

KNOWLEDGE SHARING WITH THE DPRK: FUTURE POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES

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Introduction

This paper is intended to set the stage for discussions among existing and potential partners in knowledge sharing activities with the DPRK. It explores the question why knowledge sharing with the DPRK is so critical at this time, evaluates the context and strategic considerations for engagement by the international community with the DPRK, assesses operational challenges in the DPRK context, and draws some general conclusions and principles to guide discussions of how to engage in knowledge sharing with the DPRK. Hopefully, this paper will motivate and animate expanded efforts and partnerships to realize the benefits that potentially could come from deeper engagement by the international community with the DPRK through the knowledge sharing approach.

Why Knowledge Sharing?

The phrase “knowledge sharing” implies mutual learning. This phrase has been carefully chosen for engagement with the DPRK because any successful strategy to affect attitudes, decision-making and action within the DPRK must be based on a respect for the dignity of the North Korean people and their legitimate interests. To paraphrase William Perry in his 1998 review of U.S. policy of engagement with the DPRK: “We must understand and deal with the North Koreans as they are and not as we wish they would be.” Decades of isolation and dedication to home-grown ideologies and frameworks for social and economic activity have created a context for engagement with the DPRK that we have to recognize and relate to forthrightly.

Mutual learning involves a two-way flow of information and influencing. While we may believe that the DPRK has much to learn from the outside world that will help them address many of the challenges they face, we also must recognize that they must assimilate such information through the lens of their existing knowledge, personal experience and beliefs about the world, and of course domestic political considerations and international security fears. If outsiders want to help facilitate the learning process, it is also important that they try to understand the North Korean context and the factors that may inhibit as well as motivate or facilitate the assimilation of new knowledge and perspectives. As North Korean contacts with the outside world increase, knowledge sharing also allows North Koreans to expand the range of relationships and increases opportunities to explain their priorities and decision-making process.

Knowledge sharing also implies a particular type of relationship. Building relationships and trust are valuable objectives in their own right, quite apart from the utility of the knowledge that may be imparted through these relationships. Knowledge sharing is different from terms that are often used, such as “technical assistance” and “training,” because it implies a more equal relationship between the parties. This may not be a distinction of great consequence in many countries, but in the DPRK context, it is important at this stage of relations between North Koreans and outsiders. Knowledge sharing signals that both parties approach the relationship with recognition of the value of interacting as people with common concerns and interests and not merely representatives of government or other institutional perspectives. Even an approach of “caring sharing” in its softest sense can be threatening in the DPRK context because of fears about foreign agendas that can undermine and deter even modest objectives in relationship building. Thus patience and flexibility are qualities that are particularly important in considering how to approach knowledge sharing with North Koreans.

One other important implication of knowledge sharing is that mutual learning is accompanied by mutual influencing and this leads to change. Willingness to be vulnerable to the influences that come from knowledge sharing is an important ingredient of the impact of knowledge sharing as it is reflected in changed attitudes, behaviors and decision-making. Openness to the possibility of such changes is a precondition for effective knowledge sharing and it must be understood as a two way influencing process where changes by both parties are perceived as desirable and feasible.

Knowledge sharing thus must be seen as a means to achieving valuable ends, not an end in itself. Building relationships and influencing changes that will enhance peaceful resolution of differences and problem solving that will improve life conditions for ordinary people, are the underlying goals of promoting expansion and improvements in knowledge sharing with the DPRK.

Strategic Considerations

Knowledge sharing is a tool for engagement with the DPRK. Like any tool, it can be used well and effectively, and also misused leading to frustrations and disappointment. Learning lessons from experiences of planning and conducting knowledge sharing activities with the DPRK is thus one useful way to gain insights into the particular risks and successful practices that can be disseminated and shared among groups already engaged in knowledge sharing activities or planning to get involved.

One important consideration in the DPRK context is how closely to link willingness to engage in knowledge sharing activities to political developments internally and externally and to the official level processes of negotiation and engagement with the DPRK government by outside governments. A high level of political commitment to knowledge sharing by the DPRK has the potential to facilitate visa approvals and travel agreements. At the same time, the closer the linkage, the more knowledge sharing activities will be constrained by the policies and objectives being pursued by the official parties. For this reason, financiers and providers of knowledge sharing activities with the

DPRK need to consider carefully their objectives and the conditions that will be most conducive to their success. These choices are influenced by a number of strategic considerations that are explored in this section of the paper.

DPRK's Internal Challenges

For many practitioners, the primary *raison d'être* for promoting knowledge sharing with the DPRK is to help the DPRK gain information and perspectives that can help the country face its many challenges and basic dilemmas and resolve them through peaceful means while encouraging it to become more fully part of the post-cold war international community. This implies two basic frameworks for knowledge sharing activities, and both require the mutual learning stance discussed above. One is to focus on the DPRK's domestic situation and the challenges that have to be addressed internally within the North Korean environment and realities that are facing the economy and society. This includes the major economic and social challenges that can be influenced by foreign knowledge sharing. It also involves domestic political issues related to regime succession and balance of power between the military, workers party, and technocratic bureaucracy that are less likely to be directly influenced by the knowledge sharing with foreign partners, but are likely to be significantly affected indirectly. Operationally it is easiest to organize knowledge sharing activities relating to the DPRK's major internal issues at the sector level, such as for agriculture, energy, transport, science and technology, health, environmental protection, etc. Some sectors such as education and social welfare will be more sensitive and difficult than others. But it should also be an objective to engage in knowledge sharing on these sensitive areas that touch on international human security concerns and also directly on international perspectives on human security and governance.

To address cross-cutting issues of economic development, it will be important to find way to focus on the legal system, financial system, prices, macroeconomic management, etc., and general concepts of public administration. In this context it will be necessary to address also the growing international efforts to confront the risks and pitfalls of corruption. Each of these topics involve questions pertaining to technical knowledge, policy options, and management practices that are all important subjects for knowledge sharing activities. The easiest entry for knowledge sharing is the technical area, but policy options and institutional issues relating to management are critical for ultimate results and for building relationships that can move beyond knowledge sharing *per se* to what would be seen as policy dialogue and capacity building in a more comprehensive development assistance relationship of foreigners with the DPRK. It is important from this perspective to see knowledge sharing as a stepping stone to the possibility of more results-oriented development assistance activities in helping the DPRK to address its many internal problems.

For foreign partners trying to engage on DPRK's internal problems, a major challenge is to acquire accurate information about the DPRK itself, what these realities are, and how North Koreans perceive the situations they are facing and the reasoning behind their responses to them. Another challenge is how to bring information that may be useful

to North Koreans in relating to their situation in ways that they can understand. Language is a critical barrier, as are concepts that foreigners take for granted that may or may not be understood by North Koreans.

Knowledge sharing thus requires sensitivities to effective communications in a most elemental sense. Clarifying the dimensions of the problems to be discussed requires patience and careful listening. But this is essential to understanding what the problems are and how the North Koreans conceptualize and understand their own situation. The extent to which foreign knowledge and experience can alter North Korean understanding and views of the problems they face, depends in part on how well these are communicated and in part on willingness to entertain the implications of these insights on the part of the North Korean partners. The ability to identify and discuss these issues objectively is a key measure of success in knowledge sharing with the DPRK.

The second major framework for knowledge sharing activities is to help North Koreans understand the rest of the world. This requires less focus on internal understanding of the DPRK, and more on their perceptions of the outside world and logic of dealings with foreigners. Lack of appropriate knowledge is a major inhibitor of North Koreans even being able to pose the right questions in exploring the relevance of international experience for addressing their internal problems. North Korean pride in the DPRK's early industrial and economic achievements has not waned despite the current economic difficulties. Deeply ingrained political apprehension about exposure to foreign ideas also is a factor that has to be taken into account in planning knowledge sharing experiences outside the DPRK.

Nuclear Politics

Governments and international public opinion are fixated on the DPRK's nuclear weapons program and its threats to the region and nuclear non-proliferation globally. The Six-Party Talks process has promise but also has ups and downs in making progress towards resolving international concerns about the DPRK nuclear program and military threats. While prospects for success have been improving in recent months, a major breakthrough that would be transformative in its consequences is still a hope, not a plan. In this environment, knowledge sharing activities that are tied to positive progress in the Six-Party Talks provide an incentive to keep the talks on track in a positive trend. Linking knowledge sharing activities to the talks can also provide a mechanism for resolving issues that are impeding progress on technical matters and building trust in furthering the cooperative process through the Six-Party mechanisms.

Coordination of knowledge sharing initiatives with the management of the Six - Party process is best done through the technical working groups in the short run. The invitation by the DPRK for a group of nuclear experts from the US, China and Russia to visit the DPRK and discuss specific means to dismantle the Yonbyong reactor is a good example of this positive linkage. The proposal by the NEACD and Stanley Foundation for organizing economic expert workshops linked to the work of the energy and economic development working group is another.

Even so, these knowledge sharing activities linked to the Six-Party process have limitations and also face some downside risks. First is a risk of politicization of agenda setting or discussions among experts that could undermine the objectivity of the knowledge engagement and potential for relationship-building. Another risk is that coordination with activities that are not tied to the Six-Party process may be limited, leading to possible inconsistent advice or messages about possible solutions to some issues and creating confusion rather than clarity about the best ways forward and what political and financial support governments will give to the advice given. Thus coordination of similar initiatives taken in different frameworks of engagement with the DPRK is an issue worth discussing among organizers of knowledge sharing.

Not linking knowledge sharing to the Six-Party Talks or other political engagement frameworks has certain advantages. One is that by not being dependent on the ups and downs, stops and starts, and peculiarities of the political process, such activities can be planned with more certainty and expectation of participation of the individuals or organizations intended. Another is that relationships can be established and developed in a neutral way that may be valuable for maintaining communication and connections regardless of political developments. These can be critical in the event of major adverse political developments. A third advantage is that such activities in themselves are a test of North Korean intentions and willingness to engage with outsiders. A fourth advantage is that extra-governmental knowledge sharing activities are more likely to be perceived as useful by North Koreans during a lull in official dialogue, and DPRK personnel are more likely to be available to engage in such activities. An independent venture ensures a means of continuing interaction with the DPRK when the official dialogue wanes.

But it should be recognized that even well-intentioned independent knowledge sharing initiatives have political limits of acceptability on both sides of the knowledge sharing relationship. The curtailment of economic knowledge sharing activities in 2006 reminds us that the DPRK decision to proceed with missile tests and the nuclear test had negative consequences for planned knowledge sharing activities both because of internal shift in focus by the North Korean leadership, and loss of support for economic-related engagement by foreign governments backed by strong Security Council resolutions condemning these tests.

Inter-Korean Reconciliation

Inter-Korean relations have evolved remarkably since the first Summit meeting of June 2000. The scale and scope of inter-Korean cooperation activities both at the official level and at the non-governmental level have grown over the past seven years, despite the harder line policies pursued by the Bush Administration and more recently by the Japanese government towards the DPRK.

The recent Summit meeting and the resulting Declaration on the Advancement of North-South Relations, Peace and Prosperity have launched a new era for inter-Korean

cooperation on a wide range of activities. While it remains to be seen how this will be translated into progress on specific areas of agreement after the upcoming change in South Korean leadership, it is certainly going to form the baseline agenda for the next stage of relations, assuming the parallel process of multi-party talks on the nuclear program are kept on track.

Inter-Korean agendas have important consequences for knowledge sharing activities organized by both Korean and non-Korean organizations. For South Koreans, a major question is to what extent knowledge sharing initiatives are approved or sponsored by the South Korean government. Coordination of policy and action is provided by the Ministry of Unification and governed by South Korean law. But there is ample scope for private initiative, and a democratically organized society implies that South Korean organizations will pursue a variety of objectives and interests through knowledge sharing activities with the DPRK. Coordination is thus a significant challenge for South Korean knowledge sharing, both because of the national security and political issues at stake and because of the centrifugal tendencies of democratic societies which embrace multiplicity of approaches. Attention thus needs to be given to promoting incentives for information-sharing, partnerships and cross-fertilization of experiences among South Korean organizations involved in knowledge sharing activities with the DPRK.

Because of the diverse areas of cooperation among the two Koreas the scope for potential knowledge sharing activities is quite large and varies and can also involve venues in either or both countries as well as third country settings. Common language (even with the differences that have evolved since the end of the Korea war) and common history and cultural roots, are important factors that differentiate Korean from non-Korean knowledge sharing relationships and modalities.

While there is a powerful magnetism at work in the shared value of inter-Korean reconciliation and desire for eventual unification, there is also an underlying tension that must be recognized. This tension is the undercurrent of competition between the two Koreas that has been long-standing in both the political and cultural areas. (Economic competition has been muted by South Korea's tremendous successes and the DPRK's equally horrendous economic failings). Part of this tension is due to the fact that South Korea's democratic society poses challenges for the DPRK leadership not only because of the multiplicity of actors with differing views and objectives, but also the inherent uncertainty of policy sustainability in inter-Korean relations under successive democratically elected governments in the South. Similarly, uncertainty about North Korea succession and potential for domestic rivalry between the Workers Party, military and civilian leadership, adds a dimension of uncertainty in inter-Korean relations from the South Korean perspective.

These dynamics of inter-Korean relations as they affect knowledge sharing have consequences for non-Korean organizers of knowledge sharing activities with the DPRK. One is whether and to what extent South Korean and foreign organizations can work together successfully in partnerships on knowledge sharing with the DPRK. There is also some history of the DPRK desiring to keep inter-Korean activities separated from

activities organize with other foreign partners, and this is reflected in internal organization arrangements within the DPRK government for managing inter-Korean affairs separately from other international relations. The answer in large part depends on North Korean willingness to accept these hybrid arrangements. The advantage is to combine inter-Korean good will, shared objectives and language capabilities with foreign knowledge and international perspectives and experience to have a well coordinated and leveraged impact through a tri-partite cooperative activity. This is most likely to be successful where the activity is organized through mutually agreed arrangements in Korean settings. But it is conceivable that such activities organized in third country settings, such as China, Europe or the US, could also achieve significant results both in the knowledge objectives and in relationship building that would be supportive of the inter-Korean reconciliation and unification process.

One critical area for coordination between South Korean and other foreign knowledge sharing activities is in discussions that relate to economic reform and institution building in the DPRK. Decisions regarding the development of the legal system, financial system, land, labor, social welfare and education in the DPRK, will have a direct bearing on the process of harmonization and eventual reunification of the two Koreas. The question of institutional compatibility and policy coordination between the two countries will also become increasingly important as the countries deepen economic cooperation over time. These issues will need to be kept in mind by non-Korean partners in designing future knowledge sharing activities intended to influence institution building and policy debates in the DPRK.

China, Russia and Northeast Asia Regional Perspectives

China and Russia have long-standing political and economic ties to the DPRK and have been important suppliers of knowledge in the past. Some of that knowledge is now obsolete (especially as related to socialist economic organization), but to the extent that earlier knowledge activities have established relationships that have value even today, then potentially they can be viewed as assets that can be mobilized for future knowledge sharing activities. To some extent this is already occurring in the nuclear technical area, and in bilateral cross-border topics of common interest, such as industrial development based on market principles, avenues for energy cooperation and transport potential.

In the economic area, one such historical relationship and coordinated regional knowledge activities have taken place mainly under the auspices of the Tumen River Area Development Program, supported initially by the UNDP, but now principally by China, Russia, Mongolia, and South Korea in cooperation with the DPRK. The Tumen River Commission as a multilateral cooperation mechanism sponsored a number of knowledge sharing activities since its creation in 1995, but these have lapsed in recent years. One possible avenue for future knowledge sharing that capitalizes on these earlier arrangements would be to revitalize the Tumen River Commission as a framework for cooperative knowledge sharing on a range of economic and environmental topics that have shared interests among the Northeast Asian regional partners. If the US, Japan, Europe, Australia and Canada participated in such regional activities, the Tumen

framework might have value as part of the architecture for longer-term regional cooperation, with a significant function of knowledge sharing and coordinated planning for cross-border cooperation that was the original intent for this organization.

Operational Challenges in the DPRK Context

Isolation, ignorance and fear are powerful impediments to building cooperative international partnerships. Fragmentation within the DPRK government and competition among agencies and stakeholders also complicate management of issues that require cooperation beyond an assigned counterpart. Historical factors, internal political dynamics, and social and economic realities, all contribute to an environment that is exceptionally hard to engage by international comparison. In such an environment, building bridges of understanding and relationship through knowledge sharing is widely seen as a necessary if not sufficient part of engagement strategy. This is particularly important for engagement that seeks to help the DPRK address its internal problems in constructive ways that are in keeping with international expectations of good governance. It is also important for engagement that seeks to develop international cooperation and improve the DPRK's ability to interact with the outside world in ways that promote international respect and cooperation.

An Underlying Tension

There is an unavoidable tension in the knowledge sharing relationship in this situation that we must acknowledge and understand. This tension is between the naming of the DPRK's problems on the one hand, and the assertion of international expectations or standards of good governance and acceptable responses on the other. For the DPRK, part of the challenge is to accept the perception of a problem that needs to be solved with the help of knowledge from the outside world. Another part of the challenge is to accept the rationality of an international perspective on the problem and the underlying principles on which this rationality is based, whether humanitarian, economic, geo-political or human rights based.

While individuals or a part of the DPRK system may accept and be willing to work with these challenges, we cannot expect broadly shared acceptance, nor unconditional acceptance by those who can. A challenge for international partners in this circumstance is to seek partial gains and aim to broaden acceptance of new information or outside perspectives over time as trust builds through a committed relationship.

Another challenge for international partners is willingness to work on only a part of the larger problems that the DPRK is facing, recognizing that DPRK policy or behavior in other areas is not in keeping with international standards and expectations. The willingness to engage while parsing the overall agenda for helping the DPRK overcome its problems in an internationally acceptable way can carry political risk back home, especially from advocates of hard line policies towards the DPRK, but also among supporters and financiers of knowledge sharing with the DPRK concerned with impact

and potential distortion of incentives for change in the DPRK. Thus articulating a rationale for limiting expectations of what can be achieved through knowledge sharing but also justifying engagement through knowledge sharing as a valuable component of a more comprehensive and longer-term engagement strategy is important.

Relationships

Establishing and nurturing relationships with North Koreans involved in knowledge sharing initiatives is a primary task and challenge for those organizing and conducting these activities. Lessons learned from experiences of groups that have been successful and also those that have encountered problems in building and sustaining such relationships with both the planners and participants in knowledge sharing activities is an important way to help clarify and promote practices that will lead to greater successes in the future.

In assessing lessons learned, it is important also to consider variation in the use of financial incentives and practices relating to management of monies, as well as communications practices and cultural factors. Comparisons across both organizational lines and nationality lines should reveal both commonalities and differences that will be references for future planning. Where possible, harmonization of certain practices among foreign partners in knowledge sharing activities would be worth consideration. This applies particularly to financial practices such as honoraria other payments made to participants and co-sponsoring organizations.

Information

Gathering reliable and especially quantified information about the DPRK is a major area of concern for foreign partners seeking to engage the DPRK. Sharing available information among groups who are actively involved would seem to be a desirable objective. Mechanisms to do this need to be defined, including creative use of internet-based communications capabilities for networks of groups with similar interests or working with the same North Korean counterparts.

Trust building among organizers of knowledge sharing activities is also needed to motivate willingness to share information. This applies as well to information about specific activities and experiences. To some extent there are natural tendencies among non-governmental groups and between governments to protect their relationships and resources and promote their own interests. And to some extent there are cultural and nationality differences in approach as well. But the potential benefits of information sharing among foreign partners are large, and ways to overcome tendencies towards isolation need to be explored and exploited.

Strategies are also needed for improving the amount and quality of information required to design knowledge sharing activities that will have most value and impact. A results-oriented approach requires rigor at the planning stage and also building into the plan evaluation tools to be able to assess impacts and learn from experience.

Absorptive Capacity

A practical constraint in the DPRK context is the limited number of people with the language skills, organizational ability and decision-making authority to plan and implement knowledge sharing activities with foreign partners. Helping the DPRK to expand its absorptive capacity should be given high priority. One area is in foreign language training to expand the pool of translators available to work with foreign groups. Another is to work for the development of protocols or operating guidelines to reduce requirements for ad hoc decision-making and adoption of commonly used practices.

If one objective of knowledge sharing is to pave the way for expanded international economic relations with the DPRK in the future, then some knowledge sharing activities should focus directly on the questions of what information and capacities will be needed on the DPRK side to enable this to happen. Anticipating the issues that will need to be addressed in moving from humanitarian assistance to development assistance and private foreign investment can have high payoff in the medium-term if political developments break in this direction. Knowledge sharing directed at these issues could be a valuable catalyst for change in the way the DPRK works with foreign partners on its future economic development as well as on social, cultural and human rights issues of concern both to the domestic leadership and to the international community.

Coordination

Coordination is a major issue for knowledge sharing with the DPRK. This has two aspects: internal coordination within the DPRK and external coordination among foreign partner organizers of knowledge sharing activities with the DPRK.

The present practice in the DPRK is to assign different units within the DPRK government to work as counterparts with different foreign partners, and this is aligned mainly along nationality lines. Thus the counterpart frameworks for US, European Chinese, Australian, Canadian, Southeast Asian and South Korean, etc. organizations are completely different. The same can be said for international organizations such as the UN and the European Commission. The decision to dismantle the Flood Damage Rehabilitation Committee (FDRC) in 2005 seems to have been designed to implement a policy of trying to divide donors and not bring them together in a coordinated way. Similarly the Economic Institute of the Cabinet, which had been established as a policy coordinating group under the previous Prime Minister and which acted as a coordinating counterpart for some economic knowledge sharing activities, seems now to have been weakened and responsibilities fragmented again. The government's response to this past summer's flood, however, seems to indicate recognition of the need for a high level coordinating capability in making international appeals for response. The National Defense Commission reportedly has taken on new responsibilities in this area, although information is sketchy.

Sharing perceptions of coordination mechanisms and experiences with the DPRK among foreign knowledge sharing organizers would help clarify the issues that would be worth addressing in some common way to promote more effective and efficient programing and implementation of knowledge sharing activities with North Korea counterparts.

Coordination is also needed among foreign organizers of knowledge sharing, both to avoid inefficient overlaps and to build synergies among multiple activities supported by different organizing groups. Coordination can also simplify inter-actions with the DPRK government if common procedures are adopted, and information sharing and processing can be systematized reducing administrative burdens for all participating groups.

The UNDP and OCHA have provided valuable in-country coordinating support in the past. For the future, much depends on whether the UNDP and other UN organizations are looked to by the DPRK government and their major donor governments to provide such support if there are expanded knowledge sharing activities with increasing number of foreign partner organizers. If new players enter the scene of knowledge sharing in the DPRK, especially the international financial institutions, then coordination mechanisms will be even more important. These can be developed in-country but can also be developed outside the DPRK, but in any case leadership and locus for managing such coordination will need to be defined.

Resources

Mobilizing resources for knowledge sharing with the DPRK is also a major concern. Where governments are providing funding, whether through their own agencies or via non-governmental groups, willingness to fund is potentially tied to political developments and the ups and downs of relations between the DPRK and its neighbors and the international community. Different countries also have different policies towards engagement with the DPRK and the DPRK also does not respond the same way to overtures or proposals from different sources. Strategies to mobilize funds for expanded knowledge sharing activities need to take these considerations into account.

One area that deserves more attention is exploring the potential for more partnerships among organizers of knowledge sharing activities both to maximize the benefits from the resources that can be mobilized and to leverage synergies that can come from combining resources and expertise.

An issue that cannot be ignored is the question of how best to manage financial and personnel resources for activities that are conducted in the DPRK. The recent experience of the UNDP and other UN agencies in audits of their practices should be a wake up call for all potential supplies of resources to the DPRK. Also, good governance has become a high priority in the development assistance community worldwide, with increasingly sophisticated efforts being made to curtail risk of corruption and misuse of resources. While knowledge sharing activities are relatively simple to manage from this

area of concern, it cannot be ignored. This will be an issue of increasing importance for donors who finance knowledge sharing activities, especially if there are expanded programs for the DPRK, which certainly does not have a good international reputation for fiscal management.

International Experience and Best Practices

While engaging the DPRK involves many factors and dynamics that are quite unlike other situations of engaging isolated and failing states around the world, that does not mean that experiences elsewhere and the lessons that have been drawn from decades of international development are irrelevant to the DPRK situation. The Development Assistance Committee of the OECD has sponsored in recent years a process of drawing lessons from collective international experience and promoting principles of best practices. There is no reason that these principles cannot be considered for possible application in engagement with the DPRK even though the circumstances are unique.

One important principle is the concept of partner-led processes. If the objective is to build ownership and commitment to new approaches and ways of working together, then the relationship between the donor and partner should be developed in a way that empowers the partner to take lead responsibility for moving forward in ways that can be supported by donors. Translated into the knowledge sharing context, this is very much in keeping with the mutual learning approach and development of trust and productive relationships that was discussed earlier in this paper. While there may be political sensitivities to the notion of empowering North Koreans, fundamentally that is what knowledge sharing is intended to do. Adopting some of the techniques promoted by the OCED-DAC would be worthwhile to explore in the DPRK context.

Two other major areas of best practice are the concepts of harmonization and alignment. These are being actively pursued and adapted to different country situations around the world and should be applied to the DPRK also in the future.

Harmonization refers to the adoption by donors of common policies and practices that help the partner in dealing with different donors who typically make very different demands on the relationship. The more that knowledge sharing practices can be harmonized, the easier the administrative burden on both organizers and the North Korean counterparts and the more easily partnerships can be pursued to leverage comparative advantages. In the DPRK context, particularly challenging will be trying to achieve some degree of harmonization between bilateral assistance provided by South Korea and China, which follow quite different modalities at present. Another challenge will be deepening the integration of international norms through involvement of the multilateral organizations in coordinated activities with bilateral donors and ensuring appropriate harmonization among UN agencies, the International Financial Institutions and the European Commission in this process in the DPRK environment.

Similarly, alignment is an objective of encouraging the North Korean government to adopt policies and procedures for its own purpose that can be supported by foreign

partners through aligning their practices to those adopted by the government. This objective must be seen as an aspirational one, as the present situation and DPRK practices are a far cry from acceptable international norms and practices. This issue was starkly revealed in the recent UNDP audit experience. However, if best practice principles can be introduced at an early stage in the building of new development assistance relationships with the DPRK, then this will foster practices that are both acceptable in international norms and efficient in administrative demands. This is important both for overcoming international concerns about current North Korean practices and also for contributing to alleviation of absorptive capacity constraints. These objectives may be for more medium-term value, but even at this stage of knowledge sharing initiatives if such principles can be promoted this would help put future expanded development relations with the DPRK on a good track for success from a results-oriented perspective.

Conclusions and Principles for Future Engagement in Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is a critically important modality for constructive engagement with the DPRK at this moment in history. Regardless of the prospects for transformational political developments that might come from multilateral and bilateral diplomacy, knowledge sharing represents a necessary if not sufficient component of engagement with DPRK that can support peaceful and pragmatic solutions to many of the DPRK's challenges.

Knowledge sharing must be guided by a principle of results-oriented programming. Both efforts to enhance the quality of knowledge sharing activities and efforts to increase quantity should bear this principle in mind.

Research on lessons of past experiences in knowledge sharing with the DPRK and widely sharing these insights can make a significant contribution to programming of future knowledge sharing activities. This requires both willingness to share such information among organizations involved in such activities, and willingness to adapt approaches to reflect these lessons.

International best practice and experiences from other country settings have a role to play as well in promoting enhanced results-oriented knowledge sharing with the DPRK. Adapting these lessons to the particularities of the DPRK context should be given high priority by the international community.

A principle of promoting knowledge partnerships should be embraced for future programming of knowledge sharing activities with the DPRK. This applies both to the concept of ownership that comes from DPRK-led initiatives that are supported by international partners, and the concept of multiple partner coordination and collaboration among the foreign organizations working with the DPRK.

Means should be explored to promote dialogue with DPRK authorities on systemic policies and practices regarding knowledge sharing with foreign organizations along with promotion of the principles of harmonization and alignment for knowledge activities. This would be a good foundation for expanded development assistance relationships in the future.