

## The Influence of South Korean NGOs on State Aid Policy

Kyungyon Moon

*I examine the experiences of South Korean nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that provide aid to North Korea in order to assess the success and limitations of the NGO movement. With reference to the political role of NGOs in constructivist theory, I identify three factors that have hindered the formation of a sustainable partnership between the South Korean government and NGOs since the inter-Korean summit of 2000. First, South Korean NGOs have lacked consistent efforts toward transparency and accountability in operations and organizational management. Second, the great increase in inter-Korean cooperation and exchange after 2000 weakened the research, education, and advocacy function of NGOs. Third, aid NGOs failed to establish independent, diversified, and stable funding mechanisms, decreasing their capacity to act as cooperative partners of the government. **KEYWORDS:** South Korea, nongovernmental organizations, aid policy, government-NGO relations, aid to North Korea, inter-Korean exchange and cooperation.*

AFTER THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA (DPRK OR North Korea) made an official request to the international community for aid in 1995, the aid campaign of the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) spread to become a nationwide movement. The nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that had a steering role in South Korea's campaign for aid to North Korea not only contributed to stimulating assistance and moderating the general public's antagonistic view toward North Korea but also expanded inter-Korean exchange and cooperation for peace and security on the Korean peninsula. These NGO campaigns brought significant improvements to South Korea's civil society environment. Some of their notable accomplishments include securing permission to raise funds through an automatic response system (ARS, currently the major fund-raising tool for international development and cooperation NGOs); gaining permission to raise funds in public

places;<sup>1</sup> allowing expenditure on organizational administration to increase from 0 to 15 percent of raised funds; and establishing an NGO support system (NGO Council 2005).<sup>2</sup> Due to their significant role in providing aid to North Korea from 1995 to 2007, NGO activities have been described as a second nationwide movement, following the democratic movement of the 1980s (Lee 2009).

However, by 2013 these NGOs had become largely irrelevant. They are barely surviving, along with their umbrella organization, the NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea. The major cause of their downfall is the stagnation of the inter-Korean relationship that has persisted since the Lee Myung-bak administration took power in 2008. But the rupture of the inter-Korean relationship is not the only reason.

Rather than tackling the domestic structures affecting government-NGO relationships, I analyze the NGO movement and organizational management in order to pinpoint what changed the influence of South Korean NGOs on government aid policy to North Korea. I then consider strategies to revitalize the role of NGOs as political actors in the state's policymaking process.

I use the phrase "NGOs for aid to North Korea" to cover all NGOs that participated in providing aid to North Korea from 1995 to 2007. They include religious organizations, medical associations, labor unions, and women's unions that established specialized units under their organizational structures and organized fund-raising activities. There are also NGOs established independently with a single issue-specific mandate and expertise in international development and cooperation. However, these latter types are difficult to distinguish as a number of international development and cooperation NGOs have participated in providing aid to the DPRK and still have teams or departments assigned to this objective. My study uses "NGOs for aid to North Korea" primarily as a concept to refer to organizations founded to aid the DPRK, engaged in related activities, and registered by the ROK Ministry of Unification with the corporations permitted to engage in North Korean programs.

My focus on the organizational capacity of NGOs in their advocacy and organizational management proceeds as follows. I start by examining theoretical aspects of the mechanism and dynamics that NGOs use to exert influence on government poli-

cymaking. I then analyze the development and decline of NGOs for aid to North Korea in order to identify the factors that affected their level of influence on ROK government aid policy to North Korea. Lastly, I explore recommendations for strategies to achieve sustainable NGO influence on government policymaking.

## Theoretical Discussion of NGO Influence

### *NGO Functions and Partnership with Government*

The effectiveness of NGOs established for a common purpose is determined by their relationship with government and civil society. Their roles are typically classified into service delivery, advocacy, research, and civil education (Carothers and Barndt 1999; Stromquist 1998). Service delivery includes activities supporting or assisting the government by providing public goods or services on behalf of the government. Domestically, service might include programs that support orphanages, senior citizen centers, single mothers, the homeless, and after-school classes, while internationally it might include relief and development activities in conflict areas where government organizations and international agencies cannot venture. Advocacy refers to activities that aim to change the awareness, behaviors, or policies of government or civil society. Campaigns on issues such as the environment, human rights, women's rights, antiwar movements, labor rights, refugee protection, and international aid belong in this category.

As for research and civil education, NGOs are generally established for a single, issue-specific mandate and therefore are supposed to have mandate-related expertise. For example, human rights organizations can exercise influence on government and civil society based on information and advocacy strategies accumulated through a strong organizational mandate on a human rights issue and long-term organizational experience. By means of continuous research, monitoring, and information gathering on their mandated issue, NGOs can use civic education to raise public awareness and expand support from civil society, building momentum for change in government policy.

Most NGOs perform all three of these activities.<sup>3</sup> NGOs often form and manage close cooperative partnerships with governments to promote their individual issue areas and to provide services. In the case of NGOs' service delivery, fund-raising from civil society is not enough to cover the enormous cost of service delivery. Nor is it easy for governments to cover diverse regions and issues in the delivery of certain services. In this sense, governments seek to overcome such limitations in the provision of services by utilizing NGOs as a complementary delivery channel (Ahn 2010; Son, Han, and Park 2011; Son and Jung 2010).

Close partnerships on advocacy also exist between governments and NGOs. When a government prepares to make policy changes by spreading its policy agenda or stance on an issue, the NGOs that align with the government's stance can help provide advocacy (Cho 2001). We most commonly see this alignment in the activities of policy advocacy organizations. For instance, the NGOs for aid to North Korea that advocated for the engagement policy of the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations made a positive partnership with the government during that period (Jung and Kim 2012; Lee and Huh 2006).

When NGOs push for change in policies on a certain issue, they do not simply rely on a bottom-up strategy of pressuring governments to change policy by mobilizing public opinion. NGOs also adopt a top-down strategy to target the upper-level mechanisms of the government policymaking process. As the latter is more cost-effective than the former, NGOs try to establish and manage partnerships with various players in the policymaking process. NGOs are also prone to receiving significant financial and in-kind support from governments for their operations and may procure the funds needed to maintain their organization through government sources. As a quid pro quo, NGOs inevitably tend to promote advocacy activities aligned with the funding government (Barrett and Maxwell 2005).

Research and civic education are areas that require government and NGO partnership. The range of information gathered by NGOs based on field activities and expertise on specific issues provides useful resources for government policymaking. The role of an NGO as a civil society actor is also important in a democratic state as it is

generally believed that the mandates and activities of NGOs in representing public interests make a positive contribution to social development (Jang and Hong 2010; Stoddard 2006).

To deliver the above functions and mandates, Keck and Sikkink (1998) argue that NGOs exploit several types of politics: information, symbolic, leverage, and accountability. Information politics is used as a strategic measure that allows NGOs to have effective influence on a government and civil society. The capacity to quickly generate highly reliable information and use it in a timely manner depends on NGOs' field experience and issue-specific expertise. NGOs also use symbolic politics to frame incidents, issues, or events through an effective storytelling method, and by doing so endeavor to raise or change the discursive environment of a government or civil society. Leverage politics is the use of elements that target the sensitivities of target groups. For example, developed countries are sensitive about social values such as human rights and democracy, whereas developing countries are sensitive to economic progress. Accountability politics is a strategy of exploiting demands for accountability on a government or civil society. NGOs pressure a government to comply with an official declaration, pledge, international treaty, or universal norm that already has the agreement of the target government.

### *Assessing NGO Influence*

What causes NGO influence on government policymaking to change over time? Answers can be drawn from analysis of the domestic political structure, NGOs' relationships with government, and NGOs' expertise and capability in their advocacy aimed at government and civil society.

First, the influence of NGOs on a government depends on the specific domestic political structure and environment (Keohane 1989; Krasner 1983; Kratochwil 1989; Rittberger 1993). The domestic political structure refers to the distribution of power in the government policymaking process. Factors such as the relationship between the legislative body and the administration with regard to policy monitoring and discussion, the government's perception of NGOs, and a mechanism to guarantee and encourage

NGOs' participation in the policymaking process affect government receptiveness to NGO influence. A government's internalization and sensitivity to international rules and agendas, and perception of the roles and joint efforts of the international community or organizations, are also factors that influence a government's relationship with NGOs (McAdam 1998; Risse-Kappen 1995). Generally, the influence of NGOs is less significant when a government has a centralized policymaking mechanism and the administration has more power than the legislative body. On the other hand, NGOs find it easier to engage in policymaking and exercise influence when a government is positive about their participation and has systems and mechanisms to encourage it. Studies also show that NGO influence on a government is greater when the government is more actively engaged in international treaties, rules, and efforts (Donnelly 1999; McAdam 1998; Rittberger 1993).

My study analyzes NGO expertise and competency in order to understand the causes of changes in NGO influence on government policymaking. Instead of a theoretical analysis of the domestic structure within which NGOs operate, I undertake a theoretical review of NGOs' ability to achieve sustained influence on government policymaking.

What are the factors that determine the influence of NGOs on a government? NGO influence depends on the expertise and competency of NGOs to use the aforementioned strategies effectively (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Klotz 1999; Sikkink 1993). This includes the ability to successfully frame issues and promote them through civil society and government campaigns at the right time and with the necessary accumulated expertise and information; the competency to effectively influence or be involved in various stages of government policymaking; and the ability to build and use various levels of networks as needed.

As NGOs rely on the voluntary participation of civil society, achieving accountability and transparency in their operations as well as organizational management are critical factors in maintaining their influence on a government and civil society, as well as in getting support from these actors (Adeh 2004; Brown and Moore 2001; Slim 2002). Conduct in operating and activity monitoring are important in securing accountability. Monitoring provides informa-

tion for effective management and helps determine what works well and what requires improvement. Such a process generates knowledge on development cooperation policy, and this knowledge can contribute to the development of international cooperation by being applied to other aid policies and operations. Securing accountability for taxpayers is also important for the sustainable financing of development because resources for development mostly come from the pockets of taxpayers in donor countries. Donor agencies therefore have a duty to report the progress and results of aid operations to their taxpayers, and enhancing transparency in aid operation contributes to securing this accountability (Hong et al. 2012). Therefore, NGOs have a duty to consistently strive to be accountable to donors and recipients by improving aid effectiveness and increasing transparency in their operations and activities as well as organizational management.

Second, NGOs perform research and educational functions. In contrast to the government, which deals with policy concerns, an NGO's commitment to a single issue enables it to specialize and gather relatively high levels of information and expertise on the particular issue area (Stoddard 2006). NGOs' close ties to the field and flexibility in responding to emerging issues are other factors that make them more suited to performing a pioneering research function. By disseminating updated and focused information and insights, NGOs are able to exert influence on government policymaking. In the humanitarian sector, for instance, Stoddard (2006) has shown how US humanitarian NGOs' field information contributed to the framing and understanding of international crises among government policymakers in the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, and Somalia. NGOs' close interaction with civil society also renders them better suited to foster citizen participation and perform civic education roles (Stromquist 1998). By providing leadership training for young people who want to engage in civic life and issue-specific seminars for the public, NGOs perform an educational role in civil society.

Third, as advocacy organizations, NGOs seek policy change on diverse issues such as human rights, women's empowerment, the environment, weapons, and war and peace. Constructivist scholars who examine the role of norms and ideas in government policymak-

ing see NGOs as significant independent political actors rather than passive agents of the state. They consider NGOs key constituents of civil society, acting as norm entrepreneurs. Keck and Sikkink (1998) and Florini (2000) argue that NGOs and their transnational advocacy networks shape and change the policy and practice of states and international organizations. For instance, Klotz (1999) writing on anti-apartheid movements, Forsythe (2006) and Sikkink (1993) on human rights, Price (1998) on banning land mines, and Raustiala (1997) on environmental institutions trace how norms and ideas have changed government policies and practices. Through empirical studies, these scholars argue that NGOs and their transnational advocacy networks play a significant political role in the process of state norm adoption and policy change.

Lastly, stable funding is an important factor for the sustainability of NGO movements (Edwards and Hulme 1996a; Mathews 1997). Funding for NGOs comes from various sources, including voluntary contributions, the private sector, and state financing. The sustainability of NGO activity might be constrained by the absence of a reliable revenue stream. As James (1989) has argued, however, if NGOs rely too heavily on a single funding source they may become subject to the influence of that funder. Such overreliance can damage an NGO's legitimacy. NGOs' funding mechanisms, in particular a reliance on government funding, make it difficult to maintain organizational autonomy (Edwards and Hulme 1996b; Fisher 1993), all the more so as they grow larger and become more bureaucratic. Baitenmann (1990) therefore argues that funding from governments or private corporations can undermine the autonomy of NGOs and damage their legitimacy.

### **Changes in NGO Influence on the ROK Government's Aid Policy for North Korea**

In 1995, when North Korea appealed to the international community for food aid, South Korean civil society and NGOs did not pay much attention because of the early prediction that North Korea's food shortage, caused by the previous year's floods, would be a temporary issue. However, as it became apparent that



the food shortage was not a simple and short-term matter and that large-scale organized assistance would be needed, from 1996 onward the temporary campaigns of individual NGOs became a nationwide movement with the simultaneous participation of religious groups, labor unions, and women's groups.

In this section I discuss how the influence of South Korean NGOs for aid to North Korea changed over time and why such changes occurred. Based on the theoretical framework, I contend that NGO aid to North Korea had differing levels of influence on government aid policy to the DPRK depending on the administration in power. For a more structured analysis, I classify the characteristics of NGO influence on government aid policy to North Korea from 1995 to 2012 as follows: from 1995 to 1997, restraint and confrontation during the Kim Young-sam administration; from 1998 to 2007, cooperative coexistence in the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations; and from 2008 to 2012, stagnation during the Lee Myung-bak administration.

#### *Restraint and Confrontation: 1995–1997*

As a number of international and national organizations recognized the extent of North Korea's food shortages from 1995 through 1997, various NGOs in South Korea and other like-minded organizations—including religious groups, women's groups, college unions, farmers' unions, labor groups, and democracy activists—volunteered to help North Korea by stimulating a nationwide campaign (Human Rights Movement Sarangbang 1996, 1997a, 1997b). As shown in Table 1, until 1997 only 13 organizations participated in providing aid to North Korea, but the number dramatically increased to 112 organizations by 1997. Among these organizations, Korea Sharing Movement (KSM) and Good Friends conducted a series of research projects on the humanitarian crisis in North Korea, interviewing North Korean refugees and residents in the Korean-Chinese border area and providing information on the issue to the press.<sup>4</sup> They also organized seminars and international conferences highlighting the need for humanitarian support for North Korea in order to encourage the participation of local and central government and international

**Table 1 NGOs for Aid to North Korea in the Kim Young-sam Administration**

	1995	1996	1997
Funding or resource-raising NGOs	5	9	13
Advocacy NGOs	91	69	112

society (Good Friends 2006; KSM 2006; NGO Council 2005). By framing the campaign for aid to North Korea as a part of the reunification movement, these NGOs also organized civil lectures and street campaigns in order to broaden the campaign for aid to North Korea into a nationwide movement. In particular, the participation of presidential candidates Kim Dae-jung, Lee In-je, and Lee Hoe-chang at the Presidential Candidate Discussion on Aid to North Korea event that was organized by NGOs for aid to North Korea showed how political circles perceived the civil society movements at that time (KSM 1999; Sung and Kim 1997).

However, despite the efforts of the advocacy movement from 1995 to 1997, the government barely changed its policy on humanitarian aid to North Korea. Among the movement's demands were that the government actively support humanitarian aid to North Korea and deregulate prohibited NGO campaigns and direct aid to North Korea. But the Kim Young-sam administration's aid to North Korea through international organizations remained extremely limited.<sup>5</sup> Instead, the Kim administration adopted some institutional measures to restrain NGOs from public fund-raising activities, collection of relief items, and contact with North Korean authorities to discuss aid delivery. From September 1995 the administration only permitted the Korean Red Cross to deliver aid to North Korea and restricted the provision of rice for relief assistance. The administration also did not allow the participation of the private sector and the press (NGO Council 2005).

As the campaign for aid to North Korea spread nationwide and more NGOs demanded autonomy in advocacy activities, fund-raising, and delivery of relief assistance to North Korea, the administration amended the Donation Prohibition Act for the first time since its establishment in 1951, changing it to the Donation

Restriction Act in July 1996. Although it may appear from the name change that the administration deregulated the operational environment for NGOs, the amendments actually reinforced the existing restrictions by being more specific (National Law Information Center 2013). In March 1997, the administration adopted the Action to Increase Scope of Participation and Items for Aid to North Korea, but that act still restricted the campaigns and activities of NGOs.

### *Cooperative Coexistence: 1998–2007*

From 1998 through 2007, the campaign for aid to North Korea shifted from a nationwide public campaign based on a broad NGO network to an organized, strategic advocacy campaign steered by a few NGOs. In 1999, the founding of the NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea showed that the civil movement had evolved. It allowed NGOs to share and arbitrate strategic goals, and represented the NGOs for aid to North Korea in their interactions with the government (Lee, Lee, and Choi 1999). The NGO Council also provided the government with an efficient channel to discuss the issue of aid to North Korea. Seeking to expand inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations utilized the NGOs for aid to North Korea and the NGO Council to foster the perception of North Korea as part of one Korean nation, as well as a partner for exchange and eventual reunification (Lee 2005). The government's interest contributed to a favorable operational environment for the NGOs for aid to North Korea, as shown in Table 2, establishing the culture of sharing in South Korean civil society while also ameliorating North Korea's food shortage.

The collaborative partnership between the NGOs for aid to North Korea and the government is most readily apparent on the issue of aid delivery. Since 1995, the consistent campaigns to pressure the government on aid to the DPRK were a major factor that facilitated large-scale aid to North Korea. The close relationship between President Kim Dae-jung and the NGOs for aid to North Korea dated back to 1995 when Kim was the leader of the opposition party. He consistently participated in various events,

**Table 2** NGOs for Aid to North Korea, 1998–2007

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
NGOs approved by the Ministry of Unification <sup>a</sup>	— (94) <sup>b</sup>	9 (24) <sup>c</sup>	13 (16) <sup>c</sup>	19	25	31	33	54	65	77
NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea	—	20	20	21	28	31	39	42	51	58

*Source:* Lee (2005).

*Notes:* a. NGOs approved by the Ministry of Unification to provide direct support to North Korea following the Kim Dae-jung administration's action to diversify the channel of aid to North Korea in 1999.

b. Number of NGOs that participated in the Famine 24 event to help North Korea.

c. Number of NGOs that participated in aid to North Korea without a direct channel.

seminars, and National Assembly gatherings organized by the NGOs to respond to their requests, notably his first official ceremony after his inauguration in 1998 when he took part in the civil society organizations' New Year ceremony (Hong 2008). Both Kim Dae-jung's and Roh Moo-hyun's administrations engaged with the NGOs as cooperative partners for inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, providing an official channel to deliver supplies to North Korea. As shown in Table 3, the government resumed large-scale food aid that had been constantly demanded by NGOs since 1995.<sup>6</sup> The positive response was also partly a matter of self-interest, since both administrations recognized that the NGOs could help disseminate their political agenda.

The cooperative partnership between the Kim and Roh administrations and the NGOs for aid to North Korea meant that the government actively accepted the NGOs' constant requests to improve institutional measures. The NGOs consistently pressured the government to abolish restrictive regulations—pressure that was finally accepted because of the Kim and Roh administrations' cooperative relationship with the NGOs (KSM 1999; NGO Council 2005). The founding of the Civil-Public Council for Policies on Aid to North Korea between the NGO Council and the government on September 1, 2004, was the first institutional mechanism for this coopera-

**Table 3 South Korean Aid to North Korea, 1995-2012**

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Government aid									
Bilateral	1,854	—	—	—	339	944	684	832	811
Multilateral	—	24	240	154	—	—	229	243	205
NGO	—	—	—	—	—	34	62	65	81
NGO Mobilization	2	12	182	275	223	387	782	576	766
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Government aid									
Bilateral	949	1,221	2,000	1,432	—	—	183	—	—
Multilateral	262	19	139	335	197	217	—	65	23
NGO	102	120	134	216	241	77	21	—	—
NGO Mobilization	1,558	779	709	909	725	377	200	131	118

Source: Ministry of Unification (2013, 159).

Note: Unit = 100 million KRW.

tive partnership. Changes in regulations were also critical: in 2006, an increase from 2 percent to 15 percent of expenditures of raised funds allowed for organizational administration under the Donation Restriction Act in 1999, and enactment of the Non-Profit Civil Organization Support Act to support the administrative expenses of NGOs in 2000. These new regulations, among other actions specified in Table 4, laid the foundation for the further development not only of NGOs for aid to North Korea but of all civil society organizations in South Korea (NGO Council 2005).

The NGO activities in relation to research and civil education as part of campaigns to provide aid to North Korea also made meaningful progress in terms of building a partnership between NGOs and the government. Civil education and advocacy that targeted changes in government policy contributed to forming a favorable public opinion toward North Korea that eased the implementation of state policies. South Korean civil society generally had an antagonistic attitude toward the DPRK before North Korea's food crisis. North Korea detained South Korean crews that delivered 150,000 tons of food assistance during the Kim Young-sam administration in 1995, exacerbating South Koreans' hostility (Baek 1999). Nevertheless, the NGOs for aid to North Korea tried to ameliorate this situation, framing aid as part of a reunification movement and appealing for universal humanitarianism.

To highlight the harshness of North Korea's economic crisis from a humanitarian perspective, these NGOs issued consecutive reports on the inevitability of North Korea's economic collapse<sup>7</sup> and the humanitarian impact of food shortages based on research using refugee interviews. These reports were disseminated across civil society through newsletters, the media, street campaigns, civil education, and college lectures, among other channels (Kim 2000).

NGOs for aid to North Korea contributed to the formation of a favorable domestic environment for the implementation of Kim Dae-jung's engagement (Sunshine) policy. At the beginning of the Kim administration in 1998 and 1999, many in South Korean civil society were concerned about the effectiveness of the new policy, as the DPRK responded aggressively to it. A series of military provocations in 1998 and 1999 were significant enough to under-

**Table 4 Institutional Changes Favorable to Aid to North Korea, 1998–2006**

March 18, 1998	Action to activate civil aid to North Korea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed visit to North Korea to discuss aid and for monitoring</li> <li>• Allowed aid to North Korea through cooperative programs</li> <li>• Allowed sponsorships and events for the press and individual companies</li> </ul>
April 25, 1998	Allowed fund-raising for North Korea through the Automatic Response System
May 28, 1998	North Korean Children Rescue Medical Aid Headquarters' lawsuit against the Donation Restriction Act for violation of the constitution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Constitutional Court judged that Article 4, which limits fund-raising to certain purposes such as international rescue, is unconstitutional</li> </ul>
January 18, 1999	Amended the Donation Restriction Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allowed the use of up to 2 percent of raised funds for administrative expenses</li> </ul>
February 10, 1999	Action to diversify the civil channel for aid to North Korea
October 27, 1999	Inter-Korean cooperation funds for NGOs humanitarian aid to North Korea
April 13, 2000	Adoption of Non-Profit Civil Organization Support Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tax deductions, postal aid, and subsidiaries for nonprofit civil organizations</li> </ul>
September 1, 2004	Foundation of Civil-Public Council for Policies on Aid to North Korea
March 24, 2006	Amended the Donation Restriction Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed name to the Act on Collection and Use of Donations</li> <li>• Increased 2 percent of raised funds for administrative expenses to 15 percent</li> </ul>

*Source:* NGO Council for Cooperation (2005, 67).

mine the engagement policy environment (Lee 2007), but NGO support of the new policy was important since it came at a time when the administration's political influence over civil society was weak and when trust between South and North Korea was not yet established (Hong 2007; Joo 2008). After an initial trust-building

period, the Kim administration was able to hold inter-Korean summit talks with North Korea in 2000, creating the momentum that catalyzed inter-Korean exchange and cooperation by government and NGOs.

In addition to studies on North Korea's food shortage and its impact, NGO aid organizations expanded communication with the international community to promote discussion of aid to North Korea among South Korean civil society and the government.<sup>8</sup> South Korean civil society had focused on economic development and democracy since the Korean War, but the NGOs' nationwide movement helped to expose society to wider issues such as humanitarianism, sharing, famine and poverty, and international cooperation. Consequently, South Korean civil society and the government took greater interest in poverty around the globe and the role of international efforts to ameliorate it.

As inter-Korean exchange and cooperation were blocked again during the Lee Myung-bak administration from 2008 on, the government and civil society naturally turned their interest from famine in North Korea to international cooperation on famine in other developing countries. Under the Lee administration (2008–2012), NGOs for international development cooperation emerged as new actors in civil campaigns, whereas the relationship between the NGOs for aid to North Korea and the government began to rupture (NGO Council 2005).

#### *Stagnation of NGO Activities: 2008–2012*

The negative change in inter-Korean relations was the root cause of the distant relationship between the NGOs for aid to North Korea and the South Korean government under Lee Myung-bak.<sup>9</sup> However, we must also consider whether the strategies of NGOs for aid to North Korea had limitations during the favorable environment from 1998 to 2007, as well as the response of NGOs during the Lee administration thereafter. By understanding the nature of the stagnation, the NGOs may be better able to develop a sustainable influence on government aid policy toward North Korea.

First of all, the activities of NGOs can hardly be sustainable if they do not observe principles of transparency and accountability



(Adeh 2004). Monitoring and evaluation of aid must provide feedback to donor countries to assure them that aid paid for with tax revenues has been duly used for the intended target and goals. Failure to satisfy accountability and transparency standards in one's operational and organizational management will render an NGO's activities unsustainable, because taxpayers in donor countries lose willingness to support aid when they cannot see its effectiveness (Wils 1996).

NGOs in South Korea did not adequately monitor or evaluate aid to North Korea during the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations, although this was attributable to North Korea's strong resistance to aid monitoring. As shown in Table 5, the Kim and Roh administrations conducted a minimum level of monitoring that was not enough to convince South Korean civil society and the political opposition that the ROK government's assistance was delivered to the intended target groups in North Korea. Faced with North Korea's disapproval and resistance, NGOs also failed to secure transparency in their aid distribution and relief operations.

NGOs as well as the South Korean government thereby failed to prove that their aid contributed to the improvement of people's lives in North Korea. When the Lee Myung-bak administration, which was very skeptical of the effectiveness of aid to the DPRK, took office in 2008, the NGOs' failure to demonstrate accountability or transparency in the management of their aid operations led to restrictions on their operations in North Korea.

Second, advocacy based on issue-specific expertise is a key function for most NGOs in their relationship with government and civil society. For this reason, the influence of NGOs on government and civil society might weaken when advocacy activities are not performed properly. In the case of NGOs that focus on a single issue, information is readily accessible to them via field-oriented programs and direct execution of tasks (Stoddard 2006). As they can suggest or criticize government policies with their accessibility to information, they can forge constructive partnerships with the government and put pressure on them to act in a way they see as preferable.

However, the advocacy role of NGOs for aid to North Korea was significantly reduced as the Kim and Roh administrations

Table 5 Aid Monitoring by the South Korean Government

	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2007	2008–2012
Amount of aid (unit = 1,000 tons)	Rice 300 Maize 200	Rice 400	Rice 400	Rice 400	Rice 500	Rice 400	No aid
Distribution district	Pyongyang	Nampo	More than two districts of the east and west coast	More than two districts of the east and west coast	Two districts of the east and west coast	Two districts of the east and west coast	No aid
Number of distribution monitoring staffs	1	1	12	10	20	12	No aid
Number of monitoring staffs	—	4	5	4 (1st visit) 5 (2nd–4th visit)	5	5	No aid

Source: Ministry of Unification (2006).

actively engaged in inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, in particular by providing large-scale aid to North Korea using bilateral and NGO channels. Given this favorable environment for relief and development operations in North Korea, the NGOs' major role was as a channel of relief and development aid to North Korea, not as advocates to persuade the government and civil society (see Tables 3 and 6). The exclusive focus on service delivery made it difficult for NGOs to resume the role of advocacy when the conservative Lee Myung-bak administration gained power and opposed the provision of aid to North Korea.

Third, many international NGOs in developed countries gain a global reputation by promoting notable activities with an independent and stable financial structure. In fact, many NGOs in Northern Europe rely on government subsidies to a significant extent. But a critical issue is whether NGOs maintain their autonomy while receiving government funding. Therefore, experts frequently recommend diversifying funding arrangements and creating a financing mechanism that ensures the autonomy of NGO activity (Baitenmann 1990; Clark 1995; Fisher 1993; James 1989).

NGOs for aid to North Korea received assistance from the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund from 2000. The Non-Profit Civil Organization Support Act of 2000 provided tax deductions, postal aid, and subsidies for a better work environment for NGOs. However, these institutional and policy improvements in relation to funding were not adequate to provide stable and sufficient

**Table 6 South Korean NGOs Approved by the ROK Government as Social and Cultural Cooperation Project Providers to North Korea**

	1991– 2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of NGOs approved	29	5	12	14	47	25	19	1	—	1	1	0

*Sources:* Data between 1991 and 2008 from Lee and Heo (2009) and others from the website of the Ministry of Unification.

resources for NGOs to carry out their activities in North Korea. With regard to the government's Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund,<sup>10</sup> NGOs could not ensure financial stability and plan for long-term projects as they could not predict future project areas or the scale of government financial support. Given the underdevelopment of the government funding mechanism for NGOs as well as the immaturity of the philanthropic culture in South Korean civil society, NGOs for aid to North Korea could not be free from the influence of funding entities, especially the government, which directly determined which NGO operations would receive financial support based on its own policies and preferences. These limitations caused financial hardships for NGOs, especially during the Lee Myung-bak presidency when aid to North Korea was fully suspended. With weak funding leading to poor working conditions and low salaries, NGOs and their activists could hardly be expected to be effective advocates on aid to the North.

In sum, the failure to resolve the problems and limitations identified in the process of providing aid to North Korea deprived the NGOs of accountability in their role as advocates to the government and civil society. Actually, most of them had no prior experience in relief and development activities. However, their efforts to improve policies and practices were limited to a few consultations that led to the adoption of a Civil-Public Manual on Urgent Rescue Activities for North Korea in 2005, a Code of Conduct in 2006, and a Workshop for Evaluation of Humanitarian Aid to North Korea and Development Strategies of NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea in 2009 (National Archives of Korea 2013).

NGOs further suffered from the aftermath of North Korea's nuclear test in 2006, which aid groups failed to counteract effectively. In the negative operational environment that has prevailed since then, conservative groups in South Korean civil society have damaged the credibility of NGOs for aid to North Korea, criticizing their efforts to win government subsidies for North Korea programs, their inefficient use of funds, and the lack of transparency in aid operations. NGOs' inability to resolve these limitations and problems is a major reason for their declining influence on government aid policy to North Korea since 2008.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

My study examines the experiences of NGOs that aid North Korea to illuminate the sustainability of NGO influence on ROK government policymaking. Sustainability depends on the government and civil society being mutually supportive and reliant on each other to achieve a democratic welfare state. To form sustainable NGO influence, the government needs to provide an institutional mechanism and financial support for the activities and sound development of NGOs, and NGOs need to consistently adhere to the principles of transparency and accountability.

Specifically, my study identified three principles for the accomplishment of sustainable NGO influence on government policymaking, starting with achieving accountability and transparency in operations and organizational management. While NGOs for aid to North Korea contributed to the political rapprochement between the two Koreas, they failed to satisfy in accountability that was demanded by the South Korean government and civil society. Eventually they lost the trust of key stakeholders, making it difficult for them to maintain their influence on government.

Second, research and civil education by NGOs are important tools for their maintaining influence on government. However, NGOs for aid to North Korea began to neglect this function with the rapid increase in relief and development operations from 2000 to 2007. This neglect consequently limited their capacity to provide substantial evidence and persuasive arguments to confront the conservative opposition or win the support of civil society during the Lee Myung-bak administration. Moreover, advocacy activities exploiting research and civil education are an important factor for NGOs to secure leverage with the government. With the provision of the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund and the diversification of channels for aid to North Korea in 2000, the NGOs and the NGO Council focused more on their roles as service providers than as civil advocates. The later decline in NGO leverage in relation to the government and civil society resulting from the neglect of their advocacy role shows that NGO advocacy should consistently be considered an integral part of all their activities.

Third, NGOs must establish a stable financial mechanism to serve as an equal counterpart to the government, not as subordinate partners. The most commonly suggested solutions, such as securing financial independence and stability through the diversification of their funding arrangements, requires sustainable NGO influence on government policymaking. However, South Korean NGOs for aid to North Korea failed to establish reliable and diversified funding sources, admittedly a difficult chore inasmuch as a lack of resources is often an intrinsic characteristic of nongovernmental organizations. Governments must improve financial support mechanisms for NGOs to promote the partnership between government and civil society.

## Notes

Kyungyon Moon is assistant professor of Jimmy Carter School of International Studies at Chonbuk National University, Korea. He was formerly an associate research fellow at the Research Institute for North Korea and Northeast Asia Development of the Export-Import Bank of Korea. He can be reached at mohandas78@hotmail.com. This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean government (NRF-2013S1A3A2043565).

1. Until 1998, the Kim Young-sam administration did not approve fundraising activities that were held in public spaces.

2. The NGO support system includes subsidies for NGO activities and organizational management, tax deductions, and postal service assistance programs.

3. For example, World Vision, an international aid organization, combines international rescue activities with various campaigns and advocacy activities to raise civil society's awareness of international aid programs, and conducts ongoing research and civil education programs to gain expertise.

4. The reports are at Good Friends (1998a, 1998b, 1998c).

5. This can be attributed to political risk highlighted by events such as the detention of South Koreans in North Korea on suspicion of taking photos for espionage purposes, which the Kim Young-sam administration experienced after donating 150,000 tons of rice in 1995 (Baek 1999).

6. The need for aid to North Korea through a civil channel and the demands for government aid to North Korea on a larger scale were also discussed in the presidential candidate discussion jointly organized by the Korea Sharing Movement in 1997. At that time, the Korea Sharing Movement demanded in the keynote speech that the presidential candidates adopt these two requests as policies after the presidential election, and the candidates showed positive responses to the request.

7. The NGOs for aid to North Korea emphasized that the economic downturn in North Korea was attributable to changes in diplomatic relations between North Korea and its key partners, China and the Soviet Union, in the early 1990s.

8. NGOs for aid to North Korea made aid an issue of international consequence. They consistently organized international conferences on aid to North Korea, starting with the International Conference on Food Shortage in North Korea in 1997. By doing so, they sought to encourage the international community to put external pressure on the South Korean government (Moon 2012).

9. It is undeniable that the change in inter-Korean relations since the Lee Myung-bak administration directly influenced the stagnation of the activities of NGOs for aid to North Korea. My study acknowledges this essential limitation and critically examines the weak NGO–Lee Myung-bak administration partnership. I raise this topic in order to discuss its implications for the theoretical background of the government–civil society partnership mentioned earlier in my study.

10. The South Korean government provided approximately 322.7 billion won to nonprofit civil organizations in 2010 (Cho 2011).

11. Recognizing this issue and with the intention to restrain the NGOs for aid to North Korea, the Lee Myung-bak administration audited the NGOs for aid to North Korea upon inauguration (Unification News 2008).

## References

- Adeh, Ignatius. 2004. "Fostering Accountability in Zimbabwean Civil Society." *International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law*, vol. 6, no. 3 (June), [www.icnl.org/research/journal/vol6iss3/special\\_4.htm](http://www.icnl.org/research/journal/vol6iss3/special_4.htm).
- Ahn, Sook-Hee. 2010. "A Study on Partnership Between Government and Development NGO." *Journal of Future Social Work Research*, vol. 1, no. 1 (November), pp. 65–87.
- Baek, Nak-Seo. 1999. "'95 Policy Discussion of Rice for North Korea." *Humanities and Social Science Collection*, vol. 6, no. 1 (February), pp. 5–34.
- Baitenmann, Helga. 1990. "NGOs and the Afghan War: The Politicization of Humanitarian Aid." *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 12, no. 1 (January), pp. 62–85.
- Barrett, Christopher B., and Daniel G. Maxwell. 2005. *Food Aid After Fifty Years: Recasting Its Role*. London: Routledge.
- Brown, David L., and Mark H. Moore. 2001. "Accountability, Strategy, and International Nongovernmental Organizations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, vol. 30, no. 3 (September), pp. 569–587.
- Carothers, Thomas, and William Barndt. 1999. "Civil Society." *Foreign Policy*, no. 117, pp. 18–29.
- Cho, Heung-Shik. 2011. *2010 White Book of Government Support of Non-Profit Civil Organizations*. Seoul: Korea NPO Conference.

- Cho, Myung-Rae. 2001. "Study on the Understanding and Activation of NGO and Government Partnership." *Local Community Development Society Journal*, vol. 26, no. 2 (December), pp. 275–301.
- Clark, Ann Marie. 1995. "Non-Governmental Organizations and Their Influence on International Society." *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 48, no. 2 (Winter), pp. 507–525.
- Donnelly, Jack. 1999. "The Social Construction of International Human Rights." In Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler, eds., *Human Rights in Global Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Edwards, Michael, and David Hulme, eds. 1996a. *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.
- . 1996b. "Too Close for Comfort? The Impact of Official Aid on Non-governmental Organizations." *World Development*, vol. 24, no. 6 (June), pp. 961–973.
- Fisher, Julie. 1993. *Road from Rio: Sustainable Development and the Non-governmental Movement in the Third World*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Florini, Ann M., ed. 2000. *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Forsythe, David P. 2006. *Human Rights in International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Good Friends. 1998a. "Report on the Food Deficits Testified by 472 North Korean Food Refugees." Seoul: Good Friends.
- . 1998b. "Report on the Food Deficits Testified by 1,855 North Korean Food Refugees." Seoul: Good Friends.
- . 1998c. *People Crossing Dumangang*. Seoul: Jungto Press.
- . 2006. *We Will Be Good Friends with Anyone in the World*. Seoul: Good Friends.
- Hong, Jae-Hwan, et al. 2012. *A Study on the Evaluation System of the ODA Projects in Korea*. Seoul: Korea Institute of Public Administration.
- Hong, Soo-Young. 2008. "Lesson of 10 Years of DJ-Roh Administrations: Civil Organizations Tainted by Power" (in Korean). *Donga Ilbo*, January 4.
- Hong, Sung-Tae. 2007. "The Socio-Political Governance of Civil Society and Government-NGO Relationship in Korea." *Social Studies*, no. 13 (April), pp. 73–100.
- Human Rights Movement Sarangbang. 1996. "No. 570, Fund-Raising for Flood Victims in North Korea." January 25, [www.sarangbang.or.kr](http://www.sarangbang.or.kr).
- . 1997a. "No. 870, Signed by 717 Women: For Government's Immediate Food Supply to North Korea." April 24, [www.sarangbang.or.kr](http://www.sarangbang.or.kr).
- . 1997b. "No. 915, Deliberate Badmouthing of Activities to Help Brothers." July 1, [www.sarangbang.or.kr](http://www.sarangbang.or.kr).
- James, Estelle, ed. 1989. *The Nonprofit Sector in International Perspective: Studies in Comparative Culture and Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press.



- Jang, Ji-Ho, and Jung-Hwa Hong. 2010. "Trends of Studies on Governance in Korea: With Emphasis on State, Market, and Civil Society." *Korean Society and Administrative Studies*, vol. 21, no. 3 (November), pp. 103–133.
- Joo, Sung-Soo. 2008. *Vision of Korean Civil Society in the New Millennium*. Seoul: Hanyang University Publishers.
- Jung, Ye-Seul, and Heon Kim. 2012. "Discussion of Central and Local Governments' Support for Civil Organizations: With Emphasis on Government Advocacy Organizations." *Local Administrative Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2 (June), pp. 217–250.
- Keck, Margaret E., and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Keohane, Robert O. 1989. *International Institutions and State Power: Essays in International Relations Theory*. London: Westview Press.
- Kim, Mi-Kyung. 2000. "Commercialization of Poverty and Famine: Fund-Raising Marketing Strategies of Humanitarian NGOs for Aid to North Korea." *Korean Social Science*, vol. 22, no. 3 (December), pp. 119–150.
- Klotz, Audie. 1999. *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle Against Apartheid*. London: Cornell University Press.
- Krasner, Stephen D., ed. 1983. *International Regimes*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Kratochwil, Friedrich V. 1989. *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- KSM (Korea Sharing Movement). 1999. *3rd Anniversary of Korea Sharing Movement*. Seoul: Korea Sharing Movement.
- . 2006. *10 Years of Reconciliation, and Steps Toward Peace*. Seoul: Korea Sharing Movement.
- Lee, Gang-Woong, and Chul-Haeng Huh. 2006. "Evaluation and Reorganization of Local Government Supported Organizations: With Emphasis on Government Advocacy Organizations." *Local Government Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 235–255.
- Lee, Jong-Moo. 2005. "Study of Development of Humanitarian Support System for North Korea" (in Korean). Master's thesis, Graduate School of North Korean Studies, Kyungnam University.
- Lee, Jong-Sun. 2009. Secretary-General of Korea Sharing Movement, Interview, May 12.
- Lee, Joo-Chul. 2007. "Shift of the Public Opinion Toward the North." *International Society for Korean Studies*, no. 10, pp. 128–161.
- Lee, Keum-Soon, and Moon-Young Heo. 2009. "Cooperation with NGOs for the Development of Inter-Korean Relations." Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification.
- Lee, Keum-Soon, Jong-Moo Lee, and Cheol-Young Choi. 1999. "The Study of the Shift of the Movement of Humanitarian Aid to North Korea" (in Korean). Seoul: Ministry of Unification.

- Mathews, Jessica T. 1997. "Power Shift." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 1 (January/February), pp. 50–66.
- McAdam, Doug. 1998. "On the International Origins of Domestic Political Opportunities." In Anne N. Costain and Andrew S. McFarland, eds., *Social Movements and American Political Institutions*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Ministry of Unification. 2006. "National Assembly's Government Inspection Material." Unpublished.
- . 2013. *Unification White Paper*. Seoul: Ministry of Unification.
- . 2016. "Statistics." [www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=3099](http://www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=3099) (accessed January 28, 2016).
- Moon, Kyungyon. 2012. "The Role of Humanitarian NGOs: Impact on South Korean Food Aid Policy Towards North Korea from 1995 to 2007." PhD diss., Cranfield University.
- National Archives of Korea. 2013. "NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea." <http://contents.archives.go.kr/next/content/viewMain.do> (accessed August 19, 2013).
- National Law Information Center. 2013. "Comparison of Old and New Articles of the Donation Restriction Act." [www.law.go.kr](http://www.law.go.kr) (accessed August 19, 2014).
- NGO Council for Cooperation with North Korea (NGO Council). 2005. *White Book of 10 Years of Aid to North Korea*. Seoul: Neulpum.
- Price, Richard. 1998. "Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines." *International Organization*, vol. 52, no. 3 (Summer), pp. 613–644.
- Raustiala, Kal. 1997. "States, NGOs, and International Environmental Institutions." *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 41 (December), pp. 719–740.
- Risse-Kappen, T. 1995. *Bringing Transnational Relations Back In: Non-State Actors, Domestic Structures and International Institutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rittberger, Volker, ed. 1993. *Regime Theory and International Relations*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon.
- Sikkink, Kathryn. 1993. "Human Rights, Principled Issue-Networks, and Sovereignty in Latin America." *International Organization*, vol. 47, no. 3 (June), pp. 411–441.
- Slim, Hugo. 2002. "By What Authority: The Legitimacy, Accountability of Non-Governmental Organizations." Paper presented by International Council on Human Rights Policy at the International Meeting of Global Trends and Human Rights—Before and After September 11, Geneva, Switzerland, January 10–12.
- Son, Hyuk-Sang, Jae-Gwang Han, and Bo-Gi Park. 2011. "Study of Government–Civil Society in International Development Cooperation: With Emphasis on Case Analysis of OECD DAC Member Nations' NGO Support Policies." *National Strategies*, vol. 17, no. 4 (December), pp. 105–136.

- Son, Hyuk-Sang, and Bok-Chul Jung. 2010. "Civil Society and International Aid (ODA): With Emphasis on Japan's Development NGOs." *Collection of World Regional Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1 (April), pp. 101–126.
- Stoddard, Abby. 2006. *Humanitarian Alert: NGO Information and Its Impact on US Foreign Policy*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.
- Stromquist, Nelly P. 1998. "NGOs in a New Paradigm of Civil Society." *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Fall), pp. 62–67.
- Sung, Ki-Young, and Dang Kim. 1997. "Presidential Candidate Discussion with Sisa Journal—Korea Sharing Movement: Three Different Views on Helping North Korea." *Sisa Journal*, November 27.
- Unification News. 2008. "First Audit of Inter-Korean Cooperation Funds for NGOs for Aid to North Korea." Tongil News, January 9, [www.tongilnews.com](http://www.tongilnews.com) (accessed August 20, 2014).
- Wils, Frits. 1996. "Scaling Up, Mainstreaming, and Accountability: The Challenge for NGOs." In Michael Edwards and David Hulme, eds., *Beyond the Magic Bullet: NGO Performance and Accountability in the Post-Cold War World*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.