure that the intended populations receive the food.

problems including distortion of the local economy leading to dependency on outside sources for food. While most analysts believe that it is not possible for the DPRK to become food-self-sufficient, they also agree that it can produce substantially more food than it does currently through a combination of inputs and changes in farming practices. Furthermore food security programs lay the ground work for improved collaboration on future development projects, and continue the learning on both sides through technical exchanges that will inevitably be an important component of North Korea's full entry into the global economy.

The following suggestions for U.S. government have little political risk because of a low chance of diversion of contributions. They also build gradually on existing knowledge drawn on a dozen years of experience.

Phase I

Need-based humanitarian assistance

Although there are mixed reports regarding the severity of food shortages in the DPRK, conditions in the DPRK might require that humanitarian aid actually precede "phase I" of US-DPRK rapprochement as defined by this project. Regardless of whether food aid precedes Phase I or is offered only after dialogue resumes, from a humanitarian perspective, the most desirable outcome would be a return to the need-based humanitarian assistance program begun in summer 2008 and suspended in March 2009.²⁷ As noted above, the monitoring done by the NGOs was deemed the best achieved in the DPRK and up to international standards. A return to this program would likely require resolving U.S. concerns: the nutrition survey that was to have taken place in fall 2008 would have to be completed and the DPRK would have to provide visas for a sufficient number of Korean-speaking monitors. Furthermore, there is likely to be a requirement that the DPRK recompense the United States for the unmonitored distribution of the food that was already in the DRPK when the monitors were asked to leave in March 09.²⁸

²⁷ The administration might determine an infusion of food aid is necessary to meet urgent humanitarian needs that, if left unmet, could result in wide-spread death. In the best case scenario, this aid would be given according to the "need-based" definition outlined above: after a needs assessment, with a defined population of those most in need of nutrition, and monitoring to ensure the intended population receives the food. However, in the face of urgent need, it might be difficult to replicate the improved monitoring achieved during the last food aid program. If food aid is urgently needed for humanitarian purposes, the U.S. might consider encouraging the ROK to provide assistance via the WFP.

²⁸For example, the Senate Foreign Operations Appropriations bill for 2010 as passed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee includes the following language: "Funds appropriated in this Act and subsequent acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs for energy-related assistance for North Korea shall be reduced by an amount equivalent to the amount the Secretary of State determines the Government of North Korea owes the Government of the United States for the unsupervised distribution of food assistance provided by the United States." (S 1434 PCS, 111th Congress.) While it is unclear whether this provision will survive a floor vote or conference, at this point it looks as though it will be most likely become law. Check <http://thomas.loc.gov> for updates.

The United States will need to determine how this aid should be delivered – through the WFP, through NGOs or through a WFP/NGO combination. Each has risks and benefits. Most likely a return to WFP/NGO will be considered to be the best outcome. The WFP has a greater infrastructure and capacity to deliver aid on a large scale and considerable knowledge and experience. The United States should consider requesting that all WFP donors require the same norms and endorse the same protocol. If this were to occur, the WFP program would potentially have an even greater impact and reach an even larger population in the DPRK. Furthermore, raising program implementation standards for WFP could potentially ripple to other UN operations in the DPRK – for example, the ability to staff UN programs with expat Korean speakers.²⁹

However, the inability of the WFP and the WFP’s DPRK counterpart (the NCC) to successfully implement the WFP portion of the last program may raise concerns. Considerable time and effort would be necessary to negotiate a new Letter of Understanding with the DPRK

The NGO-KAPES partnership created the conditions to implement a need-based food assistance program according to international standards. Many in the NGO community believe that they could expand the program substantially without sacrificing quality. Certainly with a longer lead-up time, NGOs might be able to field an expanded program with the same high-level quality of staff that distinguished the last program.

It should be noted that every NGO in this most recent consortium had 10 to 12 years of experience working in the DPRK. This provided the NGO leadership (the “Leadership Council”) with a deep, hard-won understanding of how to work with North Korean partners and a commitment to making the program successful. These long-standing relationships provided a basis of trust for the DPRK counterparts. The DPRK was willing to accept less experienced and inexperienced newcomers to the DPRK as long as they worked under the Leadership Council’s auspices. Furthermore, the NGOs made a commitment to one another to work inside the DPRK as a cohesive unit and to make decisions jointly about implementation. If a larger U.S. government funded program is introduced, it would be advisable to again restrict the grantees to NGOs with previous experience in the DPRK or to have NGOs new to the DPRK work under the auspices and direction of an NGO Leadership Council made up of experienced NGO leaders. Otherwise the new NGOs would need to go through the same steep learning curve of working with the DPRK, which would jeopardize the success of the program.

Finally, it will be necessary to conduct a nutritional survey at some point. The planned 2008 nutrition survey was to have been conducted jointly by the WFP and UNICEF. UN agencies have the most in-country expertise in statics gathering, and would likely need to be involved in any large-scale survey.

²⁹ Conversely, some observers believe that this is one of the major reasons it was more difficult to implement the protocol on the WFP side: the NCC didn’t want to open the door to renegotiating LOUs and MOUS with all UN institutions.

Formulate Game-Plan for Transition to Food Security Programs

As the new administration formulates the tactics and strategies of its humanitarian approach to the DPRK, it should undertake or commission a study comparing the risks and rewards of small scale development assistance in the field of food security vs. humanitarian assistance. The study should explore ways to increase food security for ordinary Koreans and perhaps strengthen market mechanisms for the distribution of food. The goal of the study should be two-fold: to contribute to a greater understanding of the experiences to date, and to explore suitable projects for the U.S. government. Note that the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has already instituted an Agricultural Support Program Study that could be a useful basis for this review.³⁰

Bradley Babson has noted that “any significant internationally supported economic development effort in the future is likely to strengthen the fiscal and administrative power of the center over the local level at least initially, as official development assistance and foreign investment typically are contracted and directed through central authorities.”³¹ While this is true in part, in certain cases there are ameliorating circumstances. For example, although food assistance strengthens central government oversight, and restores the government as the key provider of food, the recent USAID-funded food assistance program demonstrated that provincial and county governments are also deeply involved in food distribution. Observers concluded that local government officials were committed to ensuring that food aid was appropriately distributed in the areas under their purview.

Food security programs also have the potential to strengthen provincial, county and local control over food. Food produced above quota or from kitchen gardens has been legally sold at the markets, strengthening this method of food distribution. Most (though not all) regulations limiting markets have not made the sale of food illegal.³²

There are multiple definitions of “food security,” but a basic one is “adequate access to food at all times, throughout the year and year to year.”³³ Whether or not an individual or household has adequate access to food is influenced by many things. All of the following

³⁰ According to the January-April 2009 SDC Newsletter, “ASP has been instrumental for the production of a discussion paper on a range of issues directly related to improving the food security in the country. Nearly all implementation agencies in the country are taking part in this undertaking and also some members of the diplomatic community are using the ideas expressed therein. The aim of the paper is to be able to present a much more unified approach toward the partners and to generate positive exchanges and discussions on food security issues, with DPRK counterparts at all levels as well as donor agencies. The main concern is to promote sustainability in food production and all agencies are invited to continue to contribute to the paper.” SDC PYONGYANG NEWSLETTER, http://www.sdc-dprk.ch/en/Home/January_April

³¹ Bradley O. Babson, “Transformation and Modernization of North Korea: Implications for Future Engagement Policy”

³² Apparently grain is currently (September 2009) legally excluded for sale from markets, but some grain is sold on the markets despite the prohibition. Personal communication.

³³ “Operationalizing Household Food Security in Development Projects: an Introduction,” John Hoddinott, International Food Policy Research Institute, March 1999, p. 2.

types of programs have the potential to improve food security: A) programs that improve the ability to produce food (such as seed improvement, soil fertility, land reclamation; irrigation, double-cropping, and small-scale community or household capital inputs such as threshers, tractors and trucks); B) education and training in order to implement these inputs successfully; C) investments that improve health in other ways (good health care and nutrition practices); D) capital investment in industries associated with food production (fertilizer and farm equipment plants); and E) investments in infrastructure (such as improving transportation to move food and agricultural inputs more easily and improving sanitation and access to clean water, to reduce nutritional loss through diarrhea and other water-borne illnesses). Underlying the success or failure of all programs is the larger environment – do government policies obstruct, allow or support the interventions designed to increase access to food?³⁴

In general, programs that have been successful in the DPRK to date have fallen into categories A and B.³⁵ Also, some NGOs and multilateral organizations such as UNICEF have implemented projects improving access to clean water for individual communities and towns, particularly through gravity fed systems. Some programs, such as those designed to help individual households improve their own nutritional status or income-earning ability, have had mixed results due to mixed government support. Programs with the potential to improve nutrition for a larger unit (such as a school or clinic) have been more successful.

The U.S. study should examine how the U.S. government can become engaged in food security programs in addition to humanitarian assistance, and the U.S. interest in this approach.³⁶ Ideally the study would review the food security programming in categories A, B and C implemented by US NGOs, European NGOs, the SDC, and UN. It should include an analysis of successful and unsuccessful strategies to date, and hypothesize, with DPRK input, why some have been more successful than others. (For example, double cropping has been relatively successful for many agencies implementing this strategy; green manures a little less so.) A later study would examine the possibility and timing of interventions in the remaining categories.

Participants would include US NGOs such as Mercy Corps, Global Resource Services, Christian Friends of Korea, World Vision, Samaritans Purse, American Friends Service Committee, and World Vision, as well as experts in the field such as Dr. Hazel Smith,

³⁴ This list is partially drawn from Hoddintott, op-cited, above.

³⁵ There have been very successful interventions in some health fields, such as TB. I am not aware of interventions in nutrition education, but they may well exist.

³⁶ A recent paper uses an OECD/Development Cooperation Directorate definition of humanitarian assistance: “action in assistance, reconstruction, or rehabilitation ‘during and in the aftermath of an emergency.’ The authors then query the duration of an aftermath. “Rethinking Food Security in Humanitarian Response,” by Daniel Maxwell, Patrick Webb, Jennifer Coats and James Wirth, Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition and Science Policy and Feinstein International Center, presented at the Food Security Forum (Rome, April 16-18, 2008). This suggests that after 12 years, the United States consider taking actions beyond emergency assistance.

Kathi Zellweger (SDC), Hyeong Jung Park (Korea Institute for National Unification), Gopalan Balagopal (UNICEF), Suk Lee (Korea Development Institute), Hyoungsoo Zang (Hanyang University) and Dr. Randall Ireson.³⁷

The study should conclude with an examination of US laws prohibiting the expenditure of US funds on non-humanitarian assistance inside the DPRK, and explore the legal dividing line between “humanitarian assistance” and “non-humanitarian assistance,” as it is phrased in at least two laws (NKHRA and the Glenn Amendment). If the US government determines that it wants to provide food security programs and such programs require a waiver of existing laws, it is possible that extensive communication with Congress would be necessary, which should begin as soon as it seems likely food security programming might be possible.

Phase II

Need-based humanitarian assistance

If there is demonstrated need for food aid, it should continue under international monitoring standards, as described above. Fertilizer could also be distributed during this period – it is more cost-effective than food aid, and strengthens the rural economy. At the same time, consideration should be given to DPRK efforts to transition to more sustainable farming practices; heavy input of fertilizer is a step away from that transition.

Pilot Food Security Programs

As discussed above, the US government should invest in programs that increase food security programs, to increase North Korean capacity to produce its own food, improve local agency in securing food, and strengthen markets as tools for distributing food. Actual programs would depend on the results of the study. Here are three sample programs that have been used effectively by NGOs in the past. Any of these ideas could be expanded.

Small-scale, low-cost inputs to farms such as plastic sheeting

North Korea has a short growing season. Plastic sheeting allows farmers to plant seedlings in seeds beds before transfer to fields and paddies. Plastic sheeting is also used by some NGOs for green houses that allow institutions such as health clinics to grow food year round for their patients and staff.

Small-sale, medium-cost farm equipment, such as portable threshing machines

Portable rice threshing machines can be used directly at the fields. This saves labor (it’s easier to transport the machine than the harvest) and also reduces grain loss, since the crops are less vulnerable to birds and rats. According to one source, a portable threshing machine results in such a significant reduction in crop loss

³⁷ Note that a conference tentatively schedule for November 2009 in Seoul, with many of these participants, will address some of these issues, but in a less systematic way, and outside the context of US policy.

and that threshers pay for themselves after about a year of operation.³⁸ Other equipment includes seed drills and small portable supplemental pumps and irrigation equipment (which support crop rotation).

USDA/FAS Educational Exchange Programs

USNGOs have already had extensive experience in hosting North Korean delegations for training tours on a wide range of agricultural issues. US sponsorship of such exchanges could send an important signal to DPRK, both as a symbol and a benefit of a closer US-DPRK relationship. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service sponsors several categories of exchanges for developing and middle economies for “the development and adoption of new technologies, and enhancement of agribusiness and trade in foreign markets.” The Borlaug Fellows program, (which enables collaborative research on sustainable agriculture at USDA, Land Grant Colleges, NGOs, etc.) is probably the most appropriate first step. See section on exchanges or <http://www.fas.usda.gov/icd/rsed/res-scient-exchanges.asp> for more information.

Development Assistance³⁹

Background

Where the causes of a food emergency are considered to be more complex than solely due to natural disaster, aid agencies try to transition from emergency aid to development assistance as quickly as possible. North Korea was no exception. Formal international discussions about development in the DPRK took place under the auspices of the Agricultural Recovery and Environmental Program Plan (AREP), developed by the DPRK government⁴⁰ with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) assistance in 1998.⁴¹

³⁸ Dr. Randall Ireson calculates that the cost of a thresher purchased in China is between \$2200 and \$2500. Practical production capacity is about 1 ton/hour if you have an efficient crew of 4-5 people running the machine (handling the rice sheaves, feeding them to the machine, removing the straw, bagging the rice, etc.) During a 30 day/8 hours/day harvest processing season, 240 tons of rice would be threshed. *Assuming* that timely processing avoids a 5% grain loss to rats/birds/rain damage means that 12 tons of grain is avoided. A world price of around \$200/ton for paddy rice means a savings of \$2400. Fuel and spare parts, runs about \$300, but the payback is quite rapid.

³⁹ Some of the studies mentioned in the previous section also touch on the history of development programming in the DPRK. The following additional sources may be helpful: Edward P. Reed, “The Role of International Aid Organizations in the Development of North Korea: Experience and Prospects. ([Asian Perspective](#), Vol. 29, No. 3, 2005, pp. 51-72) and Interim Development Assistance for North Korea A Multilateral Approach, Suchan Chae and Hyungsoo Zang, [International Journal of Korean Studies](#), (Spring/Summer 2002.)

⁴⁰ See “Statement by H.E. Choi Su Hon, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, ”Thematic Round Table Meeting on Agricultural Recovery and Environmental Protection (AREP) for the Democratic People’s Republic of

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Seven years later, Edward Reed summarized two major obstacles to successful development programming in the DPRK: North Korea’s nuclear program and North Korea’s lack of capacity to act as a partner to international aid agencies.⁴² Unfortunately, those obstacles remain. The successes and failures of AREP – which had been conceived as an “exit strategy” from humanitarian assistance and a “bridge to sustainable development”⁴³ can contribute to understanding barriers to implementing long-term development programs in the DPRK.

Kim Young Hoon, a researcher at the Korean Rural Economic Institute, wrote that the AREP program grew out of North Korea’s recognition that successful agricultural reform – attempted unsuccessfully by the DPRK government in 1996 -- would require substantial investment from international sources.⁴⁴ The initial AREP plan envisioned three phases: (a) short-term emergency assistance; (b) sustained rehabilitation and donor interventions and (c) preparation of a framework for long-term development.⁴⁵ Initial AREP activities were to be focused on recovering and rehabilitating farmland and irrigation capacity that had been destroyed in floods, improving fertilizer production facilities and farm machinery factories, and reforestation.

According to an external review, one of AREP’s greatest successes was coordinating fourteen separate projects⁴⁶ and thereby “exploit[ing] existing synergies between projects to achieve greater, more sustainable results.”⁴⁷ These included projects such as rehabilitating dikes, dams and arable land and using inputs such as fertilizer, seeds and equipment to increase the production of crops, especially through double-cropping programs.⁴⁸

Korea (DPRK),” Geneva, 28-29 May 1998. Accessed at http://www1.korea-np.co.jp/pk/045th_issue/report/report05.htm, June 10 2009.

⁴¹ Natisos gives fascinating background information on inter-agency tensions that cropped up during these discussions. *Op. cited.*, pp 191-195.

⁴² Edward P. Reed, “The Role of International Aid Organizations”, *op.cited.*, p. 52

⁴³ Second Country Cooperation Framework for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (2001-2003), July 16, 2001, DP/CCF/DPK/2, Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, p. 5. (Hereafter referred to as SCCF)

⁴⁴ Kim Young-Hoon, “The AREP Program and Inter-Korean Agricultural Cooperation,” *East Asian Review* Vol. 13, No. 4, Winter 2001, pp. 93-111, p. 98. Accessed at http://www.ieas.or.kr/vol13_4/13_4_6.pdf June 24, 2009.

⁴⁵ “Country Review Report for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” July 13, 2001, DP/CRR/DRK/1, Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund. (Hereafter CRR)

⁴⁶ These projects included flood damage response, double-cropping, environmental protection salt production; sweet potato cultivation; and increasing access to grass-fed animals, reforestation.

“Confidential Report on the United Nations Development Programme in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, 1999-2007, External Independent Investigative Review Panel,” May 31, 2008. (Hereafter to be referred to as ‘Confidential Report,’) pp. 186-187. Accessed at http://www.undp.org/dprk/docs/EIIRP_Final_Report_31%20May.pdf on June 24, 2009.

⁴⁷ Confidential Report, p. 141

⁴⁸ SCCF, p. 6.

However, donor governments didn’t fund the more intensive mid and long-term investments. The industrial overhauls of fertilizer plants and farm machinery were dropped from the plan after the 2000 AREP Roundtable.⁴⁹ The 2001 UNDP Country Review Report acknowledged that assistance from donors “had been motivated by the country’s emergency situation, focusing initially on emergency relief and then on agricultural rehabilitation.”⁵⁰

AREP long-range development projects were never implemented. for a combination of reasons. First, a consensus emerged that AREP or similar projects could not make the DPRK self-sufficient in food production.⁵¹ Because of limited arable land, food security requires the DPRK to earn enough income from exports to purchase food, which in turn requires the rehabilitation of its industrial, transportation and energy sectors, as well as greatly increased capacity in fields such as market economies and transition economies.⁵² Furthermore, there was considerable concern that the AREP projects would not have significant impact on food production, particularly on the structure and strategy of DPRK agriculture.

In addition, humanitarian actors in the DPRK quickly found out that it was very difficult to implement standard project developments and monitoring procedures. While it is possible to implement food assistance programs under less than ideal conditions, it isn’t possible to do development work without considerable partnership and oversight.⁵³ As a result, donors were reluctant to invest in full-scale infrastructure rehabilitation programs.

In addition, to date the DPRK has chosen not to make permanent policy changes that many NGOs and all multilateral agencies believe would be necessary to allow development projects to bear fruit. For instance, the DPRK policy on allowing farmers to keep or profit from production beyond quota requirements has gone through several changes, making it difficult to calculate the impact of incentives on over-all food production. Another example: trucks donated to allow farmers to bring food to market have not been able to be used for that purpose consistently. Mid-stream project

⁴⁹ Second Thematic Roundtable on Agricultural Recovery & Environmental Protection – DPRK, April 29, 2000. Accessed at http://www.nautilus.org/DPRKBriefingBook/agriculture/DPRK_UNDP.pdf June 24, 2009. See Kim Young-Hoon, op. cited, page 101.

⁵⁰ CRR

⁵¹ CRR, p. 17

⁵² In “Food Security in North Korea: Designing Realistic Possibilities” (Shorenstein/APARC – Stanford, February 2006, available at: http://iis-db.stanford.edu/evnts/4140/Ireson_FoodSecurity_2006.pdf), Dr. Randall Ireson argues that it is, in fact, possible for the DPRK to become a self-sufficient food producer through introducing sustainable farming methods. He also argues that such an approach can be implemented more quickly and with fewer obstacles than a more comprehensive overhaul than would be required for food security based on a revitalization of the export economy. However, this position has not been widely embraced. Ireson also believes that economic diversification might start in the agricultural sector.

⁵³ In fact, because of conflict or natural disaster, many food assistance programs are implemented in less than ideal conditions.

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redirection can erode donor confidence in an operating agency and/or its on-the-ground partners, making future fundraising difficult.

Further, although the AREP plan did perhaps provide a useful umbrella, it was developed without sufficient information from and cooperative planning with the DPRK. Potential donors to AREP did not feel confident that funds would be spent in the ways they deemed most effective and efficient.⁵⁴ Finally, many donor governments have laws that prohibit spending on development in the DPRK. Such laws are unlikely to change in the near future, and certainly not in the current phase.

Other Programs

While AREP was the only comprehensive plan, many other mid-term development projects have been implemented. NGOs from the U.S., Europe, the ROK⁵⁵ and other countries have been deeply involved in programs designed to improve access to nutrition, including many projects focused on increasing food production, such as soy processing facilities, goat dairies, orchards, fish farms and so on.⁵⁶ These programs fill a gap between humanitarian assistance and long-term development programs.

One exception to the rule for government funding of development programs in the DPRK has been the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which has implemented several programs designed to increase food security. Their programs have included improving farming techniques on sloping land, integrated pest management, crop rotation, and dairy development.⁵⁷ They also have one of the most robust exchange programs, with multiple delegations from the DPRK visiting Switzerland and vice versa each year. A Pilot Agricultural Credit Scheme, which would have allowed farmers to diversify their crops and livestock, was deemed unsuccessful and laid down.⁵⁸

After the DPRK tested a nuclear weapon in 2006, the Swiss Government decided to continue existing programs, but not begin any new ones.⁵⁹ More recently, the SDC made a decision to focus its resources on a smaller constellation of countries, and a decision was made that North Korea would no longer be considered a “priority country” at the end

⁵⁴ According to one candid NGO employee it was never funded because “the AREP plan sucked.” Personal communication, June 5, 2009.

⁵⁵ For a recently published review of ROK NGO activities in the DPRK, see “From Charity to Partnership: South Korean NGO Engagement with North Korea,” in Engagement With North Korea: A Viable Alternative (Sung Chull Kim and David C. Kang, editors. Albany: State University of New York, 2009,) pp. 199-224.

⁵⁶ Reed lists representative agencies and their programs in “Unlikely Partners,” op. cited, pp. 13-18.

⁵⁷ SDC Cooperation Programme in DPRK, February 20, 2006. Accessed at http://www.deza.admin.ch/ressources/resource_en_91114.pdf June 26, 2009.

⁵⁸ SDC PYONGYANG NEWSLETTER, January – April 2009, http://www.sdc-dprk.ch/en/Home/January_April

⁵⁹ SDC “North Korea,” Accessed at http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Countries/East_Asia/North_Korea

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2011 and no “special programs” will take place in the DPRK from 2012 on.⁶⁰ North Korea was not singled out for this treatment; five other countries will also lose their status as “priority countries” at the same time. It could be that insufficient government cooperation from the DPRK hampered the SDC’s ability to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of the programs.

The Future

The need for development programming remains great. In his 2005 paper, Reed listed the following critical areas for rehabilitation: infrastructure rehabilitation, such as electricity supply; agricultural rehabilitation; industrial reconstruction; institution building (including “aid management and development planning, financial, labor, and production inputs markets, tax and budgeting processes, banking and financial services, legal institutions” and a more systemized use of farmland, all supported by an increased capacity in collecting and using economic data; and critical social services.⁶¹ Yet, since that paper was published, there has been only minor, piecemeal progress in these areas.

Nevertheless, despite the partially negative analysis of both AREP and SDC above, a few benchmarks have been reached that indicate possibilities for improving cooperation in the future. While the SDC program has hit many challenges, it has also achieved multiple successes; and, in fact, has continued to explore new paradigms for program management. For example, after years of failing to transfer responsibility from the funder to North Korean programs, SDC introduced “Outcome Mapping,” a management technique that intentionally divides each project into two spheres of responsibility: project implementation, in the hands of local staff, and project support, in the hands of the donor. An initial assessment found an increasing level of responsibility and initiative demonstrated by the North Korean project managers, noted as a “an important precondition for development cooperation.”⁶² Whether or not “Outcome Mapping” yields sustainable improvements remains to be seen. Regardless, the SDC program, whether or not it is in fact laid down, will provide a rich and valuable resource for other agencies moving forward.

⁶⁰ SDC also dropped Bhutan, Ecuador, India, Pakistan and Peru as “priority countries;”

<http://www.sdc.admin.ch/en/Home/Countries>

⁶¹ Reed, *Role of International Organizations*, op. cited, pp 60-61.

⁶² Walter Schlaeppli, “Outcome Mapping in North Korea,” *Rural Development News*, February 2008, pp 20-22 (p. 22). http://www.agridea-international.ch/fileadmin/10_International/PDF/RDN/RDN_2008/3_Outcome_Mapping_in_North_Korea.pdf. SDC notes that “Unlike a log frame approach, outcome mapping does not use pre-determined indicators, but works with precise descriptions i.e. discussions with the implementing actors on questions such as: what went well, what did not go well, what has changed as a consequence of their work, what were the determining factors for the changes, and what obstacles did they face. Quantitative indicators are also used to confirm performance and outcomes.” *Miru Hills Integrated Pest Management and Crop Rotation Project with Partner CABInternational*,” SDC website, http://www.sdc-dprk.ch/en/Home/Programme/ASP_Agricultural_Support_Programme/Integrated_Pest_Management_IPM_and_Crop_Rotation.

Alexandre Y. Mansourov has detailed six trends in disaster management that have some implications for development programming: increasing transparency when disaster occurs; increasing institutional capacity and knowledge for disaster management; increasing inter-agency management; an increasingly proactive, preventative and sustainable approach; continued civilian/military cooperation to address disasters and greater collaboration with the international humanitarian community.⁶³ These trends hopefully can be transferred to future development projects.

As already stated, NGOs working on food security programs have by and large had positive experiences in which joint project development and a shared sense of ownership have gradually become the norm. This joint project development will be crucial moving forward in any development work.

The key to moving in a new direction is a long-term consultation to develop a new development game plan. In contrast to AREP, there needs to be considerable consultation with the DPRK and potential funders before the program begins. Such a plan will need to address the lessons learned over the last decade in both the DPRK and in donor countries. The DPRK may well perceive the failure of AREP to be a case of broken promises made by UN agencies, and therefore DPRK interlocutors who initially promoted AREP may be wary of making commitments toward a new program that might also never be fulfilled.

Meanwhile, aid agencies and some (though not all) NGOs have noted considerable barriers. These institutions feel they have had limited success figuring out how to ensure that new equipment is maintained and repaired; how to ensure that increases in production benefit the participants and how to ensure that sufficient profits from increased production can be re-invested so that development activities can be sustained domestically rather than perpetually requiring foreign sources of support.

In 2005, Reed noted five prerequisites to successful development programming: an effective counterpart agency in the DPRK; simplified regulations guiding the operations of NGOs in the DPRK; the ability to gather data, greater ability to interact with community leaders in development projects; and the freedom of NGOs to select and train national staff.⁶⁴ Some small progress was made in some of these categories since that paper was published, but greater progress will be necessary to expand program activities, and these prerequisites are a good starting place.

In addition, best-case outcomes should be discussed with the DPRK: when and why have programs and mutually defined outcomes been possible? How can we replicate them? DPRK buy-in in addressing these issues will be necessary to distinguish any new plan

⁶³ Alexandre Y. Mansourov, “Disaster Management and Institutional Change in the DPRK: Trends in the Sogun Era.” *Korea Economic Institute Academic Paper Series on Korea*, Volume I, 2008, pp. 40-74. (pp. 63-66).

⁶⁴ Edward Reed, “Role of International Organizations,” *op. cited*, pp. 65-66.

from AREP. Only then can such a program provide a “bridge to sustainable development.”

Because U.S. funding of development programming will be a new step for the U.S. government, it will likely not be possible during “Phase I” of a re-engagement process. Part of Phase II should be dedicated to a collaborative effort to map a new plan.

Meanwhile, there are multiple small-scale projects that fall under the category of “development” that could be implemented during Phase II. Additional program ideas could easily be developed (tractors, x-ray machines, drip irrigation systems, etc. training across a wide range of agricultural, health or sanitation issues). Implementing such projects early in Phase II would demonstrate U.S. commitment to moving in a new direction as relations between the DPRK and the U.S. improve.

Phase II:

Energy Assistance to Hospitals: Generator II

In 2008, the U.S. government provided four million dollars for the provision of generators, hospital equipment and training for hospitals in the DPRK. This project, which is ongoing, is being implemented by Mercy Corps, Global Resource Services, Samaritan’s Purse and the Eugene Bell Foundation. The U.S. government should expand this program by providing additional funding to NGOs with a successful track record. Exploration of fuel efficiency and access to fuel, and maintenance of existing generators should be reviewed to determine best practices. Samaritan’s Purse and World Vision experiences with solar-powered generators should also be considered.

Community Development Programs

The U.S. government should provide considerable funding for comprehensive community development programs to US NGOs with existing program work in North Korea. At least four NGOs (World Vision, Global Resource Services, Agglobe International and Christian Friends of Korea (clinic development programs)) already have programs of this nature, and other NGOs are poised to do so, at DPRK invitation. Components of the existing programs include agricultural inputs, food production facilities such as soy production and goat dairies, solar energy for schools and clinics, green houses, upgrade of existing buildings, such as schools and clinics, access to clean water, etc. Although proposals should be carefully vetted, the program itself should be flexible: these NGOs have long-term working relationships with North Korea and individual communities have different needs. A cookie-cutter approach to this project must be avoided. When program sustainability depends on reinvesting a portion of proceeds into factories, or selling products in the market, or trade of goods with nearby communities, NGOs should confirm DPRK commitments to these components of program success.

Review of Microcredit/Household/Community Credit loans in the DPRK with the intention of introducing a sustainable program

Micro-credit loans and household loan programs have met with a limited success in the DPRK. For example, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has incorporated household loans to purchase livestock in its last two programs in the DPRK, the first one beginning in 1997. However, U.S. government knowledge about these programs may be limited. Therefore, the U.S. government might want to begin with a small-scale meeting bringing together the DPRK, and micro-credit programs that have been active in the DPRK such as IFAD, Maranatha, SDC, etc. to discuss their experiences. Given successful PRC experience in microcredit programs, such a review might be usefully convened with the help of Chinese colleagues and could include Chinese participants in such programs. This meeting will help the United States determine what is necessary for DPRK government buy-in, and enable it to devise a new plan for expanded microcredit programs. Project success would depend on legal access to markets.

Expanded Training in Development Topics

As part of the evidence that the United States and others are fully invested in reaching the next stage of development assistance, training programs should be expanded substantially in relevant areas. This will be covered more fully in a section on exchanges.

Game-Plan for Development Programs in the DPRK

By the end of Phase I, the US government should have completed an action plan for expanding their activities from humanitarian assistance to the small-scale food security programming mentioned above. As Phase II begins, the U.S. government can become engaged in the next planning stage: developing the steps for expanded development funding in the DPRK.

Whereas the Food Security study should be U.S. focused, any study on Development Programs should be broader in scope. The U.S. government should develop this study in collaboration with several governments, perhaps one or two European government with extensive experience and regional governments, such as the ROK, Japan or Australia. The ROK in particular should be involved, given its extensive experience and knowledge of agricultural conditions. This study will be much broader and comprehensive than the Food Security Programs Game Plan, and should include the gathering of data necessary to make adequate prescriptions. Central to this study should be the experiences of organizations such as the SDC, the UNDP and IFAD.

The study itself should be tailored to develop deep-seated understanding with the DPRK of its expectations and commitments. Conversations that clearly exclude negotiations on future programming should be held with DPRK practitioners to explore their perspective of AREP's successes and failures, and their understanding of the inputs necessary to implement their own version of economic development. Dialogue with all ministries and academies associated with AREP, SDC, etc. and any future programming needs to be part of the planning process. If the DPRK is not prepared for this kind of collaboration at this

stage, this should be acknowledged without rancor and the study should be postponed until that point is reached.

The leadership of the study must be carefully chosen. Members of a leadership team should be trusted by all interested parties so that failures can be discussed as freely as successes, without a confrontational approach. At the same time, for the DPRK to consider the study itself a genuine incentive, leadership will need to include an interlocutor well-known and trusted by the DPRK. This leader should have substantial knowledge of the AREP experience. Several well-known heads of NGO, UN and Bilateral assistance programs may be available. Project leadership should include well-trusted U.S. NGO and South Korean interlocutors, so that it includes communication with all of the DPRK Counterpart agencies (NCC, KECCA and KAPES).

Phase III

The actual items under Phase III cannot be determined until the study has been completed. The only items or activities that should be implemented in phase III are those for which there is confidence that there will be strong DPRK government support for the conditions necessary to make the projects successful. Depending on the actual projects, this might include any of the following: co-investment in individual projects, agreements on how to return profits within a given farm/food processing factory/etc to make the project self-sustaining; adequate training and education for a wide variety of people to ensure the project’s success or the maintenance of expensive equipment.

This phase, which would be a step beyond community development, might include items such as those mentioned under the Food Security Game Plan, such as capital investment in industries associated with food production (fertilizer and farm equipment plants and investments in infrastructure (such as improving transportation to move food and agricultural inputs more easily). In the health field it might include investment and technical assistance in laboratories and hospitals.

Study Tours, Knowledge Sharing Activities and Capacity Building with the DPRK⁶⁵

Background

One of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s earliest attempts to engage in people-to-people diplomacy with the United States took its cue from China’s famous “ping pong diplomacy.” When the American chapter of the International Table Tennis Federation applied to attend the 1979 World Table Tennis Tournament that would be

⁶⁵ By definition, a “track II event” could not be convened by the U.S. government, so Track II events are not discussed here. However, government participation in track II events could be useful especially prior to and during Phase I. For more information on Track II, please see the NCNK newsletter on this topic, available at <http://www.ncnk.org/resources/newsletter-content-items/ncnk-newsletter-vol-1-no-6-the-dprk-and-track-ii-exchanges>.

taking place in the DPRK, Pyongyang said yes – and even hinted that Kim Il-Sung would be on hand to visit with the ping pong champions.⁶⁶

However, while the trip made a lasting impression on some of the delegates, as a diplomatic foray the tournament was a bust: no new relationships or bilateral connections blossomed as a result.⁶⁷ In fact, the actual differences began long before the paddle hit the ball in Pyongyang. In the case of China, a year of secret bilateral communication preceded the actual invitation.⁶⁸ When the opportunity presented itself, the U.S. government decided to take advantage of the Table Tennis Tournament in Beijing as a way to further explore PRC intentions. The United States cemented their own commitment to begin a new relationship with a return invitation to China’s team the following year. In the DPRK case, North Korean expectations were not matched by U.S. interest. No reciprocal event took place.⁶⁹

Despite the fact that the Ping Pong visit fizzled, thousands of North Koreans visit other countries each year to participate in study tours, attend short-term training and capacity-building programs and attend formal courses of study on a wide variety of topics. The greatest number of North Koreans study in China; however hundreds of others visit other countries, including India, Vietnam and EU countries. Although there are no official U.S. figures, in recent years, perhaps at most 15 North Koreans visited the United States annually, and some years about half that number.

U.S. experience has demonstrated that visits and long-term study in the United States is one of our most powerful tools for transforming contentious relationships with other countries. Anecdotally, some of the most fervent endorsers of expanded exchange programs with the DPRK are people from currently communist and formerly communist regimes whose own views of the U.S. changed after visiting and witnessing for themselves the vitality, diversity and friendliness of the United States people.

⁶⁶ Martin, Bradley, Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader: North Korea and the Kim Dynasty, (St. Martins Press, Thomas Dunne Books: 2004) p. 140 ff. and “Health Care,” in the “Inside North Korea” series on World View http://www.chicagopublicradio.org/programs/worldview/series/inside_DPRK.asp with Dr. Stephen Linton, Chairman, Eugene Bell Foundation, January 19, 2006, World View, Chicago Public Radio.

⁶⁷ Although Dr. Linton’s involvement with the DPRK began at that time and the Eugene Bell programs that eventually resulted from that initial contact have had great significance in the DPRK, a single relationship cannot be considered a “blossoming.”

⁶⁸ The fascinating story behind the by now cliché expression “ping pong diplomacy” is dramatically explained in “Opening Volley,” Alexander Wolff and David Davis, with special reporting by Jaime FlorCruz/CNN in Beijing on the Sports Illustrated Website at the following link: <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2008/more/06/11/opening.volley0616/1.html>

⁶⁹ As noted below, in 2008 the U.S. also failed to reciprocate the DPRK’s invitation to the New York Philharmonic with a return invitation to the DPRK’s State Symphony Orchestra the following year.

Bernhard Seliger, in his recent useful overview, notes short-term, medium-term and long-term benefits of capacity building activities.⁷⁰ In the short-term, such activities not only increase technical expertise but also allow the DPRK to experiment with “new organizational forms on a small scale,” such as allowing families to retain profits. In the medium term, the exposure of mid-level officials to international norms puts pressure on the DPRK to open to the outside. According to Seliger, the EU-DPRK Trade Capacity Building Project compels participants to experience “the difficulties and impediments of the current economic structure.” Finally, participants in such activities can be “agents of change,” either as they move up the hierarchy or “in the event of systemic change.”

As Seliger points out, many governments have shied away from capacity building projects, because such activities qualify as “development assistance” according to their own laws. Yet even given this general reluctance, the U.S. is lagging considerably behind countries with similar backgrounds and resources (such as the Sweden, the U.K, Germany and Switzerland) in terms of the number of North Koreans that U.S. NGOs are able to bring to America each year. Of the multiple reasons for the “exchange program gap,” the following are key: the North Korean’s lack of interest in visiting the United States when times are tense; the uncertainty of the visa process, which results in NGOs withholding potential invitations to avoid the embarrassment of the visa being denied; and the lack of funding.

Even though the number of educational exchanges is modest, the U.S. has hosted a number of programs across a wide range of topics over the last dozen or so years, including but not limited to the following list: soil analysis methods; fertilizer application rates; forage and cover crops, especially green manures; CA(conservation agriculture): reduced tillage; confined poultry production; confined swine production; dairy animals, especially goats; epidemiology and disease control, including avian flu and foot and mouth disease; rice, corn and soybean breeding; seed production and testing; oil seed production, especially canola; crop rotation methods; fruit production, especially apples; cardiology, laparoscopy, and tuberculosis.⁷¹

While the New York Philharmonic’s trip to Pyongyang is the most well-known cultural exchange, it is by no means the only one. Typically at least one NGO a year sends a U.S. musical group to perform at the annual Spring Festival. Contrary to popular belief, performers determine their own play-list. Thus, U.S. performances in the DPRK have included classical musicians, a blue-grass band, and four-time Grammy winners Casting Crowns singing *Amazing Grace*. Some years ago, near the turn of the century, a symphony orchestra composed of North Koreans and Korean Americans performed at select venues in the United States, primarily to Korean American audiences.

⁷⁰ “Engagement on the Margins: Capacity Building in North Korea,” Bernhard Seliger, in Korea’s Economy 2009, Volume 25, Korea Economic Institute, pp. 67-75. p. 75

⁷¹ For a comprehensive overview of agricultural or knowledge-sharing programs with the DPRK, see “The Knowledge Sharing Experience in Agriculture,” by Dr. Randall Ireson, November 2007 (Available at http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/Ireson_KS_paper_Nov_07.doc/file_view).

Sports exchanges with the DPRK have included basketball and soccer tournaments in North Korea and a Tae Kwon Do Exhibition Tour in the United States. Because of the physical demands of the sport, the Tae Kwon Do tour touched a younger sector of the North Korean and US populations unlikely to learn about one another through a different venue. Although – or maybe because -- these elite DPRK athletes may well come from elite families, their ability to exchange views during people-to-people exchanges is particularly valuable.⁷²

Increasing the number of North Koreans who visit our country has the potential to have immediate short-term as well as more gradual, cumulative, long-term effects. In addition to the benefits noted by Seliger above, exchange programs in all categories improve North Korea’s ability to understand U.S. concerns and perspectives – and vice versa. Such visits also have the potential to create good will. Over the long term, visits to the United States will create a larger and more experienced core of people who can more forcefully advocate for transformation of their own policies.

The Future

The U.S. government has at least four tools to increase exchanges: visa policy, demonstration of U.S. interest in these programs, inclusion of DPRK participants in existing U.S. programs and funding of existing U.S. NGO programs.

As noted above, U.S. NGOs are already doing good work in this arena but are sometimes limited by funding constraints.⁷³ Some foundations are hesitant to support programming with the DPRK because of uncertainty regarding U.S. government commitment to people-to-people exchanges with the DPRK. In Phase I, the USG should help to lessen such constraints by publicizing its support of educational programs.

NGOs have noted that DPRK interest is heightened when the U.S. government is involved in project activities. Exchange programs have strong bipartisan support in Congress, since members see them as potentially very beneficial while incurring little risk. The USG should fund NGOs’ existing exchanges, perhaps even in Phase I, and in Phases II and III develop its own exchange programs with the DPRK, as described

⁷² The team’s thank you note gives a nice coda to their experience: “We would like to thank all of those involved in organizing and implementing the Good Will Tour 2007. Our trip to the United States was wonderful. We were so pleased to have the opportunity to travel to the United States and we were so proud to represent Taekwon-Do for Americans.//The United States was so big and there were so many things to see and do. Our hosts showed us great hospitality and respect and for that we are thankful. It was wonderful to see the faces of Americans as they witnessed our demonstration for the first time and we thank you for your warm welcome.//Everyone was so friendly and helpful as we toured the country. We send our deepest thanks.” See <http://www.ncnk.org/resources/newsletter-content-items/ncnk-newsletter-number-4-breaking-boards-and-eating-barbeque-june-2008/>

⁷³ While the DPRK is currently reluctant to study long-term in the United States, this section presumes that as relations improve, DPRK interest will increase. In addition, welcoming moves by the United States might increase DPRK interest.

below. The U.S. should seek ways to open up avenues for North Koreans to participate in its existing global educational activities.

Phase I

NGOs are not in agreement over whether or not U.S. financial support of exchanges might inhibit rather than expand exchanges as US-DPRK dialogue resumes. There are still several steps that the U.S. can take short of funding exchanges.

Changing the United States Visa Policy

The past policy, going back nearly two decades, of approving visas as an incentive or reward to the DPRK, while denying them to signal U.S. displeasure or to mete out symbolic “punishment,” has been counterproductive. The practice has had no effect on core DPRK policies. It has, however, undermined serious efforts to bring the fullest possible number of North Koreans to this country and introduce them to the realities of American society and culture. The practice of using visa approvals (or granting permission for representatives from the DPRK mission to the UN) to travel outside of New York) as part of the carrot-and-stick approach has not been the policy of one political party. In addition, the problem has not always been across the board. During periods of positive U.S.-DPRK relations, visa approvals were generally routine for humanitarian and academic programs. However, they were considerably less routine for political and cultural events, and were rare for visits to Washington, DC.

Without doubt, U.S. safety and security must be of primary concern. North Koreans should not be allowed to enter the U.S. without thorough vetting by the relevant US agencies. Moreover, there are specific, limited instances—e.g., requests to visit by DPRK officials at a particularly delicate time—when denial of visas may have symbolic and tactical utility. With such qualifiers in mind, a new policy on visas would send a useful and effective signal of US intent to the DPRK. Equally important, it would quietly remove a serious obstacle to broader and more regular exchanges at the people-to-people, cultural, educational, and professional levels.

During the current phase – even now, when tensions are relatively high – the Obama administration should signal a new era that completely separates exchanges and human security programs from security issues. The administration should make clear that North Koreans are welcome to visit the United States for the purpose of study and consultation on wide range of issues. Representatives of the DPRK Mission to the UN should be given permission to travel, including to Washington. Exchange programs between NGOs on medical and humanitarian topics should continue. The US government should explore the possibility of funding such exchanges, as it does with other countries, and move forward with funding if it appears that doing so would not compromise ongoing programs.

Government Recognition of the Importance of Educational Exchange Programs

From time to time, the U.S. government expresses its support for the humanitarian work that NGOs are doing in the DPRK. The government should add educational exchanges and knowledge-sharing programs – of the type listed above – to the activities it verbally

supports. This should not be a high-level pronouncement; it should just be a general talking point for lower level diplomats. In particular, when government officials meet with potential foundation funders of such efforts (at conferences, etc.), they should mention that the US government encourages such programs. This kind of communication could serve to reverse an assumption made by some funders that it is premature or against U.S. interests to engage with North Koreans at this time.

Symbolic Steps Signaling a Widening Arena for Exchanges

At the first sign of progress, the administration should make a gesture showing their support for expanded exchanges. Here are three suggestions; others could be provided:

❖ *Prayer Breakfast*

Permission to attend a Prayer Breakfast should be granted. For the last several years, civil society actors have tried to invite North Koreans to attend a Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC. Attendance at a Prayer Breakfast is a symbolic act that, while it may invite some criticism from the most vocal critics of the DPRK, confers no substantive benefit. Other meetings should be arranged for the delegation when they are in DC.

❖ *Opening the door on an increase in cultural exchanges*

One of the left-over disappointments from the last administration is the U.S. failure to allow the DPRK State Symphony Orchestra (SSO) to the U.S after the New York Philharmonic’s very successful visit to the DPRK.⁷⁴ As noted above, one of the ways the Nixon administration multiplied the positive impact of the Table Tennis visit was to invite China’s team the following year. In contrast, the US government sent signals that a return visit by the SSO was not possible until certain benchmarks had been reached on nuclear issues. This may be a good example of the ineffective use of visas to reward or punish the DPRK in other arenas of the U.S.-DPRK relationship. It seems highly unlikely that withholding visa approval for the SSO would have an impact on DPRK decision-making regarding decisions critical to the DPRK’s security. However, failure to issue a return invitation undoubtedly weakened whoever in the Foreign Ministry allowed the NYP concert to take place and sullied the nature of reciprocity on cultural exchanges.

Given the recent history, it might be premature to allow the SSO to come during the first phase. However, as soon as possible the Obama administration should signal that it supports cultural exchanges. This could take place through attendance by a high-level (Ambassador Bosworth or higher) government official at a DPRK cultural event in either the DPRK or in the United States.

❖ *Computers for Syracuse University/Korea Society Digital Library Program*⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Although visas for the SSO were never formally requested, the U.S. government signaled that a visa request would not be positively received. It is believed by some observers, including the author, that the U.S. government sought progress on a verification protocol at that time.

⁷⁵ For information on this program, see “Academic Science Engagement with North Korea,” Hyunjin Seo and Stuart Thorson KEI Academic Paper Series, April 2009, Volume 4 Number 4 available at <http://www.keia.org/Publications/AcademicPaperSeries/2009/APS-ThorsonSeo.pdf>.

Permission could be granted for The Korea Society (TKS) and Syracuse University (SU) to provide the computers and other equipment as the next stage of their Digital Library program with Kim Chek University. The DL program has been one of the most successful programs to date in terms of North Koreans embracing international standards and norms. Spin-offs of this program include the Regional Scholars and Leaders Seminar Program for Chinese, North Korean, South Korean, and U.S. information scientists and linguists and the participation by North Korean undergraduate students in the Association for Computing Machinery’s International Collegiate Programming contest in Beijing.⁷⁶

The first program is significant because this four-party collaboration is an excellent model for future programs. All team members provide technical expertise. The Chinese participants represent a non-threatening transformation experience, South Korean participants bring language and cultural expertise, and U.S. participants underscore the U.S. interest in DPRK participation in technical training. The second program is the most successful program to date for a U.S. organization working with young people. Ideally, such experiences will be a stepping stone for academic institutions and NGOs to offer undergraduates educational experiences in the United States in the future.

However, because of U.S. export laws, TKS and SU have been unable to provide the computers that are an integral part of the Digital Library program. This has hindered smooth implementation of the project. Since North Koreans have access to up-to-date computer equipment despite such laws, the restriction is symbolic rather than meaningful. The U.S. Commerce Department should lead an inter-agency review process to see whether or not it would be possible and advisable to issue licenses for TKS and SU to provide these computers at their own expense.

Phase II

Exchange/Knowledge-Sharing Activities in Phase II should include continued verbal support of the concept and a streamlined visa process. In addition, the government should begin to fund its own programs.

USDA/FAS Borlaug Fellows Program

As noted above, US NGOs have already had extensive experience in hosting North Korean delegations for training tours on a wide range of agricultural issues. US sponsorship of similar exchanges could send an important signal to the DPRK, both as a symbol of and reward for a closer US-DPRK relationship. The USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service sponsors several categories of exchanges for developing and middle economies for “the development and adoption of new technologies, and enhancement of agribusiness and trade in foreign markets.” The Borlaug Fellows program, which enables

⁷⁶ For information on the collegiate programming contest, see “Dark Horse,” by Fred Carriere and Stuart Thorson, <http://www.ncnk.org/resources/newsletter-content-items/ncnk-newsletter-vol-1-2-dark-horse>.

collaborative research on sustainable agriculture at USDA, Land Grant Colleges, NGOs, etc.), is probably the most appropriate first step.⁷⁷

English Language Programs

English language ability is a bottleneck for effective knowledge transfer and exchange programs in some fields. The British Council has had an English Language Program in Pyongyang since 2002, beginning with two teachers, and adding a third a few years later. In 2009 they increased the number to four. English is now taught in Pyongyang beginning in third grade.⁷⁸ The British Council Program focuses on training teachers, who will in turn be deployed to schools outside of Pyongyang.

U.S. NGOs have included specialized English language training in some of their educational exchange programs in the United States and elsewhere as a means of enhancing the educational experience. However, thus far, the DPRK has not allowed U.S. citizens to teach English in the DPRK under US NGO auspices.

U.S. government involvement, through the Department of State’s Office of English Language Specialists, would likely break this barrier. As the Office determines what program is most appropriate – perhaps the English Language Fellows Program – an English Language Learning Resource Center could be established at one of the major universities in Pyongyang. Once the teachers are in place, additional Resource Centers could be set up schools outside of the capitol. The English teachers should establish training for TESOL and regular TESOL tests. NGOs could be a useful resource for suggesting appropriate areas of specialized language study.

Cultural and Sports Exchanges

Although cultural exchanges are sometimes dismissed as inconsequential or lacking in substance, in the right context they contribute to a positive working environment. Perhaps the State Symphony Orchestra could be invited (at US NGO expense) early on in Phase II to symbolize a return to high expectations of reciprocal cooperation. Or, if that is not possible the United States might sponsor two good-will basketball games, one in Pyongyang and one in the U.S. In this case, to avoid misunderstandings and disappointments, the timing of both events should be agreed upon in advance. The U.S. might send its Taekwon Do Olympic team or its highest ranking college or university Taekwon Do team to the DPRK, and invite their demo-team for a return tour. A third way would be to invite the North Korean circus; North Koreans have long sought to have its circus perform in the United States. They have already performed in Germany, the Netherlands and other European countries.

Or they might be invited to give a fashion show to exhibit either traditional North Korean dresses or modern clothing, or an art exhibit that includes a visiting delegation of North

⁷⁷ <http://www.fas.usda.gov/icd/rsed/res-scient-exchanges.asp>.

⁷⁸ “North Korea welcoming Native English Teachers with Open Arms,” Yonhap News, February 13 2009, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2009/02/13/94/0401000000AEN20090213003800315F.HTML>

Korean artists or a tour of traditional musicians. (North Korean art exhibits have already taken place in Germany, Italy, New Zealand and Vietnam, as well as small-scale exhibit in Atlanta, GA.⁷⁹)

International Visitors Leadership Program

Over the last year, the U.S. has taken tentative internal steps towards including North Koreans in the U.S. Department of State’s International Visitors Leadership Program. The program “brings participants to the United States from all over the world each year to meet and confer with their professional counterparts and to experience the U.S. firsthand” participants “are current or potential leaders in government, politics, the media, education, and other fields.”⁸⁰ However, the government shied away from implementing the program until certain benchmarks related to the denuclearization agenda had been reached. As bilateral relations improve, this program should be inaugurated. Initial topics might include health issues or trade issues.

Scientific Cooperation Exchanges

The U.S.-DPRK Scientific Engagement Consortium was established to “explore collaborative academic science activities between the United States and North Korea.”⁸¹ The group, founded in 2007, has worked slowly with DPRK counterparts to develop a joint scientific project. Once a project has been identified, and DPRK delegations begin to visit the United States the participants in exchange programs funded and organized by this private Consortium should be invited to visit U.S. centers of scientific learning (NIH, the National Science Foundation, etc.) As soon as possible, U.S. government funding should be made available for these programs, through USDA’s Visiting Scientist Program or Scientific Cooperation Research Program, the NSF or other relevant bodies.

Phase III

During Phase III, U.S. government-funded programs should be expanded.

Cochran Fellowship Program

The Cochran Fellowship Program, which is administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Foreign Agricultural Service, “provides U.S.-based agricultural training opportunities for senior and mid-level specialists and administrators from public and private sectors who are concerned with agricultural trade, agribusiness development, management, policy, and marketing.”⁸² The program is open to countries that can be considered “middle-income, an emerging democracy, or an emerging market.” As the DPRK approaches the status of an emerging market – by the end of the second phase or

⁷⁹ For more information on North Korean art, see <http://www.nkeconwatch.com/2009/04/22/art-in-the-dprk/>

⁸⁰ <http://exchanges.state.gov/ivlp/index.html>

⁸¹ Seo and Thorson, op. cited. The Consortium is made up of The U.S. Civilian Research & Development; Foundation (CRDF), the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), SU, and the Korea Society.

⁸² <http://www.fas.usda.gov/icd/cochran/cochran.asp>

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the beginning of the third phase – it should be possible for DPRK professionals to participate in this program.

Expanding USDA Cooperation

USDA has tailored two programs to meet the needs of specific communities: The Scientific Cooperation Exchange Program, a bilateral program between the PRC and the US, and the Faculty Exchange Program, which has gradually expanded to include Kazakhstan, Russia, the Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia, Uzbekistan, Bulgaria, Armenia, Afghanistan, Romania, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Opportunities might be sought to develop programs specifically tailored to the DPRK’s needs and interests.

Fulbright Fellowships

As Phase III is entered, the Fulbright Fellowship Program should be made available for North Koreans wishing to study in the United States and U.S. academics interested in pursuing research in the DPRK. In addition, Fulbright’s English Teaching Assistants Abroad program may be used to expand English language teaching in the DPRK.