



Opportunities and Challenges for Exiled North Korean Women in the Human Rights Field

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Executive Summary

The knowledge, experiences, leadership, and skills of women and women's organisations play a critical role in shaping interventions designed to address the commission of mass human rights violations across the world.

This, however, is not the case for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea). Women account for 72% of the diaspora now settled in the neighbouring Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea), yet exiled men display a far higher participation rate across civil society and fill the majority of leadership roles in civil society organisations that investigate human rights violations.¹

In 2020, Korea Future began working with exiled women to better understand the causes and consequences of their absence from the human rights field. In our 2021 report, *'We want our stories to be heard,'* we detailed the unique barriers preventing exiled women from entering civil society, including overlapping forms of gender- and identity-based discrimination and indirect forms of discrimination resulting from lack of access to employment and unfair treatment that create hidden barriers and glass ceilings.²

Following the release of that report, Korea Future has worked with exiled women to better understand how the human rights movement and, in particular, grant-makers can deploy their resources to better support the active participation and leadership of exiled women and exiled women-led organisations. This report draws upon our findings to highlight just some of the key challenges and opportunities.

In preparation of this report, Korea Future organised a series of 24 workshops with exiled women and drew on other areas of work, including a survey of 100 exiled North Korean women; a series of online forums that brought together exiled women who are established, emerging, and prospective human rights leaders; interviews with academics, exiled North Koreans, and human rights advocates; and a series of in-person events at special schools for exiled North Korean students.

We find that exiled women, albeit a minority, demonstrate a strong motivation to advance, reshape, and disrupt the existing approach of civil society to the human rights situation in their homeland, despite the barriers that currently inhibit their involvement. Our findings indicate that if the civil society space is to become more inclusive, gender-aware, and motivated to take steps to ensure the full inclusion of exiled women, dialogue between exiled women, grant-makers, and existing civil society actors is required, alongside the re-imagining of traditional funding models, conversations on organisational sustainability, and the formation of interventions that provide clear pathways for young exiled women to pursue careers in civil society. These are not radical propositions, but rather realistic and sustainable actions designed to address existing inequalities and strengthen civil society's response to the human rights situation in the DPRK.



Recommendations

1

Develop targeted and gender-aware funding mechanisms that identify and are accessible to small, exiled women-led organisations in need of long-term, flexible, and core funding. Grant-makers can develop mechanisms that identify exiled women-led organisations that require long-term support to develop organisational capacities, administrative systems, and technical knowledge. Organisational resilience has become a critical factor in the employment of exiled women and the abilities of exiled women-led organisations to survive and thrive beyond funded projects. This is all the more critical in an environment increasingly impacted by changing political environments, domestic and global economic uncertainties, and health pandemics.

2

Include experienced exiled women in decision-making processes for grants, the development of thematic priorities, and project evaluations. Grant-makers can assemble advisory committees of experienced exiled women activists to help identify funding priorities and exiled women-led organisations, shape more flexible and appropriate funding criteria, including evaluation and impact assessments, and include exiled voices at each stage of project funding, from the creation of funding calls to project reviews and appraisals.

3

Invest in gender-aware data and knowledge of the civil society field, supporting diversity and gender-just grant-making. International and domestic grant-makers can co-develop and maintain a bilingual database that gathers data from across the DPRK human rights field on the funding trends for exiled women-led organisations, the gender balance of funded civil society organisations (CSOs), the existence of gender-fair policies within funded CSOs, and the share of resources devoted to thematic priorities that focus on gender. In doing so, grant-makers can pool knowledge and gain deeper insights into the realities that exist for exiled women and other organisations seeking resources for their work. Grant-makers can support CSOs to incorporate gender audits, gender-responsive working structures, and gender-fair recruitment practices into their organisational cultures and policies.

4

Consider the wider environment impacting exiled women. Grant-makers can develop distinct long-term funding calls for exiled women-led organisations that help build sustainable working practices, including caregiving and mental health mechanisms, that recognise and respond to the diverse and unique challenges facing exiled women in daily life and place their experiences at the heart of project approaches, thereby assisting exiled women-led organisations to attract and retain exiled women as staff and leaders.

Background

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or North Korea) implements policies and oversees practices that are openly hostile and violent towards women. Legislation designed to protect women is inadequate and unenforced. Sexual and gender-based violence is perpetrated against women of every class, age, identity, and status. Meanwhile, economic violence pushes women into perilous and illicit activities that increase their susceptibility to egregious violations of their human rights across the region.

Upon resettling in the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea), exiled women gain universal protections and can rely upon democratic institutions that account for and protect their human rights. In the ROK, exiled women account for 72% of the 33,834-strong diaspora.³

Based on their majority status, one may assume that exiled women's engagement with democratic institutions, including civil society, and the realisation of their full human rights would lead to their active role in civil society organisations (CSO) focused on the DPRK.

This is not the case. Within the diaspora, men occupy over 68% of leadership roles in civil society organisations and exhibit a higher participation rate across civil society organisations than exiled women.⁴ Many factors contribute to this situation, including identity and gender-based discrimination that dampens the aspirations and downplays the abilities of exiled women; indirect forms of discrimination resulting from women's lack of access to employment; and gendered social norms that disadvantage and preclude their employment in civil society.



HAVE NOT CONSIDERED WORKING IN THE NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD BECAUSE



Consequences of this gender imbalance are not only visible in the leadership, staffing, and research priorities of civil society organisations. We found that nearly one-quarter of surveyed exiled women chose not to discuss or read about human rights issues, while 52% had not attended any civil society activities or events since resettling in the ROK. A conscious distancing from civil society is all the more significant when we consider that over half of the respondents had been resettled in the ROK for 3–10 years and 19% for over 10 years.

Reasons for exiled women's absence from civil society are diverse. Significantly, nearly 70% considered themselves pressured by social and gender norms within the diaspora to relinquish or forgo employment and assume familial and childcare duties. Over 25% attributed their limited participation to the diaspora's normative preference for women to be "passive," including in leadership roles.

Expectations of low pay for women in civil society were also prevalent, with nearly 20% indicating they would not pursue a role in civil society for this reason. This is all the more remarkable given that half of surveyed exiled women lived in households whose monthly gross income was less than one million Won (\$865 United States Dollars), and 30% were spending between 22 and 35-plus hours per week on unpaid domestic labour for their families, suggesting that civil society work is widely perceived as a low-income industry.

Exiled women are already agents of positive change. Over the past two decades they have escaped brutality and fought discrimination, stigmatisation, and marginalisation, bringing their knowledge to important conversations, within and outside of the diaspora. Our findings, however, demonstrate that their participation and leadership in civil society continues to be impeded by deep-rooted barriers that obstruct their progress within the human rights movement and prevent women from leading struggles that have directly affected their lives and the lives of those who remain in their homeland.



Challenges

Civil society plays an important role in investigating human rights violations in the DPRK. Its work supports a range of actors, including victims, policymakers, states, and multilateral institutions through the provision of credible and actionable information. In turn, international and domestic grant-makers play an essential role in enabling civil society, primarily through the provision of financial support.

Despite the enormity of the human rights challenge in the DPRK, the funding landscape for CSOs working on the country is small and highly competitive. Split between international and domestic grant-makers, funding is typically acquired through competitive bids that may reflect or link to the logic of grant-making institutions. Project grants vary in size and thematic priorities, often supporting the successful completion of a single project, including the salaries of project staff and other relevant project costs.

Significant and long-term funding is available from a small number of grant-makers, including states and international grant-making foundations. Lower levels of funding are provided by a wider range of domestic grant-makers, including private foundations and embassies based in the ROK on a short-term basis. Separate indirect funding (also known as core or unrestricted funding) used to build organisational capacities independently of projects being implemented is rare.



Exiled women-led organisations may receive funding from grant-makers through two channels. First, through competitive bids for direct, time-limited, and project-based funding. Second, through funding partnerships whereby exiled women-led organisations are invited to partner with a larger and more established domestic or international CSO, receiving a proportion of project funding for designated activities. Both methods of funding present opportunities—but also distinct challenges—for exiled women and exiled women-led organisations.



INTERNATIONAL GRANT-MAKERS

DOMESTIC GRANT-MAKERS



1 An example of grant-makers who fund civil society organisations working on DPRK

COMPETITION FOR GRANTS

PROBLEM

Exiled women and exiled women's organisations lack the capacity to employ experienced staff to identify funding opportunities, write competitive funding applications, and leverage personal networks and knowledge of the wider, and often global, funding environment.

Many civil society organisations rely on project-based grants for a significant percentage of their income. This enables organisations to grow and projects to be successfully implemented, which in turn can attract additional funding. Applying for grants is the first stage in this process and often requires the civil society organisation to be formally registered; possess experience of the grant-making process; have well-developed internal organisational, financial, and monitoring policies; employ paid staff to write funding applications; and possess an English-language capability if applying to international grant-makers.

In many cases, exiled women's organisations operate without paid staff, registered organisations and bank accounts, and knowledge of fiscal, monitoring, evaluation, and tax requirements. Further, the requirement that funding proposals be written and submitted in English often creates a barrier for exiled women, who typically do not read or speak English. Market-based solutions, including the hiring of freelance fundraising consultants, may cost a CSO between \$200 and \$500 per day, putting their services out of reach for exiled women-led organisations and exiled women seeking project-based funding.

“ The process of applying for funding is too complicated [for our organisation]. A great amount of detail is expected when we apply for projects or have to report our spending. We do not even understand what many of the terms mean. ”

Exiled women-led organisations have no means to build operating reserves that help safeguard the viability of their organisations and overcome cash flow shortages, unexpected changes in funding and political environments and grant-maker priorities, domestic and global economic uncertainties, health pandemics, or the termination or cessation of funded projects.

Given that few exiled women-led organisations are able to attract initial seed funding, they are less able to build organisational infrastructures required to safeguard against cash flow shortages and invest in sustainable operations, such as reserves to cover overheads (for example, office rental costs), provide staff with pay increases, and afford insurance, independent financial audits, accounting and administrative support, and other essential operating expenses. Financial precarity is the rule and not the exception for exiled women in civil society.

While sustainable reserves are not common among most exiled and non-exiled CSOs, organisations that receive regular funding are often better placed to secure resources and overcome unexpected changes in funding or political environments and deliver

impactful projects. This leads to a concentration of funding flowing to more established organisations. In contrast, we documented how a large number of exiled women-led organisations had ceased to exist upon the completion of their funded projects or following the cessation of funding.

When seeking sustainable funding, exiled women recounted how some grant-makers did not offer full cost recovery. In such cases, their organisation was offered either a proportional share at or below 10% for indirect costs. This was not deemed sufficient by exiled women seeking to build a sustainable organisation. In other cases, exiled women were declined indirect funding, meaning the grants they received did not cover the full costs of running their project and a proportional share of their organisation's overhead.

“ I had so many ideas to expand the scope of our organisation's work. Yet I was unable to pay my employees, who were also young exiles, and I could not ask them to continue working with me when I could no longer afford to pay them. It has become a cycle: I hire young exiles on part-time contracts and they later leave for a better paid job. I then have to hire someone else and start from the beginning. ”

Exiled women and exiled women-led organisations infrequently submit competitive proposals for direct project-based funding to international grant-makers and rely on smaller, less sustainable domestic grants.

As a result of the challenges exiled women face in securing initial funding and sustainable funding, many rely on short-term (12 months or less) funding that prevents them from building organisational resilience, hinders recruitment and future planning, and poses considerable challenges when attempting to create sufficient impact with their work. Across the human rights field, it is generally considered that investigations run between 12-24 months, with impact-related interventions, such as advocacy or justice-focused activities, being conducted from the third year onwards.

One exiled woman who runs her own organisation explained that short-term, project-based funding meant that she has been unable to hire more than one staff member on a part-time basis, preventing her from building her organisation and achieving the necessary impact to demonstrate her potential to grant-makers.

“ Small, women-led organisations need to find a way to become sustainable. We are very much aware of this need. We just do not know how to remain sustainable, given that small, domestic funding is not enough. ”

PROBLEM

As the gender-majority in the diaspora, exiled women are not content with junior roles in funding partnerships, instead exiled women seek to lead human rights interventions.

An alternative to direct project-based funding is for exiled women-led organisations to partner with larger CSOs. These funding partnerships, whereby exiled women-led organisations receive a proportion of funding, are, however, uncommon in the DPRK funding landscape. Where partnerships have been explored, exiled women reported being offered limited opportunities to shape the way the projects were devised or managed and were unable to secure full cost recovery.



“ Some grant-makers think our work is solely focused on supporting the North Korean diaspora in the ROK. This is not true. We are activists who work for the human rights of all North Koreans. It is a shame that discussions about the existence and livelihood of women-led organisations are ignored by grant-makers. ”

LIMITED NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

PROBLEM

Exiled women are unable to forge or maintain networks with international grant-makers who offer long-term, sustainable funding, and this has led to perceptions of exclusion, preferentialism, and prejudice.

Few exiled women possessed a comprehensive understanding of domestic and international funding opportunities or grant-makers. Fewer still had been able to build networks that enabled them to engage directly with these grant-makers. In this respect, exiled women considered themselves excluded from conversations concerning funding priorities and perceived that only a small number of domestic CSOs were favoured by traditional grant-makers, receiving invitations to events, conferences, meetings, and even private social occasions that were not extended to the wider field. Importantly, many exiled women did not define organisational power by financial resources alone, but by personal relationships with staff in grant-making institutions.

Critically, there existed a limited understanding of feminist grant-makers who fund women-led organisations. It is notable that exiled women and organisations led by exiled women remain divorced from the wider women's rights movement in the ROK as well as globally, preventing meaningful collaboration or support. ■

“ I have never been introduced to any international grant-makers. I would not even ask for core costs. I would simply appreciate funding to run projects. ”

“ I wish to build connections with international grant-makers, but I do not know how. There are many civil society organisations led by South Korean men that are funded by these grant-makers. Women-led organisations are working on different issues, but I feel the big grant makers do not recognise this. ”

CHANGEMAKERS, NOT VICTIMS

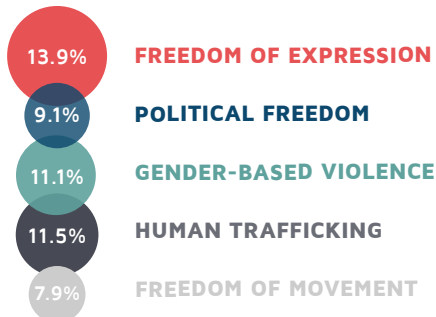
PROBLEM

Exiled women self-identified as changemakers and advocates, rather than victims, which was perceived to run counter to a dominant discourse in the civil society field.

Perceptions of exiled women as victims of egregious abuses, rather than as empowered survivors who possess the abilities to positively influence the situation in the DPRK, were commonly seen as disablers for funding among exiled women. This perception was seen to steer grant-making priorities away from issues deemed critical by exiled women, including gender-based violence and human trafficking.



AS A YOUNG NORTH KOREAN WOMAN LIVING IN SOUTH KOREA THE 5 MOST IMPORTANT NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES ARE





Focus on Exiled Women-led Organisations

UNISEED

Founded in 2014 by Esther Eom, UNISEED is an exile-run civil society organisation that aims to bring peace on the Korean peninsula through sharing and conversing. UNISEED operates a monthly food charity for people who become homeless in the ROK and monthly cultural workshops that bring young exiled North Koreans and young South Koreans together. UNISEED provides scholarships to college students with a North Korean background who seek to become civil society leaders.

Tongil Moms' Association

Tongil Moms' Association, founded in 2015 by Kim Jeong Ah, has become one of the most well-established organisations led by exiled women in the ROK. Tongil Moms' Association works to protect the human rights of North Korean women and their children in China who are at risk of forced repatriation; reconnect formerly trafficked exiled women in the ROK with their children in China; and advocate on behalf of women who remain in peril in China. Tongil Moms' Association has published six reports and now assists exiled women and their families who resettle in ROK.

Improving North Korean Human Rights Centre

Improving North Korean Human Rights Centre was founded in 2013 by Han Byul Lee and became a registered civil society organisation in 2016. Its mission is to document human rights violations experienced by persons in North Korea, in particular those experienced by women, children, people with disabilities, and people who are in immediate danger. A priority is the gathering of information about North Korean citizens who have been forcibly repatriated.

6.25 POW Family Association

The 6.25 POW Family Association was founded in 2005 and is led by Myung Wha Sohn, a daughter of a prisoner of war during the 1950-1953 Korean War who was detained in North Korea. The organisation advocates for the remaining prisoners of war in North Korea and their families, leads calls for redress for families of victims, and supports prisoners of war who have returned to the ROK.

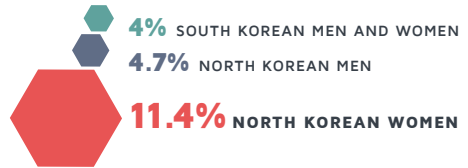
EXILED WOMEN AND CAREGIVING

PROBLEM

Gendered social norms in the diaspora concerning caregiving responsibilities intersect with an absence of policies surrounding family leave, caregiving support, and job flexibility in CSOs, resulting in exiled women forgoing, deferring, or leaving careers in civil society.

Exiled women are the primary providers of care to family members in the diaspora. This is partly owing to persistent and gendered socio-cultural norms that situate exiled women as mothers and care providers, rather than workers or employees. This is a key disabler for a gender-equal civil society in the diaspora. Among respondents, 68% had felt pressured to resign from their employment to undertake caregiving duties, while nearly 30% were spending up to 35 hours per week on unpaid domestic labour.⁵ During Korea Future’s human rights workshop series, one exiled participant gave birth and sought to leave the project. She was encouraged to remain by the provision of remote, virtual, and flexible working options and fully subsidised nursery care.

UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH KOREA



“ Exiled women find it difficult to raise children and work at the same time. Their children are young, requiring attention and care, and not all exiled women can rely upon husbands or partners. When it is a woman’s sole responsibility to take care of her children, there is a pressure to register for the state’s basic livelihood subsidy rather than risk precarious employment in civil society. This situation could be prevented if exiled women could find a long-term job, accumulate experience, and build futures for their families. ”

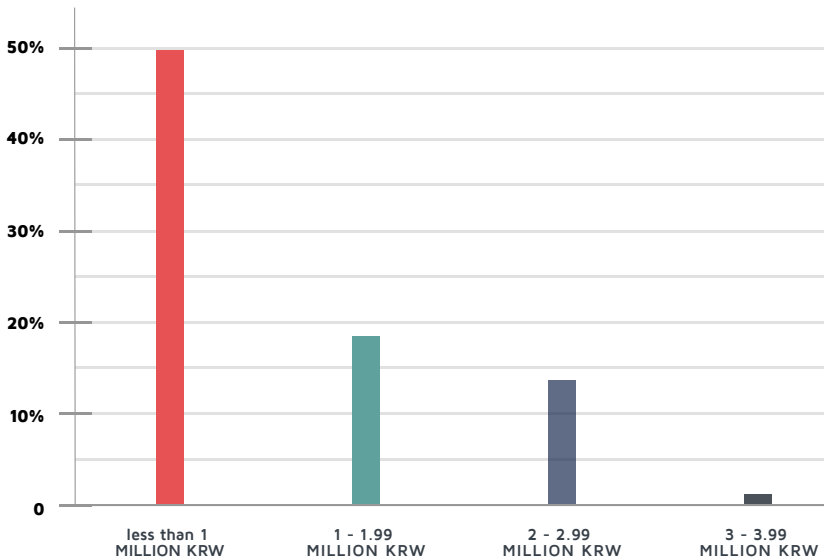
“ My husband is unwell and my child goes to elementary school. I have to care for both and I have to study to earn a degree that will secure employment. It will take a long time until I find secure employment in a civil society organisation. ”

HOUSEHOLD MONTHLY INCOME IN KRW*

*1 KRW=0,00090 USD

SOUTH KOREA'S MINIMUM WAGE = KRW 8,720 (APPROX. \$7.83 USD)

17% PREFER NOT TO SAY



“ I thought I would never finish the programme, especially with my pregnancy. But having enough flexibility in terms of participating helped me to stay engaged and to complete the programme with the other participants. ”

MENTAL HEALTH

PROBLEM

Long-term and often undiagnosed mental health problems intersect with persistent social taboos and a scarcity of psychosocial support structures within civil society to constrain and prevent exiled women from undertaking human rights work in a sustainable and supportive environment.

Nearly 70% of exiled women disclosed that talking or reading about violations of human rights in the DPRK could be traumatic. Few had access to or had accessed psychosocial support infrastructures in civil society organisations or through public services. Similarly, exiled women-led organisations were unaware of the need to build psychosocial support mechanisms and resilience into their organisations and to request sufficient support from grant-makers to do so.

Mental health remains a taboo subject among exiled women and is rarely discussed or acknowledged. In conversations with Korea Future, exiled women continued to use the pejorative phrase 'Hospital Number 49' to describe persons with mental health problems, emphasising a perceived stigma associated with psychiatric disorders. Where mental health issues were discussed, depression and sleep disorders were acknowledged by exiled women. ■

“ It has been nine years since I experienced human rights violations, but I still have nightmares. I become sick and feel anxious. It has been really hard to come to terms with. I try to meet friends, eat something nice, write diaries, and cheer myself up. ”

“ I tried to commit suicide, but I never thought of seeking mental health support. One of my friends suggested I visit a therapist. I told her, 'I am not crazy.' But after receiving professional help, I now work as a consultant for exiled women, advising them of the importance of understanding and seeking help for mental health problems. ”

SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY

PROBLEM

Socio-cultural issues, and not linguistic problems, create barriers to communication between non-diaspora civil society actors and exiled women.

Historically, linguistic differences and phrases derived from the English language presented challenges to communications between the diaspora and the ROK human rights field. For the current generation of young exiled women, this is less the case. Many of these young women illicitly accessed foreign media while residing in the DPRK or China before entering the ROK, while others have experienced education in the ROK, affording them with a better understanding of Korean words derived from the English language.

Today, socio-cultural barriers between exiled women and civil society actors persist in the form of unconscious bias, the interpretation of exiled women's behaviours and values through a lens shaped by South Korean and global cultural and political values, and prejudicial stereotyping of North Koreans as idle, unthankful, or ill-mannered. Nearly 20% of exiled women cited identity-based discrimination as the prime reason for not considering employment in civil society.

“ I was confident that South Koreans and exiled North Koreans could easily communicate and co-exist in civil society, and I was going to prove it. I hired an experienced South Korean believing that we would make a good team. We had so many differences and I had to let her go. I now admit that there are real differences in how exiles and South Koreans think and work. ”

KNOWLEDGE GAPS

PROBLEM

Exiled women typically do not receive training or education in international human rights or criminal law; lack awareness of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and the influence of the rights-based international architecture on both national and international policies; and possess limited knowledge of relevant international human rights actors.

The majority of exiled women engaged by Korea Future experienced multiple and overlapping violations of their human rights in the DPRK. It was common, however, for survivors to not recognise their experiences as human rights violations. For example, women who experienced physical beatings as a form of torture in the DPRK's penal system viewed this as a normal and accepted function of detention. In this, we found a divergence between how exiled women understood the legal definitions of human rights violations and how they viewed their experiences of those same violations.⁶

It is significant that nearly three-quarters of exiled women were unable to define the concept of human rights, despite a willingness among many to participate in civil society work focused on human rights. Some had no

“ I had never heard of the United Nations nor did I understand the purpose of international law. From what I have learned, civil society plays a big part in the international community. I was surprised to see that there are ways to monitor and contest what a government does. ”

knowledge of the existence of the United Nations nor of its purpose, which in turn led to little awareness of how civil society operates within an international framework of human rights actors and how civil society actors can best advocate and influence opinion. Nearly half of these women had received no or only irregular training or engagement with human rights in formal education since resettling in the ROK, including at the Hanawon and Hana Centres.⁷

“ The meaning of human rights was completely different in the DPRK. When I was asked whether I knew the definition of human rights before the Korea Future workshop, I answered ‘yes’ with confidence. After the workshop, I realised that I had no knowledge of what human rights meant or how everyone should be able to claim their rights. ”

ADVOCACY

PROBLEM

Exiled women have few means to engage and interact with domestic and international civil society and human rights actors, adding to their sense of isolation and preventing their messages from influencing the global discourse on human rights in the DPRK.

Exiled women are disengaged from effective approaches to human rights advocacy, leaving them unable to influence public attitudes and political processes or mobilise stakeholders to act on issues of interest. In particular, exiled women had little understanding of appropriate means and channels of communication. Primarily, they interacted with stakeholders via email and lacked the resources to travel, both domestically and internationally, to undertake lobbying and advocacy at the United Nations and human rights mechanisms. It was rare for exiled women to engage in English-language based advocacy, further limiting the reach of their messaging.

■

“Solidarity is also a way to protect human rights, and human rights protection is more than just knowing: It is about practising.”

Conclusions

There is no single solution to address all the challenges facing exiled women in civil society. Exiled women are disconnected from the funding landscape for complex and intersectional reasons, including structural barriers that may take many years to address and will be beyond the scope of grant-makers.

We find that imbalances in the funding of exiled women are a consequence of many disadvantageous factors rather than their cause. This includes the inability of exiled women-led organisations to establish and secure sustainable funding; the isolation of exiled women from grant-makers and international civil society; disabling social norms and gender and identity-based discrimination; and important knowledge gaps, among other factors.

The question of how grant-makers can mobilise adequate resources to incorporate exiled women into a civil society that is already small and reliant on limited and highly competitive channels of funding is challenging. The impact of domestic civil society actors in the human rights field in the ROK is significant and far exceeds the funding they receive. If an inclusive and effective civil society is to collectively address and document the massive and ongoing commission of international crimes in the DPRK, it seems necessary that both long-term, sustainable funding and support for exiled women and other civil society actors should be expanded within the ROK and beyond to match the gravity of the challenge at hand.

This report is the result of a two-year investigation into the role of exiled women in human rights-focused civil society. The information gathered for this report has been obtained by Korea Future through direct engagement with nearly 200 exiled women. We remain grateful for their assistance and we continue to offer them our support.

The information in this report was gathered through:

- **24 workshops** held by Korea Future between January and August 2022 that engaged exiled women in the ROK on a range of issues identified as preventing their practical involvement in human rights work.
- **Survey of 100 exiled women** aged 19–34 living in the ROK conducted in December 2020.
- **Participatory events** at 4 special schools for exiled students across the ROK between March and April 2021.
- **3 online forums** in July 2021 that brought together 22 exiled women who are established, emerging, and prospective human rights leaders.
- **30 interviews of academics**, exiled human rights advocates, and human rights actors between December 2020 and August 2021.
- **Desk review of literature** on gender and exiled women in the ROK and within the human rights field, including reports by civil society organisations and academic literature.

In undertaking this project, Korea Future adhered to the principle of 'Do No Harm'. Considerable efforts were made during planning to ensure that no participant was exposed to further harm as a result of engagement. The purpose of each form of engagement was explained to every participant, including information about how data would be used. All exiled women who participated in this project provided informed consent.



¹ We define civil society organisations as registered or unregistered groups or organisations that conduct forms of social action and are neither connected to, nor managed by, a state.

² Korea Future (2021). "We want our stories to be heard": Barriers to North Korean women's leadership and participation in the human rights movement. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/608ae0498089c163350e0ff5/t/618415f487e83a4bed6437fa/1636046342709/Barriers+to+North+Korean+women%E2%80%99s+leadership+and+participation+in+the+human+rights+movement.pdf>

³ Ministry of Unification (2022). Accessed 5 September, 2022. Available: https://unikorea.go.kr/eng_unikorea/relations/statistics/defectors/

⁴ Certain organisations identified are dormant, yet remain registered civil society organisations. [Unpublished internal research].

⁵ This is higher than the average for employed South Korean women, who spend 2.5 hours per day on unpaid domestic labour, and unemployed South Korean women, who spend 4 hours per day engaged in these tasks. See: Korea Future (2021). "We want our stories to be heard": Barriers to North Korean women's leadership and participation in the human rights movement. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/608ae0498089c163350e0ff5/t/618415f487e83a4bed6437fa/1636046342709/Barriers+to+North+Korean+women%E2%80%99s+leadership+and+participation+in+the+human+rights+movement.pdf>

⁶ This report understands human rights as those rights inherent to all human beings—regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status—that are set out in the International Bill of Human Rights, a series of international human rights treaties and other instruments, and other widely accepted international human rights mechanisms. It does not explore discourses concerning non-Western conceptions of human rights.

⁷ During their resettlement period at Hanawon, exiled women are obliged to undertake a mandatory human rights course. The course includes a single three-hour lesson that may not be sufficient for exiles to grasp a holistic understanding of human rights.



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Opportunities and Challenges for Exiled North Korean Women in the Human Rights Field

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