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# **The Role of NGOs in Settling North Korean Migrants into South Korean Society: Perceived Assistance and Realities**

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**The Role of NGOs in Settling North Korean Migrants into South Korean  
Society**

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# **The Role of NGOs in Settling North Korean Migrants into South Korean Society: Perceived Assistance and Realities**

## **Abstract**

This study examines non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) settlement assistance to North Korean migrants into South Korean society from 2006 to 2008. This paper argues that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and clients need to develop an effective partnership in which trust is deeply grounded. This will not only facilitate effective service delivery and satisfactory cooperation, but also increase the likelihood of future cooperation between NGOs and clients. NGOs' settlement assistance to North Korean migrants in South Korea serves as a case study we developed from findings derived from in-depth interviews, which were conducted from November 2006 through June 2007, with follow-up conducted through August 2008. We draw to collaborative governance and trust theories that locate the development of public-private partnership and effectiveness of service provision to address a broader debate about the role of NGOs to mediate migrants' settlement in a host society.

*Keywords:* North Korean migrants; South Korea; Settlement assistance; NGOs; Public-private partnership; Trust-building

## **Introduction**

Since the late 1990s, South Korea has encountered an unprecedented phenomenon in which an increasing number of North Korean migrants have entered South Korea. The term ‘North Korean migrants’ means ‘nationals of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’ (the DPRK or North Korea) who leave their homeland and settle in South Korea. To seek a route to South Korea, in most cases, these migrants illegally crossed the borders from China into other countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam to find their way to South Korea. Several terms also define North Koreans—North Korean defectors, refugees, “Talbukja” (North Korean escapees), or “Saetomin” (literally new-settler) (Chan & Schloenhardt, 2007, p. 215; The Ministry of Unification [MOU], 2005, p. 106).

Driven by national identity based on shared “Korean” ethnicity, the South Korean government accommodates all North Koreans who wish to settle there. A year as of 2011, 22,410 North Korean migrants have been settled in South Korea (MOU, 2011a). Through its settlement policy, the South Korean government has facilitated these migrants in their efforts to establish themselves in South Korean society. South Korea’s government has built public-private partnerships to handle the settlement and societal integration of North Korean migrants. The Korean government has increasingly contracted out multiple services to third parties and relied on networks of public, non-profit and for-profit organizations (MOU, 2009; MOU, 2010; Milward & Provan, 2006). There are a number of organizations and people in the local communities that engage in the settlement and integration process: settlement helpers, support officers, North Korean Refugees Foundation, the Regional Adaptation Center (Hana Center), the Regional Council of Support for North Korean Refugees and NGOs (MOU, 2010, p. 243).

The roles of NGOs and volunteer activities are expanded under the public-private partnership strategy for efficient and effective service delivery in global communities (Kettle, 2005; Klijin, 2008) and the approach has been applied to settlement policy of North Korean migrants in South Korea. Despite the development of public-private partnerships for delivering the settlement policy, limited attention has been paid to perceived assistance and realities in incorporating the use of NGOs to assist migrants with their settlement. In addition, there is rare research on trust-building between service providers (NGOs) and migrants and its impact on service delivery effectiveness.

In the context of reciprocal resource dependence between organizations, both government and NGOs adopt each other's good points to make up for their weakness, thereby developing effective public-private partnerships (Bryson & Crosby, 2008, p.62; Lambright, Mischen & Laramie, 2010; Saidel, 1991, p.544). Furthermore, in the collaborative networks, relationships are based on cooperation and collaboration in which trust is deeply grounded (Milward & Provan, 2006, p. 9). Trust-building between service providers (NGOs) and migrants also serves as a key factor for effective service delivery and satisfactory cooperation (Das & Teng, 1998, p. 494). Successful cooperation between NGOs and migrants is important because cooperation not only plays a significant role in the development of interpersonal trust, but also becomes a consequence of trusting relationships. Trust facilitates future cooperation by reducing uncertainty in the relationship and concerns about opportunism, thereby minimizing the transaction costs involved in future relationships (Lambright et al., 2010, p. 69).

Non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) settlement assistance to North Korean migrants in South Korea serves as a case study developed from findings derived from in-depth interviews. This study draws to public-private partnerships and trust theories that locate the development of

public-private partnership and effectiveness of service provision to address a broader debate about the role of NGOs to mediate migrants' settlement in a host society. The purpose of this exploratory study is to analyze the following research questions: (a) how have public-private partnerships evolved in implementing South Korea's settlement programs for North Korean migrants?; (b) what are the causes of building the partnerships?; (c) what settlement assistance do NGOs provide to migrants?; and (d) to what extent does trust-building between NGOs and migrants affect the service delivery process?

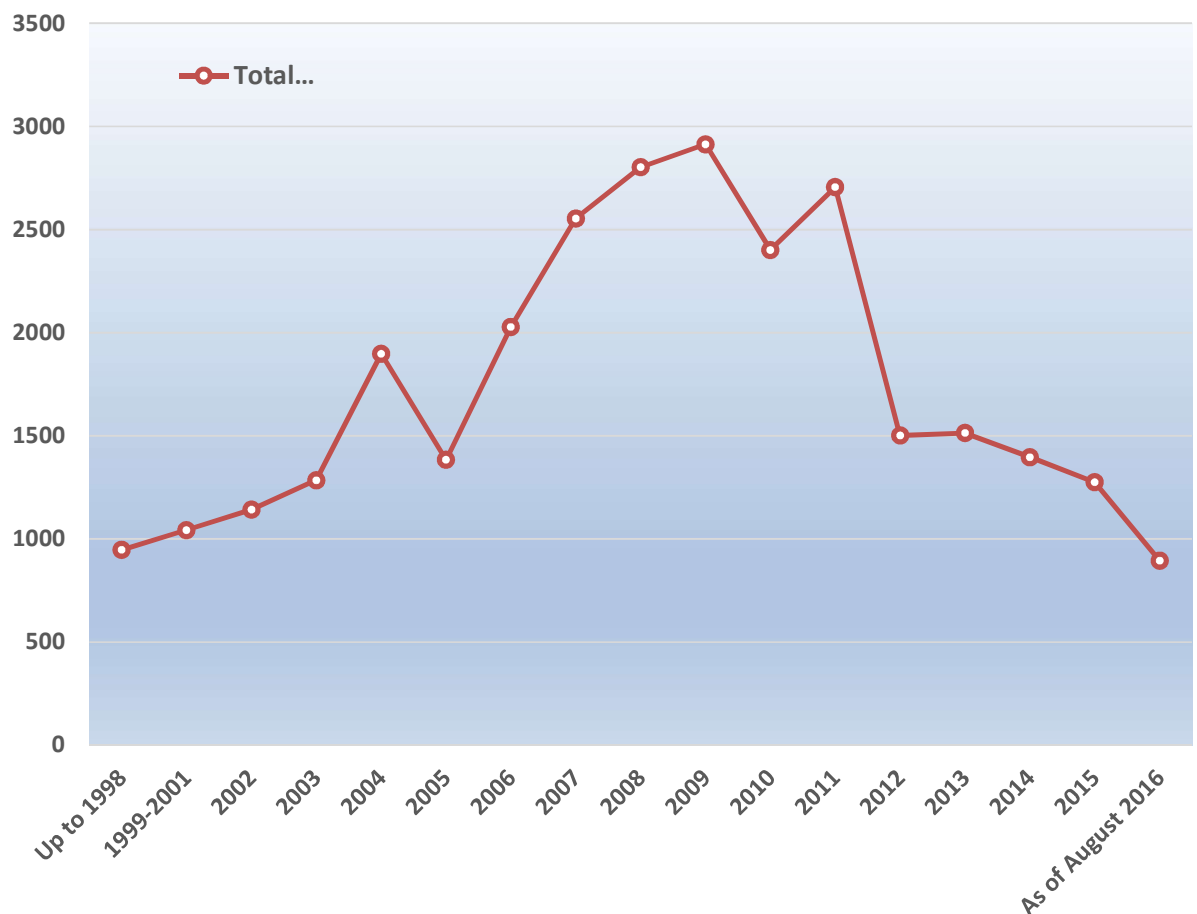
The study is derived from fieldwork research among North Korean migrants, NGO officials and government officials in South Korea, who are the key stakeholders of public-private partnerships in the settlement and societal integration of North Korean migrants. For this study, in-depth interviews with these groups were conducted from November 2006 through June 2007. Follow-up interviews continued until August 2008. Although the interview data collected is outdated, the research was conducted during the Roh Moo-hyun administration (2003-2008) when the South Korean government strongly encouraged multiple actors, such as NGOs and local communities to assist North Korean migrants with their settlement. Accordingly, the collected data shows multi-level networks and community-oriented governance in public-private partnerships for settlement programs, which is a distinctive pattern of this period.

The paper begins with a brief review of the movement of North Korean migrants. Next, we examine the literature on public-private partnerships in policy implementation, and trust developed between NGOs and clients. Following research methods and data, the paper discusses research findings, addresses implications for effective performance between NGOs and migrants in service delivery and proposes important avenues for further research.

## Context: The Movement of North Korean Migrants

As previously stated, South Korea has experienced an increasing number of North Korean migrants entering its country. From the end of the Korean War (1950-1953) until 1998, only 947 North Koreans fled to South Korea. Since then, the number has increased to hundreds annually. Since 2002, more than one thousand have entered South Korea every year. Total 22,410 North Korean migrants have been settled in South Korea by 2011 (MOU, 2011a).

Figure 1. The Number of North Koreans Entering South Korea  
(From 1953 through August 2016)





\*Source: Ministry of Unification (MOU) (2012; 2016)

This unprecedented phenomenon occurred because of geopolitical factors surrounding North Korea. In the 1990s, the demise of the Soviet Union and the change of China's political and economic landscapes accounted for a decrease in economic assistance to North Korea (Ohliger & Münz, 2003, pp. 4-5). In the early 1990s, Russia and China established economic and diplomatic ties with South Korea, thereby straining their own relations with North Korea, which relied on preferential trade relations with its two allies (Davis, 2006, p. 132). Faced with minimal support from the two allies, North Korea experienced a severe economic downturn. In addition, acute food shortages were compounded by natural disasters in the mid-1990s (Muico, 2005, p. 1).

Consequently, hundreds of thousands of North Koreans crossed the border into China to look for food and work. Unfortunately, China's legal and institutional systems, designed to maintain strict control of these migrants, prevented them from gaining economic security, personal safety and social acceptance (Kim, 2008). Faced with this situation, migrants searched for a new life in South Korea, whose government took the leading and coordinating action for the protection of these migrants and the resolution of their problems (Muico, 2005, p. 13). North Korean migrants were granted South Korean citizenship upon arrival. Furthermore, they benefited from a wide range of assistance – subsidized housing, settlement money/monthly allowance, a reward system for employment, medical care assistance, and so on (MOU, 2011b).

However, as the number of migrants to South Korea steadily increased, the South Korean government found it difficult to maintain strict control of the settlement and societal integration of migrants all by itself. Thus, the government has established and maintained partnerships with NGOs.

## **Public-Private Partnerships in Policy Implementation**

Scholars of public administration and public policy acknowledge that the global public management reform has distinctive features, such as decentralization, devolution and outsourcing, thereby leading to the development of public-private partnerships in service delivery (Kettl, 2000; Klijin, 2008; O'Leary & Bingham, 2008; Bouckaert & Pollitt, 2004). The changing of service delivery modes is potentially a costly undertaking whereby service delivery choices exhibit strong inertia. However, a number of factors influence service delivery choices of public managers and their political overseers: political pressures, fiscal constraints, bureaucratic routines, growth demands, past performance and the characteristics of the services to be delivered (Brown, Potoski & Van Slyke, 2008, pp. 128-129). Furthermore, a complexity of problems in service delivery prevents a single organization from giving an effective performance. To achieve effective service delivery and maintain goal congruence, the development of collaborative networks in the public-private partnerships receives much attention from public managers and their political overseers (Milward & Provan, 2006, p. 9).

There are a number of factors encouraging collective networks. Here, particular attention is paid to government's decentralized role in service delivery and insufficient resources facing NGOs. In cross-sector collaborations, government plays a different role, including providing much of the framework necessary for markets, businesses and non-profit organizations to operate effectively, correcting or coping with market and philanthropic failures and even guarding against its own possible failures through elections, checks and balances, and the rule of law. However, government admits it could be susceptible to marginal efficiency and productivity. For example, government operating agencies can fail when they lack an external orientation to accomplish public purposes as a result of monopoly practices or distracted monitoring. In

addition, the public is not adequately served or protected when government regulatory agencies fail because of poor organizational design, inadequate authority, or poor information. Likewise, complex public problems challenge government bureaucracies, which prevent them from doing their job alone (Bryson & Crosby, 2008, p.59).

Because government does not adequately provide goods and services required by particular groups or individuals, NGOs are engaged in the service delivery process by contracting with government or through joint service-delivery arrangements (Brown et al., 2008, p. 127; Bryson & Crosby, 2008, p.60). In this process, NGOs supply their service delivery capacity, information, political support and legitimacy, which are considered resources government or private organizations do not have (Bryson & Crosby, 2008; Saidel, 1991, p.545). Despite its service capacity and knowledge about local conditions and clients, NGOs' major concern is financial constraint; thus, they depend on governmental funding or other fiscal sources. Furthermore, NGOs are confronted with limited human resources and training (Kramer & Grossman, 1987; Saidel, 1989).

By building a partnership with government, NGOs gain access not only to financial resources but to other government resources as well: information, including expertise and technical assistance; political support and legitimacy, in the sense of external validation; and access to the non-legislative policy process. In the context of reciprocal resource dependence between organizations, both government and NGOs adopt each other's good points to make up for their weakness, thereby developing effective public-private partnerships (Lambright et al., 2010; Saidel, 1991, p. 544).

Today, government has increasingly contracted out multiple services to third parties and relied on networks of public, non-profit and for-profit organizations (Milward & Provan, 2006, p.

8). This transition demonstrates that the government sees third parties as having strengths it does not have, especially in social services, health, employment and training (Bryson & Crosby, 2008, p. 62). Settlement policy for migrants is no exception. This study firstly explores the evolution of public-private partnerships in the context of North Korean migrants' settlement policy implementation in South Korea.

### **NGOs and Clients: Does Trust Matter?**

Many argue that trust-building between contracting participants is a prerequisite for public management networks because trust is used to reduce the complexity of the events and gain positive expectations (Brown et al., 2007, p. 614; Das & Teng, 1998, p. 494). Similarly, trust-building between NGOs and clients serves as a key factor for effective service delivery and satisfactory cooperation (Das & Teng, 1998, p. 494). Public trust in the non-profit sector is based on accountability, with accountability being both 'held responsible' by others and about 'taking responsibility' for oneself (Leen, 2006, p. 6).

However, NGOs often face challenges in demonstrating effectiveness in their work and accountability in their relationships with various stakeholders (Leen, 2006, p. 8). For example, lack of self-regulation and codes of behavior weaken the legitimacy of the non-profit sector. Although 'downward' accountability between NGOs and clients can be enhanced through participatory evaluation, NGOs' responsiveness to clients' feedback may not be as attentive as it should be; moreover, the decision-making authority of clients is limited (Leen, 2006, p. 10; Nelson, 2007, p. 18). Because client participation or authority is still at a minimal level, people have too little understanding about ownership to answer questions about the performance of the non-profit sector (Schlesinger, Mitchell & Gray, 2004, p. 677). For these reasons, 'downward' accountability between NGOs and clients has traditionally been the weakest link in the

accountability chain (The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organizations, 2010, p. 2). Accordingly, trustworthiness appears to be the foundation upon which rests the public legitimacy of the non-profit sector (Schlesinger et al., 2004, p. 678).

To gain public trust in NGOs, successful cooperation between NGOs and clients is important because cooperation not only plays a significant role in the development of interpersonal trust but also becomes a consequence of trusting relationships. Trust facilitates future cooperation by reducing uncertainty in the relationship and concerns about opportunism, thereby minimizing the transaction costs involved in future relationships (Lambright et al., 2010, p. 69). Consequently, trust-building between NGOs and clients enhances effective partnerships and achieves policy goals.

## **Research Methods and Data**

For this research, two research methods are applied: archival research and in-depth interviews. Among archival data sources, particular attention has been paid to policy documents and media reports (S. Schensul, J. Schensul & LeCompte, 1999, p. 202). Because public-private partnerships have evolved around South Korea's settlement policy for North Korean migrants, the study closely examined the "official perspective" of this policy, including the "Act on the Protection and Settlement Support of Residents Escaping from North Korea (hereinafter "Settlement Support Act")" and the White Paper on Korean Unification (1997-2010) (MOU, 1997; 1998; 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2009; 2010). Yet, it should be acknowledged that it is uncertain whether stakeholders other than policy makers equally present their opinions in the production of policy documents. To analyze the relationships among governments, NGOs and North Korean migrants, in-depth interviews were conducted to see how

real people interpret policy documents versus interpretation by an imaginary audience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 124).

### **Interview Data Collection and Analysis**

In-depth interviews with the key stakeholders were conducted from November 2006 to June 2007 in South Korea. Follow-up interviews continued until August 2008. There were a total of 29 participants: 20 North Korean migrants (11 male and 9 female migrants), 7 NGO officials and 2 government officials at MOU. Although the interviews were mainly conducted in Seoul, South Korea, some interviews were conducted in other provinces, such as Gangwon province and Jeollabuk province. The recruitment of North Korean migrants for several in-depth interviews was initially assisted by the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights (NKHR). The snowball sampling method was used to recruit other North Korean migrants.

Among the twenty migrants interviewed, the length of residence in South Korea varied. The shortest period of residence was six months and the longest was more than ten years, with the average length of residence being more than four years. North Korean interviewees who were over 18 years old were also selected because it was concluded that interviewees under that age might not be able to understand or respond to the interview questionnaire properly. In addition, two government officials at MOU—especially, the settlement support department—and seven NGO officials at five South Korean NGOs working for North Korean migrants were also interviewed. These NGOs are introduced in the findings section of this paper.

Three separate interview questionnaires were prepared for the study: one each for North Korean migrants, NGO officials and government officials. All interviewees' information is strictly confidential and anonymous; this paper will not reveal participants' profiles. All of the interviews were conducted in Korean and translated into English. With the consent of the

interviewees, researchers used written notes and audio-recordings in the interviews. To analyze the dynamics between NGOs and migrants in the service delivery process, this paper has paid more attention to the interview data analysis of NGO officials and North Korean migrants than that of government officials.

## **Findings**

### **Evolution of Public-Private Partnerships for Settlement Programs**

The archival data shows there are three distinctive periods in the evolution of public-private partnerships related to South Korea's settlement policy for North Korean migrants (see Table 1). The North Korean Refugees Foundation<sup>1</sup> was established in the first period (1997-1998). The South Korean government expressed that this foundation would play a crucial role as a civic organization in assisting the settlement and societal integration of North Korean migrants (e.g., counseling for adjustment, career counseling and vocational training). Yet the government performed as a single actor in delivering its service to the migrants. Because the number of North Korean migrants was small, the government was able to manage their entry into South Korea.

During the second period (1999-2003), public-private partnerships extended to joint delivery of residential protection and counseling between the central government and local governments. In 2001, local governments and NGOs established the Regional Council of Support for North Korean Refugees, which provided various services, including social adjustment programs, education on the local communities, vocational training and social welfare services. As of 2010, twenty-six regional councils were active and collected data on migrants' settlement process. In response to the increased demand of social services for North Korean migrants, 63 NGOs established the Association of Support Organizations for North Korean Defectors in 1999. Likewise, government's joint service delivery with NGOs has significantly

increased (e.g., education programs and services for children and teenagers, settlement support and training, and social welfare service). This demonstrates that the South Korean government recognized the important role of NGOs' performance in service delivery.

In the third period (2004-2010), the service delivery process became more active and complex through multi-level networks, including businesses, local communities, volunteers and central-local government networks. In 2007, Hanawon built a partnership with Daewoo Motor Sales to offer migrants job opportunities at the company. More attention has been paid to the important role of volunteers and local communities in assisting the settlement and integration of North Korean migrants. For example, the Settlement Helper System was introduced in January 2005. As of June 2010, more than 2000 settlement helpers in this volunteer program served as good neighbors for migrants so they became accustomed to their new lives and smoothly integrated into the community. Settlement helpers introduced the migrants to a local society, listened to their difficulties and helped with their initial settlement in the community (MOU, 2010, p. 243).

The Regional Adaptation Centers (Hana Centers) for North Korean migrants represent a collaboration model of central government, local governments, NGOs and local community organizations. These centers provide general services, including initial adaptation support, employment support and career counseling. As of 2010, a total of 30 centers were in operation in 16 metropolitan areas (MOU, 2011b). Likewise, public-private partnerships for settlement programs have now evolved into multi-level networks and community-oriented governance.



Table 1. Public-Private Partnerships Evolution (1997-2010)

**(See Table 1 on Page 31)**

## The Causes of Building Public-Private Partnerships

In the events surrounding the movement of North Korean migrants, the paper explores the causes of building public-private partnerships to implement settlement programs for North Korean migrants. The study found three major factors persuading the partnerships: the constant increase of migrants; the need of specialized services for migrants with different backgrounds; and political leadership in South Korea. As shown in figure 1, the number of migrants to South Korea has steadily increased. The constant influx of North Korean migrants led to the wider range of backgrounds among migrants—age, education, occupation, etc. As shown in table 2, 819 men and 1,918 women entered South Korea in 2011. Since 2003, more than twice as many female migrants as males have arrived in South Korea (MOU, 2011a). Table 3 illustrates that those in their 20s and 30s accounted for 58 percent of the total population of North Korean migrants (MOU, 2011b).

Table 2. North Korean Migrants in South Korea by Gender (1953-2011)

	1953 -2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Men	1,898	469	626	423	509	570	612	666	579	819
Women	1,230	812	1,268	960	1,509	1,974	2,197	2,261	1,800	1,918
Total	3,128	1,281	1,894	1,383	2,018	2,544	2,809	2,927	2,379	2,737
Female Ratio	38%	63%	67%	69%	75%	78%	78%	77%	76%	70%

\*Source: Ministry of Unification (2011)

Table 3. North Korean Migrants in South Korea by Age (2011)

Age	1-9	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	Total
Persons	906	2,618	6,124	7,020	3,603	1,112	1,027	22,410
Percentage	4%	12%	27%	31%	16%	5%	5%	100%

\*Source: Ministry of Unification (2011)

According to the archival data analysis and the interview data with government officials, the South Korean government found it difficult to maintain strict control of the settlement and societal integration of migrants all by itself. The government needed specialized and varied services to efficiently support these diverse migrants; government required NGOs' cooperation because NGOs had a practical knowledge and experience in performing specialized services. Thus, the government has established and maintained partnerships with NGOs.

In its annual White Papers on Korean Unification (MOU, 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005), the South Korean government clearly stated it could not sufficiently educate migrants in social adaptation because of their different backgrounds. To provide appropriate services, the government promoted NGOs to assist migrants in their effort to settle and integrate into South Korean society. Since 2001, the government has been seeking to expand voluntary activities by NGOs, so this movement can become a national campaign through which migrants can benefit (MOU, 2001, p. 160).

Furthermore, political environment and presidential leadership have affected the evolution of public-private partnerships to implement South Korea's settlement policy for North Korean migrants. Prior to 1997, the South Korean government maintained strict control of the entry, settlement and integration of North Korean migrants. The partition of the Korean Peninsula made the government take caution in dealing with the influx of these migrants. Regardless of why each migrant left North Korea, the government showed a deep concern about espionage or intelligence leaks. In addition, the inter-Korean relations between North and South Korea were not as friendly as they have been more recently. Thus, the government was especially careful about direct interaction between North Korean migrants and South Korean

people. Because of political situations, the South Korean government performed as a single actor in managing the entry, settlement and integration of migrants.

However, the study found that the dominant role of the government in delivering the settlement programs changed, moving toward developing public-private partnerships beginning in the Kim Dae-jung administration (1998-2003). During this period, the development of inter-Korean relations between the two Koreas promoted the administration not only to provide North Korea with food and financial aid, but also to facilitate the settlement and integration of North Korean migrants in South Korea (The Hankyoreh, 2010; MOU, 2001, p. 107). In the latter case, the administration established public-private partnerships, thereby encouraging NGOs to assist migrants in their settlement and integration. Since then, the government has actively promoted the expansion of the existing partnerships and the development of new collaborative networks.

### **NGOs' Settlement Assistance for North Korean Migrants**

Numerous organizations and people have emerged that facilitate North Korean migrants' settlement and integration into South Korean society. NGOs have taken the initiative in assisting the migrants with their settlement. Today, more than 131 organizations are active in helping migrants adjust to their new homeland. Among them, fifty-one organizations, including community welfare centers and Korean Red Cross's local branches assist North Korean migrants in their settlement in the local communities. They provide initial adaptation support, employment support, career counseling and the like. Twenty-four organizations, such as Korea Freedom Federation, Lifeline Korea and Good People also offer general services for migrants' settlement. North Korean migrants have created approximately eighteen organizations, the majority being social organizations. In addition, fourteen organizations, including the NKHR, 3 and 4 School, Wooyang Foundation and TogetherKorea provide North Korean students with educational or

fellowship programs. Six organizations—Education and Welfare Institute, Pusan YWCA, Seoul YWCA, the Coalition for North Korean Women’s Rights, Hanawoman Association and the Anglican Church of Korea’s G.F.S (Girls’ Friendly Society)—focus on the adaptation of North Korean women to life in South Korea. Eight organizations assist North Korean migrants overseas; and about ten organizations are not included in the above-mentioned categories.<sup>2</sup> However, I assume more organizations exist than are shown in the data. As is seen, NGOs provide migrants with different settlement assistance, but the common goals are to help migrants establish themselves in South Korean society.

Here, we introduce five South Korean NGOs, with which we met for our in-depth interview. The NKHR has organized international conferences to inform the international community of North Korean human rights and refugees. Its volunteers have participated in programs for teenagers at the “Hanawon.” In the past, this agency offered programs to adult migrants, whereas it is currently offering programs only to North Korean students, such as a college-student leadership program and a summer/winter school. In addition to these programs, the agency has afforded academic and career counseling but has never offered materials or money to migrants.

In 1997, the North Korean Refugees Foundation was established under Article 30 of the “Settlement Support Act.” It helps North Korean migrants settle in South Korean society by providing assistance for livelihood stability and social adaptation (MOU, 2010, p. 244). This foundation has operated two businesses—a direct and an indirect business. The direct business includes a social adaptation program, medical care assistance and career counseling. The indirect business offers a settlement helper service and an appeal program to open bidding to NGOs for

public subscription to carry out the projects intended for these migrants. The foundation has paid closer attention to the indirect business than the direct one.

Established in 1960, Soongeui Dongjihyo is a social organization for North Korean migrants. Although the agency often receives funding from the MOU, the National Police Agency (NPA) directly provides the organization's budget. Until recently, the agency mainly promoted mutual friendship for the migrants. As the number of North Korean migrants significantly increased, the agency assisted migrants in their efforts to establish themselves in a new home. It offers temporary/regular jobs, medical care assistance, civil service consultation and the like. Because of insufficient financial and human resources, the agency provides its services on a small scale.

The NK volunteer association has provided a settlement helper service to these migrants in collaboration with one community welfare center in Seoul, South Korea. This organization started its volunteer work in 2001; and in particular, has offered a settlement helper service since 2004. As of 2007, the organization helped approximately 360 migrants. Its services include apartment cleaning, lease contract, shopping and the like. It also has extended its service to social adaptation for migrants, such as going on a picnic and going to the movies with migrants. Unity Preparations North Korea Defector Association is a political organization established by North Korean migrants. Instead of directly helping migrants, the agency has disseminated information about the realities and problems of North Korea at public meetings. The agency believes its work will prepare migrants and South Korean people for the unification between North and South Korea in the future.

The NGO officials interviewed took a positive attitude on their settlement assistance for North Korean migrants. Interviewee A<sup>3</sup> said, "My agency has done a good job for the migrants.

Under limited financial and human resources, we have done more than we could afford.”

However, our study indicated NGO officials or volunteers and migrants found it difficult to interact with each other because of lack of trust. Based on the interviews with North Korean migrants and NGO officials, the paper addresses challenging issues of building trust between NGOs and migrants in the following section.

### **Weak Trust Building Foundation between NGOs and North Korean Migrants**

A strong skepticism regarding NGOs’ roles discouraged NGOs from collaborating with North Korean migrants. This study found that the majority of North Korean interviewees had little understanding of NGOs and their volunteer work. They questioned why these organizations tried to help them without any reparation. They assumed NGOs were rewarded for their services. Some were also concerned their interaction with NGOs could lead to NGO officials’ intrusion into their private affairs. In particular, some migrant women, who had a painful experience in China, were reluctant to interact with NGOs because they feared their previous experiences, such as sex trafficking and forced marriage, might be revealed. Below are two testaments from NGO officials regarding their experiences with migrants.

Settlement helpers keep advising North Korean migrants about what to do because they think these migrants do not know anything about South Korea. However, the migrants feel these helpers keep nagging them for unnecessary things. So, they try to avoid settlement helpers’ meddling (Interviewee C).

In particular, North Korean women are very reluctant to interact with NGOs or reject their approach. Once they get help from NGOs, NGO officials ask them about their experience in North Korea and China. So, they have a fear that their excruciating experience will be disclosed, thus avoiding NGOs. In my opinion, we should wait until they are ready to interact with us. We, NGOs, should not force them to approach us (Interviewee D).

Although five North Korean interviewees benefited from NGOs’ programs and/or services, the rest of the interviewees have not received help from NGOs because they had misgivings

about the NGOs' intentions or did not expect them to play a significant role in their integration process. The following are excerpts from migrant interviews:

I didn't get help from NGOs, only from my church. From the beginning, I did not have a fantasy about NGOs and their help. If their volunteer work had been helpful, I would have expected it more, but it was not, so I did not take it seriously (Interviewee E).

North Korean migrants are reluctant to get help from NGOs because they find it weird and unfamiliar with NGOs. I haven't received help from NGOs either (Interviewee F).

This skepticism about NGOs' role arises from North Korean migrants' bitter experiences with NGOs, brokers or individuals in China. Although the groups helped migrants flee to South Korea, many lost their savings to pay for their assistance, and some experienced threats and detention. The groups often exploited migrants' vulnerable situation for their own advantages: surreptitious smuggling across borders; labor contracting between Chinese or Korean-Chinese employers and migrants; and arranged marriages between North Korean migrant women and Chinese or Korean-Chinese men – usually farmers or the handicapped (Massey et al., 1993, p. 450). Accordingly, migrants formed a negative impression of NGOs, brokers or individuals in China and that impression has extended to NGOs and volunteers in South Korea. Instead of welcoming NGOs' or volunteers' help, migrants are wary of their intentions and volunteer work and refuse the services they offer. In China, interviewee G<sup>4</sup> met one South Korean NGO official. His agency promised to help her arrive in South Korea safely. Unfortunately, the agency swindled 1.7 million won out of her; she was unable to go to South Korea as she planned. This bitter experience gave her doubts about NGOs and their services in South Korea.

Similar to migrants' strong skepticism creating reluctance to take advantage of NGOs and their services, those NGO officials who were interviewed also found it difficult to interact with North Korean migrants. Because these migrants had little knowledge regarding the concept of



NGOs and the volunteer work, they often treated NGO officials and volunteers as their private helpers, thereby giving them an unpleasant feeling. Some settlement helpers were irritated by North Korean migrants' lackadaisical attitude toward their integration efforts. To allow migrants to move in, low-income South Korean residents vacated their apartments. They might not easily find housing with their deposit because they paid a less expensive housing security deposit for their apartments than other South Korean residents. On the other hand, migrants were provided with subsidized housing and economic assistance; nonetheless, they seemed more likely to depend on the government's assistance than to become self-sufficient. Some migrants took advantage of economic initiatives provided by the government. Subsequently, settlement helpers were unsympathetic toward migrants; simultaneously, they disagreed with the government's generous support for migrants.<sup>5</sup>

Not only did NGOs develop their negative impression because of their experiences with North Korean migrants, but they also had prejudice against North Koreans because of the long-standing conflict between North and South Korea. This conflict deeply infused anticommunist ideas into the minds of South Korean people. Although inter-Korean relations between the two Koreas have improved since the Kim Dae-jung administration (1998-2003), the deeply-rooted anticommunism did not disappear immediately; moreover, it was resurrected by the misdeed of the North Korean regime. For example, a series of incidents between the two Koreas— North Korean torpedo attack on the South Korean warship Cheonan and another attack on a South Korean island, called Yeonpyeong Island in 2010—led to a strong sense of anti-sentiment toward the North Korean regime among South Korean people. Subsequently, this resentment aggravated South Korean people's perceptions and relations with North Korean migrants. As illustrated in Yoon and Che's study, North Korean migrants felt South Korean people—including those

working in the NGOs—became cynical about the migrants after the North Korean torpedo attack. Migrants feared the South Koreans working with NGOs might treat them with hostility.

This negative feeling was a result of the absence of a mutual understanding between NGOs and migrants. Because migrants had little knowledge about NGOs and their volunteer work, they did not value NGOs' role. NGO officials also had little understanding of migrants' experiences, perceptions and behavior patterns.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, prejudice developed from the long-standing conflict, including the infused anticommunism, discouraged NGOs to have a good understanding of North Korean migrants. The lack of mutual understanding may become a barrier to building a relationship between NGOs and migrants. Without a trustworthy relationship, NGOs and migrants cannot proceed to effective performance and successful cooperation in the service delivery process.

## **Implications**

The findings of the study show the complexity of public-private partnerships in delivering settlement programs and several challenging issues of building trust between NGOs and migrants. First, the partnerships consist of multiple participants, including the central government, local governments, NGOs, volunteers, businesses and local communities. Each participant has different resources, which are viewed as strengths other participants do not have. Thus, each participant in complex networks is dependent on resources controlled by another, and pooling resources produces some types of benefit (Lambright, Mischen & Laramee, 2010, p. 64).

In the complex network system of the partnerships, sharing information from service delivery might empower partners and enrich the partnerships. It is also important to monitor and evaluate the partnerships toward shared goals. However, there is little information on how the complex networks are coordinated to increase effectiveness of settlement assistance for North

Korean migrants. Furthermore, limited attention has been paid to perceived assistance and realities in incorporating the use of NGOs to assist migrants with their settlement.

Today, many NGOs assist North Korean migrants in their efforts to settle and integrate into South Korean society. There is the increased likelihood of expected future cooperation between NGOs and these migrants. However, the partnerships may not be as effective as they could be because NGOs seem more likely to develop prejudice against migrants and their integration efforts. On the other hand, North Korean migrants have very little knowledge about the concept of NGOs and the volunteer work. Furthermore, they have had bitter experiences with NGOs, brokers, or individuals in China, including fraud and disloyalty. Accordingly, migrants' negative impression of NGOs, brokers, or individuals in China extends to NGOs and volunteers in South Korea. This weak trust-building foundation between NGOs and migrants could lead to ineffective service delivery and unsatisfactory cooperation.

In the service delivery process, the effective collaboration between NGOs and North Korean migrants is important because migrants would be able to receive the services they need and develop a positive impression of NGOs' role. NGOs also have a better understanding of migrants and their conditions, thereby providing better services to migrants. To enhance performance effectiveness in service delivery, NGOs and migrants need to maintain a good understanding of each other. In this case, both NGOs and migrants need to be educated about each other: NGOs understand migrant's experiences, perception and behavior patterns; and migrants learn about NGOs and their volunteer work. In the latter case, this education would encourage migrants to volunteer for their fellow migrants in the future. The development of a mutual understanding will contribute to building trust between NGOs and migrants, thereby increasing the success of service delivery and the likelihood of future cooperation.

## Conclusion

To efficiently provide services required by North Korean migrants, public-private partnerships have now evolved into multi-level networks and community-oriented governance. However, the results of the study also show that the collaboration between NGOs and migrants may not be as effective as they could be because of a lack of trust-building. This weak foundation of trust-building results from the following factors: (a) migrants' limited knowledge about NGOs and their volunteer work; (b) migrants' bitter psychological experiences with NGOs, brokers, or individuals in China; and (c) NGOs' development of prejudice against migrants and their integration efforts. These factors not only weaken trust-building between NGOs and migrants but also challenge performance effectiveness in the service delivery process.

This paper contributes to this research field by shedding light not only on the notion of trust developed between NGOs and migrants in service provision, but also on the impact of trust on the increasing likelihood of performance effectiveness and successful cooperation in the context of settling North Korean Migrants into South Korean Society. Despite its contributions to the literature of public-private partnerships concerning settlement policy for migrants and of trust-building between NGOs and migrants, this research has several limitations. First, the interview sample is small; opinions of some stakeholders may be missing from the data. Second, the interview data collected is outdated because the fieldwork research was completed more than 4 years ago. Thus, our interviewees may have similar or different opinions about the same questions if the field work were to be conducted now. Finally, there is little literature of public-private partnerships on settlement policy available for reference; therefore, it is challenging to develop a conceptual framework about trust-building between NGOs and specific clients, such as North Korean migrants.

It would be worthwhile for future research to look closely at North Korean migrants' direct interactions with NGO officials or volunteers. In doing so, it is important to conduct participant observation or interview many more NGO officials, volunteers and migrants. We aim to study in what areas of services NGOs produce the most/least effective performance, thereby examining the effectiveness in incorporating the use of NGOs to assist migrants with their settlement. To fully understand the implementation of public-private partnerships, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis of the various partnerships. In addition, scholars need to pay more attention to examining policy coordination concerning North Korean migrants' settlement (i.e., inter-agency coordination in national government and inter-governmental coordination). In line with this, it is necessary to analyze governance structure and network management of the multi-level partnerships and collaborations.

## Notes

1. The association has changed its name several times – The Foundation of Supports for Residents Escaping from North Korea, the Association of Supporters for Residents Escaping from North Korea, the Association of Supporters for North Korean Refugees (ASNKR) and North Korean Refugees Foundation. Here, we use its current name – North Korean Refugees Foundation.
2. This data was collected from MOU, North Korean Refugees Foundation and the Naver blog-  
[http://cafe.naver.com/allallcare.cafe?iframe\\_url=/ArticleRead.nhn%3Farticleid=984&/](http://cafe.naver.com/allallcare.cafe?iframe_url=/ArticleRead.nhn%3Farticleid=984&/)
3. An official from North Korean Refugees Foundation.
4. A female North Korean migrant.
5. An interview excerpt from volunteers at the NK volunteer association.
6. An interview excerpt from an official at the NKHR.

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Table 1. Public-Private Partnerships Evolution (1997-2010)

	PPP Type	1997	1999	2001	2005	2009	2010
North Korean Refugees Foundation	Public-Private (National/NGO)	Established					
The “Hanawon”	Public-Private (Multi-level Networks)		Established				
The Association of Support Organizations for North Korean Defectors	Private-Private (NGO/NGO)		Established				
The “Administrative Support Officer System (ASO)”	Public-Public (National/Local)		Established				
The Regional Council of Support for North Korean Refugees	Public-Private (Local/NGO)			Established			
The “Settlement Helper System”	Public-Private (Multi-level Networks)				Established		
The “Support System” among the Ministry of Unification, Gyeonggi Province and the Korean Northern Relations Council	Public-Private (National/Local/NGO)					Established	
The Regional Adaptation Centers for North Korean Refugees or Hana Centers	Public-Private (National/Local/NGO)					Established	

Notes: This table is developed based on the White Paper on Korean Unification from 1997 until 2010. In addition to the above-illustrated partnerships, there are a number of organizations and people that assist the settlement and integration of North Korean migrants. This table shows several exemplary models for public-private partnerships to handle the settlement and integration of migrants.



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