

Annual Report

2023

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LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

As Co-Chairs of the Board of Trustees, we are thrilled to share Korea Future’s annual report, highlighting a year of considerable achievements.

Korea Future’s achievements are a testament to the dedication of our staff. Our team built ground-breaking case files on high-ranking perpetrators and led critical amendments to this year’s United Nations resolution on the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea—a substantial step toward justice and accountability. In Seoul, pioneering investigations identified thousands of perpetrators, providing survivors with greater opportunities for justice. We strengthened our collaboration with the survivor community through consultations and capacity-building workshops, ensuring our work remains survivor-centred. Additionally, we published impactful reports addressing sexual violence and torture in the DPRK penal system.

Our work gained significant recognition by governments and the UN, and has attracted global media attention, establishing Korea Future as a leading voice on the DPRK. Our visual investigation into the infamous North Hamgyong Provincial MPS Holding Centre was exclusively and widely covered by CNN, offering the first glimpse into this facility.

Financially, we have experienced steady growth, which has strengthened our organisational resilience and allowed us to diversify our funding sources. This financial stability positions us to increase our impact in the years ahead.

We are excited to announce the upcoming release of our new five-year strategy, which builds on our existing work to strengthen survivor access to justice, bolster evidence for targeted sanctions, unify international policy efforts, and boost capacity building for grassroots civil society organisations.

We remain deeply grateful to our funders and partners, whose support has been invaluable. We invite you to continue this journey as we pursue meaningful justice with victims and accountability for perpetrators in the DPRK.

Vicky Nida & Oliver Windridge



OUR IMPACT

22

GOVERNMENTS AND MULTILATERAL ACTORS BRIEFED



18

PUBLICATIONS ON POLICY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES

3

PUBLICATIONS AUTHORED FOR GOVERNMENTS

6

DETAILED DOSSIERS SUBMITTED RECOMMENDING TARGETED HUMAN RIGHTS SANCTIONS

4

SUBMISSIONS TO UNITED NATIONS BODIES

3

AMENDMENTS TO A UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION

1

AMENDMENT TO A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

9150

INCIDENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS DOCUMENTED



EVENTS FEATURING KOREA FUTURE STAFF

11

CITATIONS IN GOVERNMENT AND UNITED NATIONS REPORTS

13

MENTIONS IN GLOBAL MEDIA

22

1425

DETAINEES IDENTIFIED

571

DETAILED IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS WITH SURVIVORS, WITNESSES, AND FORMER STATE-AFFILIATED AGENTS

4

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

4

WORKSHOPS FOR EXILED NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATORS

1095

ALLEGED PERPETRATORS IDENTIFIED THROUGH INVESTIGATIONS



160

EXILED NORTH KOREANS ENGAGED THROUGH WORKSHOPS



EXPERT OBSERVATION

Siobhán Hobbs is a human rights lawyer and gender justice advocate. She was the Gender Adviser to the UN Commission of Inquiry on the DPRK and served as Gender Adviser to the UN Special Rapporteur for Afghanistan and the UN Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea.

“It has been a pleasure working with the staff and leadership of Korea Future. The organisation has a clear and unique mission, talented team and impressive and achievable goals. The investigation methodology is robust, and the team is keenly focussed on ensuring it is in line with, or exceeds best practice. The depth, quality and quantity of information in the Korea Future database is fantastic. The public accessibility of the database is unique and useful for researchers examining the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. It has the capacity to be the central repository of testimony relating to violations in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s penal system, enabling the international community to have a clearer and more accurate concept of the breadth and scale of these violations.”



OUR STORY



In 2017, three years after a UN Commission of Inquiry exposed “unparalleled” atrocities in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the situation remained largely unchanged. As the world’s commitment to the principle of “never again” began to fade, survivors approached human rights investigators Michael Glendinning and James Burt, long-time supporters of North Korean refugees, seeking to advance accountability and justice.

Consultations with survivors and discussions with policymakers revealed three critical shortcomings that hindered progress. Firstly, the documentation of survivors’ experiences within the DPRK’s penal system—a central source of these “unparalleled” violations—was inconsistent and unreliable. Secondly, this lack of robust evidence left national and international bodies ill-equipped to hold perpetrators accountable. Thirdly, the exclusion of survivors from justice processes prevented their direct involvement in seeking accountability.

In response to these gaps, Korea Future was established in London, where the second-largest North Korean refugee diaspora resides globally. Within two years, an additional office was opened in South Korea, where it rapidly compiled unprecedented documentation of systematic violations. To further leverage these findings for legal and political advocacy, an office was established in 2021 in The Hague, the pivotal hub of international justice, facilitating efforts across Europe, North America, and at the United Nations.

Today, Korea Future is recognised as the leading organisation committed to achieving justice with victims and ensuring accountability for violators in the DPRK’s penal system, propelled by a clear mandate from the survivors they serve.



OUR 2025-2030 STRATEGY

1

ACCESS TO ACCOUNTABILITY PLATFORM



Korea Future's Access to Accountability Platform (AAP) is the first mechanism designed with survivors at its core, supporting North Korean survivors and families of victims in their pursuit of justice and accountability for human rights violations. The AAP streamlines the process of seeking remedy and reparation by taking on client cases, constructing case files, and submitting them to targeted human rights sanctions regimes and relevant UN bodies. With rigorous methodologies and a survivor-centred approach, the AAP collaborates with survivors, ensuring their voices are heard. By engaging the North Korean diaspora through outreach programmes and partnerships, the platform boosts survivors' access to justice and fosters a supportive community.

2

STRENGTHENING GLOBAL RESPONSES



The fight to hold the DPRK accountable for human rights violations has been impeded by limited prioritisation, low visibility, and inconsistent global engagement. While some states take a proactive approach, others, despite their commitment to human rights elsewhere, avoid engagement due to knowledge deficits and perceived limitations in influencing the DPRK. This fragmentation obstructs the formation of a unified approach, stalling progress in holding the DPRK accountable and upholding the rights of victims. Our solution is evidence-based targeted advocacy to mobilise a broader range of global actors in support of accountability measures, policy development, and effective diplomatic engagements. We employ various methods, including in-depth reports, discussions with key decision-makers, targeted media outreach, and partnerships with local stakeholders, to ensure survivors' voices are heard before national authorities and international bodies.

3

EMPOWERING GRASSROOTS HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS



Grassroots human rights organisations face significant challenges in sustaining their efforts and increasing their impact, partly due to a lack of knowledge and capacity in implementing the survivor-centred and trauma-informed approaches now widely expected in the field. Without these skills, grassroots organisations compromise the credibility of their work, and survivors face a heightened risk of re-traumatisation, making them less likely to participate in human rights initiatives. To amplify their impact, ensure survivors' voices are heard, and their rights respected, there is a critical need to empower these organisations with the skills, knowledge, and tools necessary.



ACHIEVEMENTS: LEADING THE FIGHT

TURNING DATA INTO JUSTICE

Through 571 interviews with survivors and witnesses, we identified 1,070 perpetrators and documented 8,718 human rights violations. This massive compilation of credible data is the most extensive of its kind. It is not just numbers on paper—each case represents a real human story, a life disrupted by violence, oppression, and injustice. These findings have a powerful impact in our work. They inform our submissions to targeted human rights sanctions regimes, providing the solid evidence needed to hold perpetrators accountable. Additionally, this data strengthens our political advocacy efforts, allowing us to press for meaningful change at both national and international levels.

A GAME-CHANGER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

We released the third update of the North Korean Prison Database (NKPD), the most comprehensive archive of documented human rights violations within the DPRK's penal system. This database is a game-changer, offering detailed information in a format that is both accessible and easy to use, with sophisticated tools for analysis. Available in Korean and English, the NKPD has become an essential resource for those working to understand and address human rights issues in the DPRK. It is widely used by governments, politicians, journalists, academics, and civil society organisations, guiding their efforts to expose abuses and advocate for change.

EXPOSING HARSH REALITIES

Our work played a crucial role in revealing the harsh realities of the DPRK penal system. Our publications delved into systemic human rights violations, focusing on critical policy areas including sexual and gender-based violence and comprehensive documentation of torture. We employ survivor-centred methodologies, ensuring that the voices and experiences of those who have endured these atrocities are central in our publications. We were also pleased to contribute to key publications by the Association for the Prevention of Torture and the German Development Cooperation.





IMPACT STORY



KOREA FUTURE'S IMPACT ON UN RESOLUTION FOR THE DPRK

In a significant advocacy breakthrough, Korea Future secured critical changes to the 2024 United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolution on the human rights situation in the DPRK. This achievement represents a major step toward increasing global scrutiny and accountability for violations within the country's penal system.

Our efforts led to the resolution, for the first time, explicitly recognising the widespread human rights violations occurring throughout the entire penal system. This includes the systemic use of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against detainees, along with a call for transparency in the treatment and conditions of women in detention.

These amendments are more than just symbolic—they represent a seismic shift in the international community's approach to addressing human rights violations in the DPRK. By explicitly calling for an end to SGBV against forcibly repatriated women and demanding greater transparency in the treatment of detainees, the revised resolution acknowledges the suffering of survivors within the DPRK penal system and those who have escaped, as well as the pain endured by the families of victims.

This recognition is a testament to Korea Future's documentation and advocacy efforts, demonstrating our role in amplifying survivor voices and the significance of technical, evidence-based advocacy in shaping international responses to human rights violations. The impact of these changes extends beyond the confines of the UN. The amended resolution serves as a crucial tool for other institutions, including targeted human rights sanctions regimes, providing them with a comprehensive framework on which to base accountability measures against the DPRK.



IN THE MEDIA

Korea Future's partnerships with major media outlets like CNN and BBC have dramatically increased global awareness of human rights abuses in the DPRK. Through these collaborations, we facilitated in-depth reports on torture and other egregious violations within the DPRK penal system, reaching millions of viewers around the world. By working with leading news organisations, we bring critical stories to light and broaden the impact of our advocacy, creating a powerful platform for change.

11

**TIMES FEATURED IN
SIGNIFICANT EVENTS,**

raising our profile and sharing
insights on the global stage

21

FEATURES IN GLOBAL MEDIA,

spreading awareness and fostering
public understanding of the DPRK
human rights situation

13

**CITATIONS IN OFFICIAL
GOVERNMENT AND UNITED
NATIONS REPORTS,**

validating the credibility
and impact of our research

131,000 users

engaged through our website

31,367 YouTube views

of our visual investigations

9,389 people engaged

through our webinars and videos

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**KOREA FUTURE'S
PARTNERSHIP WITH CNN:
EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS INTO
DPRK TORTURE PRACTICES**

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We partnered with CNN to offer exclusive insights from our visual investigation into torture practices within the DPRK penal system. This collaboration resulted in significant coverage on CNN's front page and news broadcasts. The story maintained headline status for over two days, gaining extensive syndication and international media attention. This visibility has been instrumental in drawing global attention to our work, furthering our mission to address these abuses.

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**PARTNERING
WITH THE BBC TO EXPOSE
HUMAN RIGHTS
VIOLATIONS**

.....

Our collaboration with the BBC was key in revealing severe human rights violations at a detention centre near the China border. By sharing exclusive insights from our investigation, the BBC delivered comprehensive coverage across its platforms, including BBC News, their website, and radio broadcasts. This partnership significantly raised public awareness and added momentum to our calls for accountability and justice for the victims of these grave human rights violations.

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**AMPLIFYING HUMAN
RIGHTS ADVOCACY:
REACHING A GLOBAL
AUDIENCE IN
10+ LANGUAGES**

.....

Our work has resonated internationally, with our work featured in over 10 languages, including Korean, Dutch, German, Japanese, and Spanish. This extensive linguistic reach amplifies our human rights advocacy, enabling us to connect with diverse audiences around the world. By engaging people in their own languages, we are mobilising a global response to the violations within the DPRK's penal system, creating a broader platform for justice and accountability.





ACHIEVEMENTS: ADVANCING ACCOUNTABILITY

TRANSFORMATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY



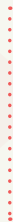
Our approach to transformative accountability relies on a meticulously audited investigative methodology and a team of experienced staff. This expertise allowed us to compile comprehensive dossiers on high-ranking perpetrators in the DPRK, meeting stringent legal standards and evidentiary thresholds. These case files were submitted to key international stakeholders, including the European Union, United Kingdom, and United States, advocating for targeted human rights sanctions such as travel bans and asset freezes. This initiative marks a significant milestone in holding the DPRK accountable for human rights violations.

KOREA FUTURE'S IMPACT ON GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY



By engaging with key entities in policy development, sanctions, atrocity prevention, and other areas of government, Korea Future influenced the global conversation on human rights and accountability in the DPRK. We collaborated with informed and concerned states, including those that were previously under-leveraged in DPRK discourse, as well as with the UN system, to drive meaningful change. Our comprehensive briefings with over 20 governments, information sharing with the UN Special Rapporteur on DPRK, and submissions to the Universal Periodic Review had a significant impact. Our efforts were recognised in the March 2024 Special Rapporteur's report, various governmental reports, and government policy statements, indicating our successful role in shaping the international response to the DPRK.

WHAT ARE TARGETED HUMAN RIGHTS SANCTIONS?



Targeted human rights sanctions are specific measures aimed at individuals or entities responsible for serious human rights abuses, rather than broad economic or financial sanctions against a country. These sanctions can include travel bans and the freezing of assets of the targeted perpetrators, directly holding them accountable without penalising the country's population. Unlike broad economic sanctions, which can affect a state's economy and can have widespread implications for its citizens, targeted sanctions focus solely on those directly implicated in human rights violations, aiming to deter future abuses and promote accountability.

"Securing justice and accountability is imperative. Korea Future stands out in its relentless pursuit of this mission, particularly in its advocacy for women suffering from sexual and gender-based violence and its revealing insights into the DPRK's vast penal system. Their commitment to laying the groundwork for justice and amplifying the voices of survivors is truly transformative. As someone who has directly benefited from their unwavering support, I cannot overstate the profound impact of their work. Korea Future does not just champion victims' rights; they ensure our stories resonate on a global scale, forging paths toward tangible change. Their dedication is not just commendable—it is life-changing for survivors like me."



JIHYUN PARK. NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

YEJIN LEE, HEAD OF CLIENT EXPERIENCE, CONNECT: NORTH KOREA



"As a North Korean, Korea Future's dedication to empowering exiles and supporting North Korean-led organisations through capacity-building inspires me deeply. As a trainer for one of their workshops, I have witnessed the positive impact of their culturally sensitive and trauma-informed training. Their approach, grounded in lived experience, not only fosters change in the North Korean refugee and human rights sector but also has a transformative effect on individual lives. At Connect: North Korea, we specialise in providing mental and physical support to North Koreans. Korea Future stands out as one of the few human rights organisations that genuinely prioritise psychosocial support for those they interview. Their trauma-informed methods ensure clients receive the care they need, and their capacity-building efforts for other human rights organisations on psychosocial support are invaluable."



ACHIEVEMENTS: CAPACITY BUILDING

ADVANCING BEST PRACTICES IN SGBV INVESTIGATIONS IN THE DPRK



Our research into SGBV in the DPRK addressed a significant gap in global best practices for human rights documentation. Given the unique challenges involved in investigating SGBV in the DPRK, we engaged in direct dialogue with survivors and collaborated with civil society organisations to develop effective guidance. This process led to two comprehensive reports that offer valuable insights into the experiences of survivors and provide a framework for gender-sensitive, trauma-informed, and survivor-centred documentation practices. The guidelines aim to improve the effectiveness of investigations into SGBV in the DPRK, equipping investigators with tools that align with global best practices while addressing the specific challenges of engaging with survivors in this context.

EMPOWERING EXILED NORTH KOREAN WOMEN: BUILDING LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT



Through a series of workshops, participatory events, online forums, and surveys, we grew the engagement and leadership of exiled North Korean women aged 19–34 in South Korea. Our capacity-building efforts involved over 150 participants, revealing key barriers to their active participation and leadership in civil society. These insights allowed us to design targeted programs that focused on enhancing leadership skills and amplifying the voices of these women. Our strategic initiatives led to measurable progress, fostering positive change and boosting the influence of marginalised women within the diaspora.

Can you provide examples of recent successes or milestones achieved in your role as head of accountability at Korea Future?

Recently, we successfully advocated for language changes in UNHRC resolutions, increasing international scrutiny on the DPRK, and submitted case files to targeted human rights sanctions regimes. These are huge strides in holding perpetrators accountable.

How do you measure the effectiveness of Korea Future's work in promoting accountability for human rights violations in the DPRK?

Effectiveness for us is twofold: ensuring international norms are upheld and keeping survivor voices at the forefront. It is about the tangible policy shifts and engagements we catalyse, alongside the depth of survivor involvement. These aspects are complementary, reinforcing our mission to not only seek justice and accountability but to embody the principles of human rights in every action we take.

What challenges have you encountered in your efforts to hold perpetrators accountable, and how has Korea Future addressed or overcome these challenges?

A key challenge has been the limited change a decade after the UN Commission of Inquiry. However, we have turned this into an opportunity to engage states with our up-to-date, in-depth documentation. By providing credible information, we are supporting states in exploring new, effective forms of accountability, thus reinforcing our role in driving significant, systemic change.

How do you ensure that survivor voices are central to the accountability initiatives undertaken by Korea Future?

Being survivor-centred transcends listening; it involves actively integrating survivors' experiences and insights into the core of our actions and decisions. By incorporating their experiences and preferences into our documentation, advocacy, and accountability efforts, we ensure they are not just included but are central to guiding our mission and influencing our actions.



HYEONSIM LEE

How do you personally gauge your satisfaction with the progress and impact of Korea Future's accountability work?

Seeing the real-world impact of our work, from policy changes to heightened international attention, fills me with pride. It is the progress we make in empowering survivors and the growing recognition of our efforts that truly mark our success.

What motivates and drives you in your role as head of accountability at Korea Future?

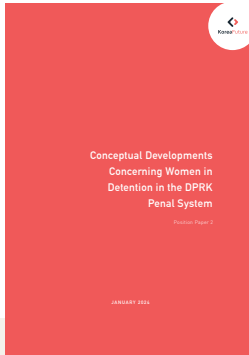
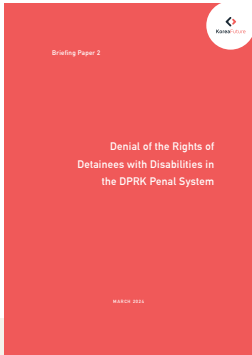
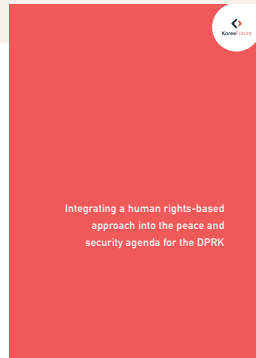
What drives me is not just the external successes but also the internal dynamics of our team. Seeing our staff's dedication and the nurturing environment we have created, where everyone is committed to justice and accountability, reinforces my belief in our collective impact and the importance of our mission.

How do you see Korea Future evolving in its approach to accountability in the future?

I view our efforts as going beyond merely responding to existing opportunities; we are also actively shaping these opportunities to aid both governments and survivors. Through this approach, I believe Korea Future will play a pivotal role in achieving significant advancements and making real progress in tackling human rights violations in the DPRK.



RECENT PUBLICATIONS



OUR FUNDERS

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the following donors for their invaluable support, which significantly contributed to advancing Korea Future's mission.

- Canada
- Germany
- The Netherlands
- The United Kingdom
- The United States of America

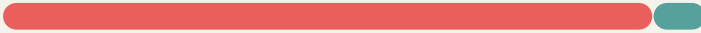
- The Joffe Charitable Trust
- The International Republican Institute
- The National Endowment for Democracy
- Souter Charitable Trust
- Stefanus Alliance International



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

2023

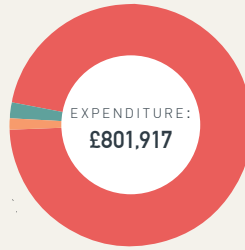
INCOME:
£770,286



Charitable Activities/Grants:
£749,561

Other:
£20,725

Investigation: **£773,352**
Capacity-building: **£16,272**
Administration: **£12,293**



2022

INCOME:
£561,540



Charitable Activities/Grants:
£540,130

Other:
£21,410

Investigation: **434,910**
Capacity-building: **£85,406**
Administration: **£12,554**

