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Ways of Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation for North Korean Women's Economic Empowerment (III)

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Korean Women's Development Institute

**Ways of Inter-Korean Exchange and
Cooperation for North Korean Women's
Economic Empowerment (III)**

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I . Introduction

1. Research Purpose and Necessity

The purpose of this research is to develop a model for inter-Korean exchange and cooperation projects for economic empowerment of North Korean women. This study has been conducted for three years to prepare for implementation of inter-Korean exchange and cooperation projects for North Korean women's economic empowerment. The first-year study identified agendas, and the second-year study laid a basis for implementing the projects. The third-year study of this year developed models for the inter-Korean exchange and cooperation projects for North Korean women's economic empowerment based on the research findings of the first- and second-year studies.

2. Research Contents and Methods

1) Research Contents

- Analyzed women's economic empowerment projects implemented by international organizations and socialist countries after their reform and opening up
- Analyzed North Korea's empowerment projects and identified their characteristics
- Analyzed the demand of the North Korean authorities for women's economic empowerment projects
- Developed a module and models for North Korean women's economic empowerment

2) Research Methods

A. Literature review

- Case surveys of women's empowerment projects in former socialist countries: Case surveys of women's empowerment projects in China and Vietnam

B. Interview and workshop

Conducted interviews and workshops with a total of 18 persons, including persons with experience of implementing international development cooperation projects, persons with experience of implementing North Korean empowerment projects at home and abroad, researchers on inter-Korean exchange and cooperation projects

implemented by local governments, and international organization activists.

C. International academic conference

- Shared experience of implementing women's empowerment projects in former socialist countries

II. Overseas Cases of Women's Economic Empowerment Projects

1. Cases of International Organizations

In this study we analyzed 10 projects implemented by a total of nine international organizations. Focusing on projects for business women, female farmers, and women in science and technology, we examined their project components and implementing systems. First of all, international organizations implemented women's economic empowerment projects specifically for the following targets:

- i) Projects for women entrepreneurs included Women's Entrepreneurship Development (WED) conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Development Project by Asian Development Bank, Enterprise Development Programme /Empresas Cambian Vidas and Women in Small Enterprise (WISE) by OXFAM, and Enhancing Employability and Leadership for Youth project by Aga Khan Foundation Canada.

ii) Projects for rural women included Joint Programme to Accelerate Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Pathways program by Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE).

iii) Projects for women in science and technology included Women's Digital Literacy by Telecentre.org Foundation, Technovation for Girls by Technovation, and Strengthening STEM Curricula for Girls by UNESCO.

Second, the projects had the following characteristics depending on the component:

i) Empowerment projects comprised projects for strengthening financial and management competencies, projects for strengthening competencies in rural areas, STEM education, and projects for strengthening gender equality competencies.

ii) Infrastructure-building projects consisted of funding support, policy environment creation, and market and job securement

iii) Awareness enhancement projects were implemented in an integrated manner with existing empowerment projects and infrastructure-building projects.

Third, international organizations' projects had the following characteristics and implications:

i) Women's economic empowerment projects implemented by international organizations and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) went beyond the empowerment of their main beneficiaries, i.e. individual women and organizations, leading to changes in socio-cultural attitudes and norms, and policy environment such as gender responsive policies.

ii) Major donors stressed various types of policy intervention to alleviate women's burden of care work and to reinforce social security systems as a means of overcoming continued inequality.

iii) Empowerment projects, infrastructure-building and awareness enhancement projects were carried out as independent projects, but at times they were integrated into a project.

When it comes to implementation methods, the projects were carried out in some cases by each international organization or NGO, but in other cases by forming a partnership among several implementers.

Therefore, it is necessary to think over how to connect empowerment, infrastructure-building, and awareness enhancement projects in devising North Korean women's economic empowerment projects. Also, a strategy for resolving inequality needs to be taken into consideration. Regarding how to implement the projects, the projects should be carried out in diverse forms such as independent, specialized, and cooperative projects. Not only that, it should be positively reviewed utilizing international organizations' existing projects.

2. China's Case

Led by the government, China started to lay legal, institutional, and policy bases in an effort to strengthen women's economic competencies. The country put the first and foremost priority on the resolution of women's poverty, took actions to eradicate family poverty through All-China Women's Federation, and devised and implemented poverty reduction models. China also prepared a security system to facilitate women's economic activity, conducted vocational education for women, and actively carried out employment policies for rural women.

To support women's startup, China implemented financial policies, including small mortgage loans, and succeeded in raising the rate of women starting a business. With regard to gender equality, the Chinese government implemented gender equality policies together with diversified activities to improve social and cultural conditions. In cooperation with other countries, China has also promoted women's empowerment related to gender equality.

In spite of these achievements, the country revealed its limitations because there still remained a socio-cultural awareness that women were responsible for care and only a limited number of women benefited from its policies. Also, China's case shows that improvements of laws, systems, and policies cannot be effective unless they are accompanied by changes in people's perceptions and practices. Therefore, it is necessary to consider taking an approach or giving priority to change their perceptions together with policy implementation for North Korean women's economic empowerment.

3. Vietnam's Case

Led by the government and domestic and overseas NGOs, Vietnam implemented economic empowerment projects after its reform and opening up. Vietnam's women's empowerment projects had the following characteristics: First, the country implemented resident-led projects through grassroots organizations. Second, a majority of its projects was for ethnic minority women who were excluded from the public decision-making process and limited in getting access to resources. Third, Vietnam promoted implementation of UN's sustainable development goals.

The project beneficiaries included female farmers and female owners of small and medium sized enterprises. Also, the beneficiary group was comprehensive to empower not only individuals but also many interested persons included in the value chains. In Vietnam, like in China, there still existed a fixed idea of traditional gender role, which worked as a hindrance to women's activity.

The greatest factor that contributed to the achievement of Vietnam women's empowerment projects was the organizational support of Vietnam Women's Union, which performed a crucial role in carrying out projects in the local community. As such, it is necessary to find ways of highlighting the role of North Korea's Korean Socialist Women's Alliance in implementing North Korean women's economic empowerment.

III. North Korea's Case of Economic Empowerment of Women and Demand

1. North Korea's Experience of Implementing Empowerment Projects

North Korea's empowerment projects had the following characteristics: In content, its empowerment projects in the area of economy accounted for a majority, and in form, short-term invitation or visiting education within the knowledge-sharing frame formed the mainstream projects. In many cases, the projects were implemented by a third country. Its empowerment projects started from humanitarian assistance, then were implemented together with development and cooperation projects, or led from humanitarian assistance projects to empowerment projects. North

Korea's participants in the empowerment projects were mostly elites.

Women participated in North Korea's empowerment projects in the following ways: Existing projects consisted of women's participation in general projects and women-specific projects. To raise women's participation and implement women-specific projects in the future, it is necessary to build the bases for North Korea's participation in the projects based on the international norms, and to encourage the project implementers to carry out women-related projects.

2. Demand for North Korean Women's Economic Empowerment

Economic policies in the Kim Jong-un era require the following competencies: technical skills to increase agricultural productivity, new production capacity for self-rehabilitation of light industry, scientific and technological competencies to make all the people talents in science and technology, and expertise in education and health care.

North Korea demands for women's economic competencies. The demand for women's economic competencies is in the same vein as the demand for empowerment of all the North Korean residents under the strategy established by the North Korean authorities for economic development. The North Korean authorities call for technical skills, practical skills, and scientific and technological competencies, and management capabilities from across all sectors and the same goes for women.

When it comes to North Korea's approach to women's economic empowerment, the country approaches empowerment projects in the following ways: expand empowerment projects and raise women's

participation rate in women dominant areas, promote women’s participation in women-specific projects in women-dominant areas, and increase women’s participation in areas where women are a minority.

As to the project implementers, projects can be implemented directly by South and North Korea, or by forming partnerships among South and North Korea, and overseas countries. Considering this, ways of strengthening the role of North Korea’s Korean Socialist Women’s Alliance should be prepared.

IV. Module and Project Concept for North Korean Women’s Economic Empowerment

1. Directions and Goals for North Korean Women’s Economic Empowerment

Goal		Description
Goal 1	To promote participation in economic activity and increase income	To improve skills and capabilities for economic activity To increase economic activity participation rates
Goal 2	To improve economic, social and cultural conditions	To remove hindrances to economic activity To spread gender equality culture
Goal 3	To strengthen gender equality competencies	To raise awareness of gender equality To reinforce activity for gender equality

2. Module for North Korean Women's Economic Empowerment

Category	Module	Description
Area	A. Narrow education gaps	A-1. Narrow gender gaps in basic education A-2. Expand women's educational opportunities in majors with a minority of women A-3. Enrich women's education in majors with a majority of women A-4. Strengthen ICT competencies
	B. Strengthen job competencies and promote professionalism	B-1. Improve skills by industry B-2. Empower experts and managers
	C. Enhance gender equality awareness and competencies	C-1. Disseminate gender equality culture C-2. Strengthen competencies of gender equality policies
	D. Set legal and institutional bases	D-1. Improve laws and systems related to inter-Korean exchange and cooperation D-2. Improve laws and systems to guarantee North Korean women's right to work D-3. Improve systems of international organizations' implementing North Korean projects and international cooperation
	E. Build rudimentary data	E-1. Survey actual conditions of North Korean women E-2. Survey current situations of infrastructure for supporting economic activity
	F. Establish infrastructure	F-1. Expand public spatial facilities to guarantee women's right to work F-2. Expand supply infrastructure
Project form	I. Knowledge-sharing	I-1. Invitation training and education I-2. Online education and conference I-3. Joint research and academic conference
	II. Support and Cooperation	II-1. Humanitarian assistance II-2. Partnership projects
Strategy for implementation	I. Implementation methods	I-1. South-North Korea direct projects I-2. Externally connected projects
	II. Ways of North Korean women's participation	II-1. Specialized projects for North Korean women II-2. Ensure women's participation in existing projects

3. North Korean Women's Economic Empowerment Models

1) Businesswomen's Empowerment Models

〈Table 1〉 Model for strengthening entrepreneurs' management competencies

Category	Strengthen ICT competencies	Strengthen management competencies	Enhance gender equality awareness
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female managers, CEOs, presidents, employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female managers, CEOs, presidents, women in management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female managers, CEOs, presidents, women in management, employees
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen ICT competencies of businesswomen and employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote business management capabilities To reproduce women entrepreneurs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To lay a foundation for operating a gender equal enterprise
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct education to reinforce ICT competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote businesswomen's leadership Strengthen financial and management competencies Conduct education on the market economy system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct education on gender equality Educate business people on their responsibilities to create a gender equal society
Implementer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korean universities, research institutes South Korea's women-owned IT enterprises International organizations and NGOs Third country's universities, institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korean universities, research institutes South Korea's women-owned enterprises and enterprise network International organizations and NGO Third country's universities, institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korean universities, research institutes South Korea's women-owned enterprises and enterprise network International organizations and NGOs Third country's universities, institutions

〈Table 2〉 Model for developing entrepreneurs

Category	Develop prospective entrepreneurs	Support startup
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Operators of stands in the state-run market · College students related to management and economics · Women's alliance members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Operators of stands in the state-run market · College students related to management and economics · Women's alliance members
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To nurture prospective female entrepreneurs · To reduce education gaps · To contribute to social and economic development in the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To support female startups · Eradicate women's poverty, increase income
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Operate programs on management and economics for female college students · Educate workers in the state-run market on startup and management · Form self-help groups in the people's class and basic-unit women's organizations, and operate pilot projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Introduce micro finance (small loans, etc.) · Improve systems to guarantee the right to access payment and settlement service circuits · Educate entrepreneurs on how to prepare project plans and loan applications · Conduct education on finance and economy · Conduct education on financial affairs and management
Implementer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Korean universities, research institutes, NGOs · South Korea's women-owned enterprises and enterprise network · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions · Inter-Korean Women's Cooperation Center (tentative) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Korean universities, research institutes · South Korea's women-owned enterprises and enterprise network · International organizations (related to finance)/NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions · Inter-Korean Women's Cooperation Center (tentative)

〈Table 3〉 Model for building a business environment

Category	Establish business information system	Expand and improve systems
Target	· Women entrepreneurs	· Women entrepreneurs
Purpose	· To enhance businesswomen's accessibility to information · To expand businesswomen's areas of entry	· To support businesswomen's activity
Strategy	· Build information and knowledge in latest industry · Lay a basis for ICT	· Improve business operation systems from a gender perspective · Prepare systems to ensure businesswomen's activity
Implementer	· South Korean universities, research institutes, NGOs · South Korea's women-owned enterprises and enterprise network · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions · Inter-Korean Women's Cooperation Center (tentative)	· South Korean universities, research institutes · South Korea's women-owned enterprises and enterprise network · International organizations (related to finance)/NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions · Inter-Korean Women's Cooperation Center (tentative)

2) Women Farmers' Economic Empowerment Models

〈Table 4〉 Model for supporting agricultural management

Category	Strengthen ICT competencies	Implement high-value added business	Improve accessibility to financial service
Target	· Women farmers	· Collective farms with a majority of female subgroup leaders	· Subgroups with female subgroup leaders · Work groups with female work group leaders
Purpose	· To increase women farmers' ICT competencies	· To promote competencies of business management and experience of the market economy through high value addition of products	· To increase farming productivity through small capital loans

Category	Strengthen ICT competencies	Implement high-value added business	Improve accessibility to financial service
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct education to strengthen ICT competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support product-making, including processing and packaging Conduct education on the market economy system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce micro finance (small loan, etc.) Improve systems to guarantee the right to access payment and settlement service circuits Educate female farmers on how to prepare project plans and loan applications Conduct education on finance and economy
Implementer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korean universities, research institutes South Korea's women-owned IT enterprises International organizations and NGOs Third country's universities, institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korea's private businesses International organizations /NGOs Third countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korea's financial institutions dedicated to the inter-Korean project implementation International organizations ODA donor countries

〈Table 5〉 Model for developing and supporting agricultural science and technology

Category	Distribute women-friendly farming machines	Exchange agricultural science and technology	Establish the agricultural information system
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager-level female farmers, including work group leaders and sub-group leaders Collective farms with a majority of women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female farmers
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase productivity by distributing and developing farming machines that reflect traits of female farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve agricultural productivity and grow to be professional farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To secure female farmers' accessibility to ICT-based agricultural information, technology, and knowledge
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute women-friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify demand for farming technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide latest farming information, technology

Category	Distribute women-friendly farming machines	Exchange agricultural science and technology	Establish the agricultural information system
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> farming machines Educate women farmers on how to use farming machines Develop women-friendly farming machines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct education on advanced farming technology Exchange professional workforce Conduct joint research and knowledge sharing program (KSP) for farming, mountain and fishing villages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and knowledge using ICT Create a basis for ICT
Imple- -menter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korea's women farmers organization International organizations and NGOs Third countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korean universities, research institutes International organizations and NGOs Third countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korean universities, research institutes International organizations and NGOs

〈Table 6〉 Model for improving rural living environment

Category	Improve facilities for common use	Restore and improve production infrastructure
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperative farms with a majority of preschool children and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooperative farms with a majority of women
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To alleviate female farmers' burden of care, etc. and expand public care and health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase women farmers' productivity by preparing a supply base, including stable water and electricity
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve facilities for common use, including childcare and health facilities Install joint work places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct joint research to build a system for effective development, use, and management, including stable water and electricity Conduct education on alternative energy Install production infrastructure
Imple- -menter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korea's NGOs, private businesses International organizations and NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Korea's public institutions South Korean universities, research institutes International organizations and NGOs Third countries

3) Professional Women's Economic Empowerment Model

〈Table 7〉 Model for strengthening professionalism

Category	Strengthen professional competencies	Reinforce administrative competencies	Promote gender equality awareness
Target	· Female workers in each area	· Female workers in each area	· Female workers and colleagues in each area
Purpose	· To promote professionalism of female workers in each area	· To enhance representation of women by strengthening administrative competencies	· To create a gender equal society
Strategy	· Provide technology and knowledge in each area · Share knowledge with female professionals	· Administrative practice education · Leadership education	· Gender equality education · Reinforce gender equality policy competencies
Implementer	· South Korean universities, research institutes · South Korea's women network in each area · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions, women's network	· South Korean universities, research institutes · South Korea's government ministries · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions, women's organizations	· South Korean universities, research institutes · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions, women's network

〈Table 8〉 Model for developing experts

Category	Strengthen basic education competencies	Reinforce ICT competencies	Create conditions for entering a higher school
Target	· Female youth	· Female youth, college students	· Female youth, college students · workers in related areas
Purpose	· To reduce education gaps · Expand opportunities to go on to a higher school	· To reinforce basic competencies to improve professionalism	· To develop female professionals · To expand women's opportunities to enter higher school

Category	Strengthen basic education competencies	Reinforce ICT competencies	Create conditions for entering a higher school
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Exchange between female youth · Conduct education to raise basic education competencies of female youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Conduct education to strengthen ICT competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Support women's entering a higher school · Improve the selection system
Implementer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Korean youth · International organizations and NGO · Third country's youth organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Korean universities, research institutes · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions, women's organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Korean universities, research institutes · South Korea's government ministries · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's universities, institutions, women's network

〈Table 9〉 Model for creating a working environment

Category	Build infrastructure	Expand and improve systems
Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Workers in each area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Professional workforce, prospective professionals
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To relieve professionals' burden of care · Build a foundation for promoting women-related professional fields 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · To expand prospective /professionals to advance
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Improve and expand common use facilities, including care and health facilities · Establish knowledge and information system in each area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Improve systems to improve working environment and conditions
Implementer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Korea's public institutions · South Korean universities, research institutes · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's institutions, NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South Korea's public institutions · South Korean universities, research institutes · International organizations and NGOs · Third country's institutions, NGOs

V. Conclusions

Models for North Korean women's economic empowerment are composed of strengthening competencies, infrastructure-building, and value chains in an integrated manner.

Based on the module for North Korean women's economic empowerment, projects should be constituted and implemented while considering sanctions against North Korea and inter-Korean progress. In a present situation where sanctions against North Korea and inter-Korean progress are stagnant, the most realistic project would be to encourage North Korean women to participate in the existing projects that North Korea has already been implementing. Proper forms of the projects will be humanitarian assistance and knowledge sharing, implementing the projects by comprising humanitarian assistance in a form that enables knowledge sharing. The strategy for implementing projects in phase for North Korean women's economic empowerment is presented in the table below.

〈Table 10〉 Strategy for implementing projects in phase for North Korean women's economic empowerment

	Continue sanctions against North Korea	Ease sanctions against North Korea	Remove sanctions against North Korea
Component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen human competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build infrastructure for strengthening human competencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen human competencies, build infrastructure, and establish gender-integrative value chains
Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and training plus infrastructure-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and training plus infrastructure-building

	Continue sanctions against North Korea	Ease sanctions against North Korea	Remove sanctions against North Korea
Implementation method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Collaborate with third countries · Directly implement projects with the international community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Collaborate with third countries · South-North Korea directly implements projects · The international community directly implement projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · South-North Korea directly implements projects · The international community directly implement projects
Women's participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Expand women's participation in existing projects · Develop women-specific projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Fully implement women-specific projects · Expand women's participation in existing projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Expand women-specific projects

To implement projects for North Korean women's economic empowerment, South Korea's environment and conditions also should be improved. In the inter-Korean relations, efforts should be made to form a consensus on implementing gender equality agenda, to improve laws and systems related to inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, to prepare systems to carry out the projects, and to strengthen human infrastructure. It is also necessary to empower South Korean women who can implement inter-Korean exchange and cooperation, to integrate a gender perspective to expertise in each area of exchange and cooperation, and to make efforts to form partnerships with the international community and overseas organizations to implement projects for North Korean women's economic empowerment.

