
Images of War Refugees, Orphans and Women Post-war Korea (1954-1960s) and Australian Social Rehabilitation Campaign

David W. Kim

Australian National University, Australia

The ideological Korean War (1950-1953) between communism (North Korea, Russian, and China) and democracy (South Korea, USA, and UN) destroyed “a quarter of the real wealth of South Korea and killed over 5% of the civilian population.” The influx of refugees was larger as three million people came down from North Korea. Individual life was grim, with most of Koreans living below subsistence. Economic recovery was progressive but slow, under 1% per year GNP in the post-Korean war era. Therefore, the primary policies of the new democratic government were to ensure the survival of its citizens, reconstructing the economic and social infrastructure, rebuilding industrial facilities, and stabilising the prices of goods. People started to at least recover from extreme poverty. During the reconstruction period (1954-1960s), Korea was a land of ideological and religious contrasts. The socio-political debates and the division of state religions were the major issues while the ordinary citizens were still suffering from the sequelae of the Korean War.

Medicine (Ob-gyn)

There were temporary foreign medical institutions in Pusan in the 1950s, such as St. Mary’s Catholic Hospital, the Swedish Red Cross hospital, the German Red Cross hospital, and the Swiss Red Cross hospital. They were officially supported by their own governments as general hospitals for military soldiers. Korean patients were admitted on a limited basis. On the other hand, the Il-Shin Women’s Hospital was established by Australian medical volunteers under the support of the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Union (PWMU). The Australian NGO hospital was not a general medical centre, but it was the first modern hospital for women and children. Another purpose for its establishment was to operate a midwifery training school for local Korean nursing teachers at a postgraduate level. The Severance Refugee Hospital, the first major hospital in Korea, did not even have an obstetrics & gynecology medical capability in that era. Infant care was the key strategy of the Australian hospital for post-war Koreans. Since Korean women culturally preferred to have their babies at home, the home-delivery service was also provided as trained midwives visited people’s houses.

	1954	1956	1959	1961	1963	1964	1965	1967
Out-Patient	11,996	10,213	10,142		8,871		10,000/ T125,222	
In-Patient	2,201	2,082			2,900	T35,000		
Delivered Babies	1,399	1,047	1,286		1,445	1,242	1,337	T25,000
Milk Staion	81	700	712		767		641	700
Doctor	4	6	4	7	8			
Nurse	9	16	23	21	23			
Postgraduate Sts.	18	24	31	33	26	26	T482	
Nursing Assistant			7	13	17			
Operation						402	312	

Table 1: Record of Il-Shin Women's Hospital in 1954-60s

The Il-Shin Hospital, under the supervision of Dr Helen Mackenzie and Sister Catharine Mackenzie, was always busy with out-patient and in-patient mothers and babies. It was the only hospital in Pusan where free treatment was provided. The number of the out-patients was more than 10,000 people each year as they treated over 100 people per day through the years. Its 10,000th baby was born on 31st October, 1961. By 1965, the medical workers had examined 125,222 different out-patients. There were over 2,000 in-patients each year. The number of in-patients reached approximately 35,000 people in 1964. Meanwhile, the Australian hospital delivered a yearly average of 1,200 babies. By 1967, the total number of delivery babies became 25,000:

Many times a very small baby has to be taken out because an even smaller baby has been born. One little baby weighed just 1 lb. 13 oz when she was born, but dropped to 1 lb. 1 oz... Her mother left the hospital... but [with] wonderful nursing and an incubator which was her home for three months, she did not die but slowly became a healthy person.

The voluntary activities in ob-gyn care and the training of local medical professionals were unique, for none of military or foreign hospitals in Korea was able to perform with such dedication for the local people at that time. The women's hospital still exist in the same place of Pusan and has been carried on the Australian legacy in the twenty-first century.

Minority-welfare

The Australian volunteers, with a Korean Committee, established a charitable organisation, called the 'House of Hope,' for which they had made representation to the United Nations Korea Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA) and secured a grant of US\$3,000. A beautiful large Korean house became home for women coming out of prison and starting a new life. Post-war Korean

society did not give opportunities to those people, even though many of them had certain skills and life experiences. The 'House of Hope' helped connect them with factory owners under concept of rehabilitation.

Hannah Yang, in association with Rita Stuart, cared for orphan girls and mentally ill women. The place where the girls lived was called the 'House of Sisters.' There were ninety- five girls. Mrs. Yang tried to give them practical skills that would enable them to become self- supporting individuals. She also had a house for 200 mentally ill women. There was no specific form of treatment except for receiving biweekly visits from a doctor and very simple shock therapy. The voluntary mental services were eventually acknowledged by the Korean government for caring such a marginal people of the society in 1968. The morning Coffee Party organised by Miss J. Rooks in Australia contributed \$400 for Mrs. Yang's work, which was used for building the Mental Home (a dormitory). As a result, some women were well enough to leave the Home and be rehabilitated: "... A great deal of thanks for the contribution of \$400 to be used for the sick women here... I again thank God who clothes the roses in the wilderness and feels the birds in the air."

Consultancy for Religious Rehabilitation

The long-term seizure of power by Syngman Rhee caused social hostility in the second half of the 1950s. When the Korean government was going through a political transition from 19th April, 1960, the Korean Church (Presbyterian) was also divided into three groups by different theological ideologies on the historical issue of Japanese shrine worship. As the revolutionary government was not happy with the state religion (Christianity), Buddhists fought among themselves over property rights. Confucians mocked their professional masters by engaging in petty strife over the proper execution of ritual. Yet the Australian voluntary work was still carried out under such unsteady democratisation.

As the Korean War ended and the religious groups of Kyeongsang province needed help to re-establish their organisation, Miss Elizabeth W. Dunn and Miss Rene Watkins moved to Masan, Korea's second sea-port (80,000 people) from Pusan. The Australian NGO group invested £1,000 to rehabilitate the Masan property. Miss A. A. McNabb reached out to the female groups and churches in Tongyung and Kosung regions. Koje refugee schools and 32 churches were also under their concern: "the second trip to Koje Island was made at the invitation of Rev. Sin Yong Gun (who was the overnigher for 28 (Presbyterian) churches)... We finished up this trip at Hachung, where again there are two churches." Island evangelism was one of the methods through which McNabb and her team approached the island people. The use of a boat was effective for the people of Chil Jon Island, Sarang Island, Yokji Island, and Namhae Island of Kyeong Nam Province. Des Neil visited the islands of the south coast, where the people were not happy with the public health, social services, or the education. The need of a local church was another issue for the island people.

Bible clubs sprung up in many places. These helped families who could not afford public school

fees. Thousands of children were taught the rudiments of education through these twenty-two bible clubs. The teaching duty was helped by the commitment of local teenagers who had previously finished their middle and high school. According to *Prayer for Korea*, the bible club teachers aimed to provide a primary education to the children in the poorer country districts. Additionally, the bible study group for female prisoners was one of the major concerns the Masan branch workers of the Australian NGO organisation focused on. There were a few local women for short periods, but the major group was for political prisoners. Among them most were victims of the Korean War. Miss Dunn was even invited by the Governor and chaplain to visit some of them who had to be relocated to Seoul. Bible study was extensively offered by Bene McNabb in the Koje Island, where there were fourteen women in 1959 and forty-six in 1960. Likewise, a bible correspondence course offered an opportunity for the country people.

Religious Higher Education

Professional religious education was launched just after the end of the Korean War. G. Anderson once mentioned the need for training for local religious leadership, that for the normal life of the Church, “we need efficient and devoted ministers, efficient and devoted Bible women (female evangelists), efficient and devoted ordinary members of the congregations.” For these purposes, the Higher Bible Institute, which was financially supported from New Zealand, began to train young men and women, including Bible women, Korean missionaries, and ministers in Pusan. While John Brown taught Hebrew Exegesis in the Seoul Seminary, Dorothy Watson taught Worship and Theology and helped the poor students in various ways by providing food and money for school fees.

Alan Stuart, as principal, served ninety students at the Pusan Theological Seminary and Bible school in 1966. The Australian NGO group contributed \$1,600 per year. Yet the condition of the seminary was not that great, as it had only one small room that served as a general office, staff room and principal’s office. The library was inadequate to contain the students. They needed one more lecturer room as well as two more full-time lecturers. These issues described the practical circumstance the volunteers had to face every day.

Regional Community Development

The Australian volunteers launched a milk station where about 30 children daily received a drink of milk. It improved the health condition of the children because they used to struggle with amblyopia and many sores. Warm clothes and vitamin tablets were also offered for individual cases. In 1965, 700 sets of children’s clothing were given away at a milk station party. There were over 200 T.B. (Tubercle Bacillus) patients, including 80 children, in Masan. Among them, the female patients at a T.B. sanatorium of the Korean government received knitting needles and wool, while the male patients were provided a bar of soap. The provision of 15 small hand looms as well as fancy-work cottons and

needles encouraged the T.B. patients and their families to be independent in society.

The local Korean government awarded the efforts of the Australian volunteers with fifty bags of bran. As rural projects, the Australian NGO organisation, under the help of the Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union (PWMU), also focused on farming potatoes and beans as seeds for the next season. With the Christian community of the Hui Mang village and Moo Kokni, the Australian volunteers supported a poultry farm project. Raising pigs was another community project in the region of Masoowon. The projects in raising cows, bees, and chickens were also adopted for local communities. The self-support embroidery project was one of the successful projects to help young girls, including Miss Il Sun Yu: "the embroidery project had been the only livelihood for herself and her four younger sisters and brothers for more than four years, since the time their mother [had] died in childbirth." Mrs. Brown, with Wendy Lee, supported twenty-four women in similar difficult circumstances by the embroidery project. The baby articles, table linens, bedspreads, aprons, and many other items were sent to the branches of the PWMU in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia for sale. The profit from those products supported the women's families through their own efforts: "there is a large stock of Korea craft work on hand at present... Remember that Korean widows are dependent on our help to sell their handiwork." Norma Brown also helped the local people by such ways as buying milking goats for village families, buying a sewing machine for a needy woman, buying food and clothing for a desperate family, and schooling an intelligent child.

The Hazeldine Family and Chinju

Jim and Beth Hazeldine who arrived in Chinju, were the only residential foreigners in the region of Korea in 1960. It was the beginning of the third branch of the Australian NGO group in Korea. Beth Hazeldine operated an antenatal clinic. The Geelong Boys College of Victoria, Australia contributed a donation of £1,000 to Chinju to build a dormitory for 30 people and a lecture room for a Bible school and conferences. The Presbyterian Bible school had seven sleeping rooms, a kitchen, and a central-eating room. The building was of concrete-block construction with a galvanised iron roof. Thirty percent of the total cost was raised by the regional Korean church association even though the nation was in the grips of such an economic depression.

As there was \$378 contribution from Australia for the purpose of a bookshop, the Ki Mum Christian bookstall was opened in the city of Chinju in 1967. It became the agent for the Korean Bible Society (KBS) and Christian Literature Society (CLS) in the western Kyungnam part of Korea. The work of Jim Hazeldine, who used to supply Bibles and hymnbooks to local churches and Christians from 1962, was transferred to the first Chinju Christian bookshop. The location of the bookshop was in central, and the glass doors enabled many passers-by to look in for a 'kukyung (glime).' Ki Mum served as an ecumenical venture. The good large Bible pictures were popular among the local readers.

Relief from Natural Disasters

As the geographical landscape of Kyeongsang province was located at the mouth of the Nakdong River, the area was one of the major regions where people annually faced severe natural disasters from cold, flood, and drought. There were many narratives where the foreign NGO group involved. For example, one large bag of rice was provided to an old people's home in Masan where 40 homeless old folks dwelled in the freezing cold winter of 1956. A donation feeding 300 patients was offered to the Masan T.B. Sanatorium. A gift of money was given for over 200 T.B. patients of the Masan regional prison. Gifts were also provided to orphanages that were under the care of the Australian NGO organisation.

Typhoons in the summer of 1957 caused flooding in Korea. "The intensity of these was later evident when we saw where an army building on the coast was lifted completely over other buildings and deposited in a creek 50 yard away." Another typhoon was in 1960. Many people in Masan escaped from their houses to hillsides. The rice fields were damaged. The continuous rain throughout the springtime of 1963 impacted 80-85% of the barley crop, causing it to fail. Since barley was the staple food of the poorer people, it was serious news, as 20,000 people desperately struggled. The summer of 1965 had heavy rains, hills subsiding, and people drowning in the swollen rivers. Overflowing levee banks destroyed thousands of houses. The figures on 27th July of the year showed 224 dead, 94 missing, 214 injured and about 300,000 homeless. The lack of a multipurpose dam and water control system produced various casualties and property loss.

Industrial Training

President Chung Hee Park launched the first five-year economic development plans between 1962 and 1966. The nation then began to move from agriculture to industrialisation. As the local industries and factories were developed, there was the need to support factory workers: "many people were flocking to the cities in the hope of finding employment in the factories." Korea in that era generally produced good textiles, radios and electrical goods, seafood products, and tools and equipment for local use. Ulsan as well as Seoul, and Chinju, were the regional cities where there were many factories producing diesel engines, matches, paper, cloth, fishing nets, agricultural chemicals, and textiles. Pusan had many factories as well as extensive port facilities, rattling trams, and cobblestone streets. However, the launch of 'industrial volunteerism' began from the second half of the 1960s.

For Handicapped Young People

In the early 1960s Ulsan was a fruit and vine growing district. When the Korean government decided that the city should be the centre for a new industrial complex, five major factories emerged

and were soon in operation. These included oil refineries, sugar refineries, textile factories, and engineering works. Barry Rowe moved to the industrial city for young people in the region of the old refinery in 1968. As the first foreigner in the whole city, Barry worked among local people who were physically handicapped and who were completely new in the industrial city. Dick Wootton had been working in Seoul amongst ordinary people, because they struggled with poor working conditions, long hours, no protection against accidents, and poor pay. Barry, like Mr. Wootton, was concerned about the health lives of workers by improving their standards of living.

Such social work challenged local authorities including the Ulsan city mayor. He therefore set up a fund-raising committee. The result was successful in raising \$1,200 for the occupational school. It was the financial seed by which they were able to set up a completely self-supporting scheme for handicapped people. The so called 'Yanggi' vocational centre was able to train twenty to thirty-five crippled students at a time in the skills of TV and radio repair: "I'd like to tell you about Chong Jin... a young man of twenty-year-old. He was lucky, only lost both legs. There was nothing below his buttocks. He walks on wooden clogs. When he came to us, he was loved... He is now doing well at radio work." Such a method of approaching local people who needed help was encouraged by the Ulsan representative of the Australian NGO group. Among other Australian workers, Dorothy Watson, while teaching in traditional ways, had herself enrolled as a student in a women's university in the hope that she could have a connection with students to understand their lives in counselling. Des Neil also had a plan for working amongst offshore island people, who had been ignored by the greater community.

For Prostitutes

The 'House of Grace,' near the Seoul Station, where many girls daily arrived from the country for work or a better job, protected fifteen young girls at a time from the hands of procurers. Each girl lived a year together, receiving counselling, a basic education, and Christian and vocational training. Mrs Betty Wootton, as a registered nurse, taught home nursing, childcare and hygiene. For six months, the girls studied in the home under the close supervision of a housemother and a social worker. They learned reading, writing Chinese characters, cooking, gardening, housework, music, sewing, embroidery, art, family planning, etiquette, and the Bible. After six months, they enrolled in a government licensed school of their choice where they learnt a trade, whether tailoring, dressmaking, barbering, or beauty shop. The 'House of Hope' was the second project where teen girls stayed for a month until they are either returned to their families or placed in legitimate jobs. By the time 1966, a hundred and twenty girls completed their course at the 'House of Grace' and five hundred girls have been helped by the 'House of Hope.'

The 'House of Faith' was opened at Camp Kaiser (a U.S. Army camp). It was located near the village of Ulsani, which has a population of 18,000, with 1,000 registered prostitutes. Any prostitute who wished to leave her job was guided to the 'House of Faith' where she could study

and work for two months in children's welfare programmes. Afterward, she would be transferred to Seoul for the training courses she needed to get a job. Richard Wootton, with these girls, ran a gift shop, selling the girls' handwork, cosmetics, soap, scarves, lingerie, baby clothes, blouses, and used magazines at Severance Hospital to support the financial burden of the three programs. The Korean government's Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, who used to predict impossibility of such Australian rehabilitation campaign, began to contribute to the social welfare of these rehabilitated girls. The local government started vocational programs for former prostitute girls to whom the Betty Wootton team was invited to send social workers trained in the three Houses. Among the first thousand girls, 85.5% were living new lives. Of these, 482 were working in various occupations, 32 were married, and 341 had returned home.

Sheep Farming Project

Campbell Lamb was involved in a sheep farm project that the Australian and Korean governments developed corporately in the Taejon area. As the Morwell Community Aid group from Melbourne had provided seed for pasture development, pasture has been sown, mainly cocksfoot, white clover and rye grass. Water was received from a spring. A 10,000-gallon concrete tank was syphoned to the paddocks on the farm. Campbell and his family worked with local people to pass on their pastoral skills. He also wrote a handbook on sheep raising suitable for Korean environment. It was published in English and Korean to guide those who were working with sheep. The Christian service centre used the book as a textbook for its students. By early 1970, Australian sheeps were doing well and had settled into the new country. They were able to cope with the different climate conditions. Campbell and his Australian team had ten paddocks fenced at a time, when fencing was quite new in Korea. Mr. Jong and other Koreans were able to shear the sheep as well as obtain basic knowledge for wool preparation. The corporate team had a little less than ten acres of usable land. Such work in the livestock industry was the initial project for Koreans to have a new farming culture raising stock.

Conclusion

The post-war period in Korea (1954-1960s) was not the best or right time for the local government to care for the socio-economic development of the peninsula. Rather, political and ideological confusion and conflict caused the nation to go through a transitional process of democratisation. Meantime, the lack of industrial infrastructure development allowed for various natural disasters due to which the citizens experienced all sorts of hardship. International aid was one of the major sources to relieve the practical burdens of the local people. However, while international governments' agents withdrew support after the Korean War, the Australian Presbyterian NGO group (one group with many branches in Korea) maintained their voluntary

works in social rehabilitation. The activities were mainly focused on the quality of life for less fortunate citizens, in particular in the regions of Pusan and of Kyeongsang province, where the majority of refugees permanently dwelled after the Korean War.

The medical offering of ob-gyn care was a groundbreaking project for Korean society, since there were no certain public services for obstetrics and gynaecology. The training of professional midwifery nurses at Il-Shin Pusan women's hospital also contributed to the development of the Korean nursing profession. Female prisoners, the children of soldiers and of lepers, orphan girls, and mentally deranged women received benefits. Local religious organisations, including churches and colleges, were able to be consulted and re-established based on the generous donations from Australian. Regional communities in Masan were given opportunities to learn agricultural business skills, and with financial support, to begin micro- businesses for their families. The Hazeldine family, with Dorothy Knight, was interested in the social enlightenment of Chinju society through literature campaign and public health activity. Support in response to natural disasters was immediate reaction, while industrial and sheep ranching training were provided to handicapped young people (Ulsan), prostitutes (Seoul), and stock farmers (Taejon). Such projects of social rehabilitation were not the major national issues of the Korean government in the era, but they were the grassroots issues that were directly connected to the lives of marginalised people.