

News from the Foundation

Realizing social values by sharing with NK refugees



The Korea Hana Foundation (KHF) signs an MOU with Seoul Regional Headquarters of the National Health Insurance Service (NHIS) to help North Korean refugees achieve stable resettlement and improve their quality of life.

The Foundation, which was established by the Ministry of Unification (MOU) and now headed by President Ko Gyoung-bin, and NHIS Seoul Regional Headquarters led by Chief Jin Jong-oh signed a bilateral cooperative agreement for stable resettlement of the refugees from North Korea and improvement of their quality of life.

The ceremony was held at the NHIS Building in Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, on 14th of November, NHIS Seoul Regional Headquarters has fulfilled its core missions to promote national healthcare and social security while also achieving social values through its

various philanthropic programs: promoting access to healthcare, protecting the human rights of socially vulnerable groups, supporting households with child care and operating study centers for socially alienated groups.

Pursuant to the agreement, the two organizations will work closely to cooperate in supporting various social service programs for refugees, including projects for their stabilized livelihood, customized medical and health promotion and employment.

"The life of the refugees in South Korean society has significantly improved over the years. Still, many of them live in a social minority group and need support from us," stressed President Ko. "In cooperation with NHIS, KHF will do our level best for their successful settlement and better life in the days to come," he added.

How to Donate

You can help North Korean refugees achieve self-sufficiency and successful resettlement in our society by giving a helping hand. The Donation will be used for the resettlement of North Korean refugees.

The Korea Hana Foundation(KHF) News Letter

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Settlement Story

'First time in South Korea?' - KHF video production

'First time in South Korea?'

"The video series 'First time in South Korea?' help trainees at Hanawon, or people on other resettlement education programs to express their ideas and enter into a discussion." expounded Lee Ha-young, manager of the KHF public relations.

So many men, so many episodes

KHF has categorized the experiences of the refugees into ten different themes to create ten videos under the title 'First time in South Korea?' Each has two episodes in real life. They excluded even excellent topics or episodes that might spawn misunderstandings for either North Korean refugees or South Koreans. Three hosts were selected for the filming, each with a different perspective on North Korean refugees: Jung Sungho, a South Korea comedian, Jo Miyoung and Jung Minwoo, North Korean refugees, who have been in South Korea for 14 and 5 years. The ten categories of the video series include 'Differences in communication styles', 'Lack of knowledge about contracts and laws', 'Differences in culture and social systems', 'Misunderstandings and inferiority complexes', 'Failure to confirm work experience in North Korea' and so on.

Resolving conflicts induced by ignorance

We visited the filming scene and learned what messages the videos meant to convey to society and the thoughts of the hosts. Composition of the video production team was especially meaningful because the majority of them and hosts were from North Korea.

"I've learned a lot about the refugees while preparing for the project. I guessed it would probably be much the same story as that of any other people. Soon, however, I realized I had been wrong. I have come to learn how differences in culture and social system can create huge gaps between people from different backgrounds. For the first time, I realized how difficult their life must have been and became interested in the relevant issues." Said writer Hong Seong-hua.

We met show MC Jung Sung-ho. "I just wanted to do something with them regardless of my own benefit. I wanted to find a way to help them. We all are living in the same world but their life is



different. Often being referred to as 'them' not 'us', the refugees go through difficulties as they settle in this society because of some prejudice and bias, I think it is imperative for us to fill the gap arising from ignorance by exposing issues to different sectors. Minwoo has been in South Korea for five years and opened his own business a year ago. "It would be an exaggeration to say I know all the nuts and bolts of life in the South or that I'm totally confident of it. Resettling here still gets more difficult and sometimes terrifying as I get to know about the society. I hope this show will enable my fellow North Koreans to settle smoothly in this new society" he said.

Neither the refugees nor South Koreans are to blame for such misunderstandings and conflicts arising in the course of the former's settling in the South. It is natural to have a lack of understanding because we have been lived in different ways for a long time. The video series 'First time in South Korea?' is not only for the North Korean audience but for South Koreans too.

'First time in South Korea?' will also be reborn in a document form. We hope this show, a four-year hard work of story research and collection will help both the refugees and South Koreans get to know better each other.

written by Song Jung-sil & Photo by Her Young-chul

*Hanawon: The settlement support center operated by Ministry of unification.



Settlement Story Documentary film 'The Children Gone to Poland'

Report on a shared great journey of love

Released in movie theaters across the country at the end of last month, the documentary film 'The Children Gone to Poland' is about 1,500 Korean War orphans who were forcibly sent by North Korean authorities to Poland in the middle of the war in 1951 and the Polish teachers who took care of them. Lee Song, 28, the leading actress, escaped from North Korea and arrived in the South in 2014. She now is a college student.

Director Chu and actress Lee

Director Chu was inspired to make the tragic history into a movie after reading a Polish writer's novel Angels' Wings about a Korean War orphan named Kim Kwideok who died of a disease after being sent to Poland. One day, Chu happened to see a video about a North Korean orphan, known as a flower swallow, eating grass in the wild to survive and she became interested in the North Korean kids who lost their parents and went through difficult times. The video greatly motivated the director to make a film out of the story.

After an audition, Lee Song was picked out as the actress and went to Poland with Director Chu. They were really surprised to find out that the teachers who taught the orphans were in their 90s. For the movie, the director filmed the scenes of their meeting with some of the teachers, and this footage was integrated into her non-fiction film.

"Director Chu is my real sister"

The film premiered on 8th of November at Film Forum in Seoul. Prior to the event, we met with Director Chu and Lee Song.

"We heard you guys had a hard time communicating with each other when you began the filming?" We asked them this question. Director Chu replied it was difficult because the actress didn't open up to her at first. The director expected to hear much from Song about her childhood in North Korea, thinking her stories would be essential for the film. She went to Poland with her actress with the expectation, but Song didn't really share much about her personal stories with the director. The actress would burst into tears in the Polish teachers' arms as they warmly welcomed her after learning that she's from North Korea. However, it took a long time before she finally confided with the director.

At first, Song wouldn't answer questions about difficult times in North Korea, family and relatives and her worries about them. She gradually opened up to the director after seeing her cry and empathize with the orphans' life stories that the Polish teachers

shared. One night around bedtime, Song finally told her life stories back in North Korea. Her stories made the two break down and cry. Since then, they have become like sisters and now Song calls the director her real sister. Her face seemed to glow with love, trust and happiness.



Unification means love

More than 70 years of territorial division of the Korean peninsula has ended up with many heterogeneous sentiments between the two sides. Most notable is their cultural difference. Although looking at the exactly same thing, each perceives and expresses it in a very different manner.

Language developed in different ways constitutes another communication barrier to people from the two parts. North Koreans consider South Koreans to be manipulative and lacking sincerity, while South Koreans consider North Koreans to be too straightforward. A close look at such a cultural difference shows that while South Koreans are more focused on caring about others' feelings, North Koreans have developed the habit of prioritizing clarity and straight forwardness in their communication.

The director and the actress have already achieved their own 'small unification.' They argue, "First of all, it's important that you meet the people from the other side. Don't try to judge if you like them or not, but honor their different perspectives. Then you will find yourself standing alongside them. Even if you've been hurt before, don't give up. Try hard to communicate with them."

Director Chu mentioned she would make more movies that could draw our attention to North Korea and unification, anticipating that the Korean peninsula will be a place where peace and happiness prevail at the earliest possible date. Song, an acting major in college, is dreaming of pursuing her career as an actress and become a director in the long run. The real Korean unification may happen if we keep on realizing 'small unification'.

written by Kim Hyeong-soo & Photo by Jo Da-bi

Settlement Story 2nd English Speech Contest's winner, Lee Hyo Eun(Hankyeore High School)

Is it my fault?

In 2008, a 9-year-old girl followed her father and went to another country : Korea. The way to Korea had been longer and bumpier than the girl had expected. She thought that everything would be fine because she could see her mother there. But unlike this young girl's expectation, there were more difficult things that were waiting for her. This girl is actually me. Let me start my story now. After spending 3 months in Laos, I finally arrived in Korea. Contrary to my expectation of staying with my mother, I had to go to the National Intelligence Service (NIS). Life in there was a boring routine and a whole limitation. The workers of the NIS had a different accent to us. I thought "From now on, I should use this accent, since I have to live here." I started practicing a standard Korean accent. I recited by memorizing some scripts from Korean dramas in order to imitate the accent. I sometimes played a role in pretending to be a salesman looking at a jewel's picture in a magazine and practiced. The reason why I practiced so hard was that I hated being laughed at by my school friends.

Then, I finally got to live with my mother, and all I had to do from then on, was going to school. I was more worried about what my Korean friends would think about me. Two months after that, I entered the third grade of Elementary school at the age of 11. On the first day, I introduced myself proudly. But I couldn't say that I was from North Korea and a year older than them. It was because I was ashamed of my background and my past. My accent was completely just like South Korean and no one knew my secret. I had to live as a liar.

One day in Social studies class, there was some activity where we had to draw North Korean flags. Of course, I could draw it perfectly. And I drew it so perfectly that my friend said, jokingly, "Are you North Korean? How can you draw it so well?" I felt sick, like a frog hit by a stone thrown by someone. And I was scared that my friends would find out my secret.

Also, every time we had a questionnaire and that we had to write our date of birth, I was always writing mine secretly in the corner after all my friends did. I couldn't say "I was born in North Korea and I am a year older than you." because I wasn't ready to expect their reaction, nor what would happen after revealing that.

One day, in the fifth grade of elementary school, everyone got to know about my secret. Some kids who got along with me suddenly turned a blind eye on me and change their way to

behave towards me. Some of my friends passed by and asked me, "Are you really from North Korea?" I replied "Yes, I'm from North Korea." and I pretended that I didn't care at all about these ongoing questions. "You can ask me if you have any questions." I even pretended to be strong.

One day, a child made fun of me by saying "You're a North Korean defector!" I was so angry and I asked him to stop. I said to him "Yes, I'm from North Korea, but is that wrong?" And he sarcastically answered "Oh my god, your parents live thanks to the taxes my parents have to pay. Go back to your country!" I know that I have the same human rights as he does, but the fact that I was from North Korea made me shrink. Of course, he apologized to me and it ended well. However the wound to my heart wasn't healed. Their prejudices and their thoughtless words made me cringe. It was nobody's fault, not yours nor mine.

I would like to say two things here. For those who are experiencing the same experience as mine, "It's not your fault. It is not something to feel ashamed of. Be confident. For you, dear audience, I would like to say "Prejudiced opinion makes us distant." Is it my fault? Or, is it your fault? This is no one's fault. This is just the harsh reality of division.

