

## Abstract

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

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### *Purpose and Necessity of the Research*

- This study stems from the necessity of carrying out the inter-Korean exchange and cooperation project with a focus on resolving the gender gaps between South and North Korea as well as in North Korea and realizing a gender-equal Korean Peninsula. The study pays special attention to North Korean women's economic competency for the following three reasons.

- First, the current policies on Inter-Korean relations are being implemented with a focus on economic cooperation under the keynote of peace and prosperity. Because expansion of economic cooperation will affect the economic conditions of North Korean residents, this study seeks ways to implement exchange and cooperation in the direction of North Korean women's economic conditions.
  - Second, North Korean society has recently shown a remarkable expansion of markets and changes in women's economic activity. These changed situations have acted as a factor in promoting or restraining North Korean women's exercise of economic competency. As such, through a close review of the situations, this study seeks ways for the exchange and cooperation project to contribute to preparing conditions in which North Korean women can exhibit their economic competency.
  - Third, the concept of economic competency does not merely include women's participation in economic activity and creation of economic interest, but should also consider social and cultural conditions in which women can exercise their economic competency. As such, conditions in which North Korean women can display their economic competency can be prepared by changing the structure and culture of gender-based discrimination.
- This study aims to prepare ways to implement the exchange and cooperation project for North Korean women's economic empowerment, and it has been designed with three-year tasks.
- The first-year study aims to develop agendas for the

exchange and cooperation project for North Korean women's economic empowerment, the second-year study to lay the foundation for the exchange and cooperation project for North Korean women's economic empowerment, and the third-year study to develop a model for the exchange and cooperation project for North Korean women's economic empowerment.

- As a basis for seeking ways of exchange and cooperation, the first-year study aims to grasp the current situation of North Korean women's economic competency and accordingly develop agendas for exchange and cooperation.

### ***Content of the Research***

- First, the study analyzes changes in women's economic status and cases of women's economic empowerment in socialist states, including China and Vietnam, since their reform and opening up, then offers implications for the inter-Korean exchange and cooperation project.
- Second, it grasps the current conditions of North Korean women's economic competency, and identifies the current state of education, which is the basic condition for North Korean women's economic competency, and surveys the level of economic activity and the current state of competency in each sector. Based on these actual conditions, the study also analyzes requirements, or constraints and contexts of North Korean women's economic competency.
- Third, it develops agendas for the exchange and cooperation project for North Korean women's economic empowerment based on the cases of socialist states and actual conditions

of North Korean women's economic competency.

### *Main Findings*

#### ▶ North Korean Women's Economic Competency-related Education

- Of the regular education courses, technical education is conducted in North Korea, and the subject "basic technology" is taught to both female and male students.
- Computer education is conducted in "information technology" beginning from the 4th-year elementary school. In particular, since Kim Jong-un took office, he has stressed the development in science and technology. As a result, it seems that education using computers has increased.
- Sex education and gender equality education are not offered in the regular course.
- Vocational training schools with the majority of women are nursing training schools. After receiving education at the nursing training school, trainees obtain a nurse certificate and get jobs in clinics and hospitals.
- The current state of distance education is yet to be identified, but it is found that distance education is conducted at textile factories and silk mills.
- International organizations, non-governmental organizations and foreign universities have conducted education on capitalist economies and finance for North Korean economic bureaucrats or scholars, but education for North Korean women on these topics is not common.

▶ Characteristics of North Korean Women's Economic Competency

- In a situation where factories or enterprises operate at a limited level in North Korea, women are not economically active in the planned sector. They tend to try to create economic profits largely through the market.
- Skills are important elements for creating profits both in the planned sector and the market. In some cases, women apply their skills that they have learned and accumulated in the planned sector to the market.
- Although the North Korean education system in itself offers opportunities to develop economic competency, women tend to develop practical skills and competencies by themselves.
- Autonomous development of economic competency is even more conspicuous in the market activity. Women develop their competency by themselves based on the experience of people around them or the success or failure in the market activity.
- One of the important resources in North Korea's economic activity is the access to political power. Because resources are distributed and information is shared largely by men's power, women have no other choice than to utilize men's power or rely on male power.
- In a situation where the system is not sufficiently equipped, "trust" has become an important capital. Personal connections and "trust" are very important in receiving loans and selecting goods for sale or sales routes. As a result, women have to take various risks.

***Agendas for the Exchange and Cooperation Project for North Korean Women's Economic Empowerment***

▶ Directions for the Exchange and Cooperation Project

- ① Implement the project to (re)strengthen North Korean women's economic competency.
- ② Create the foundation for identifying and exhibiting North Korean women's economic competency.
- ③ Implement the exchange and cooperation project for the mutual growth of South and North Korean women.
- ④ Promote changes in North Korean society toward a gender-equal society.

▶ Agendas for the Exchange and Cooperation Project

- Building Rudimentary Data to Conduct the Economic Empowerment Project for North Korean Women
  - Conduct a survey of South and North Korean women's economic activity.
  - Conduct joint research to prepare a support system for North Korean women's economic activity.
- Laying the Basis for Supporting North Korean Women's Sustainable Economic Activity
  - Install the South and North Korean Women's Cooperation Center (tentatively).
  - Create infrastructure to secure women's labor rights.
  - Introduce microfinance to help female entrepreneurs establish their business.
- Operating Programs for North Korean Women's Economic Empowerment
  - Operate programs for expertise, technical education, and

exchange to improve the qualitative level of women's economic activity.

- Conduct education to strengthen the managerial competency of female entrepreneurs.
- Operate an economy inspection team comprising South and North Korean women.
- Promote the understanding of North Korean society's gender equality.