

**Institution: UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

**Unit of Assessment: 28 MODERN LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS**

**Title of case study: International Aid: Effecting Change in a Variety of Agencies' Views and Practices in Relation to Non-traditional Aid Providers**

### **1. Summary of the impact**

Kim's research on Japan and South Korea (hereafter Korea) as non-traditional aid providers has been instrumental in addressing the Western bias within traditional aid conventions and in promoting a better understanding of the distinctive perspectives and practices of development assistance by non-traditional donor organisations. Her publications and related outreach activities have helped to re-contextualise the international aid debate in Korea, and, to a lesser extent, Japan, by highlighting the significance of issues of ethics, of climate assistance, and international aid architecture for key agencies. The impact of this has been recognised in the policy documents and activities of key Korean and Japanese institutions such as aid agencies and civil society organisations, including think tanks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In turn, it has also informed the practice of aid workers on the ground by increasing their awareness of current issues on a global scale.

### **2. Underpinning research**

Since taking up her post as Lecturer in Japanese Studies in Leeds in 2009, Kim has undertaken research on emerging aid providers, focusing primarily on Korea as a non-traditional aid provider compared with members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the traditional donors' club. This research builds on her doctoral research on aid provision in Japan; Japan's experience with the DAC since the 1960s provides comparable critical insights into the current 'friction' caused, to a large extent, by non-traditional emerging donors within the global aid architecture [output 5].

As well as identifying distinguishing features of non-traditional aid providers, Kim has undertaken research into a variety of issues that are central to aid providers, such as climate change and sustainability and their social and environmental impact [5]. This research engages critically with current debates on emerging donors (both in policy and academic circles), and challenges the Western-centric body of knowledge on international aid 'conventions'. Kim's work explores the vexed question of the relationship between the DAC and non-traditional donors [1] and more specifically the relationships which the DAC was seeking to build at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held at Busan, Korea in 2011 (Busan HLF4) and beyond; it examines the under-studied issue of Korean aid in the context of mainstream aid-ethics debates [2&3].

Empirical analysis and data including participatory observation at the Busan HLF4 and the Busan Global Civil Society Forum in late 2011, through the case study of Korea, were important in countering the reductionist readings of emerging donors that were using the established normative framework as a reference point; the research emphasises the significance of the donor's own historical and institutional contexts in understanding its case

for aid activities and provision. In particular, output [4] analysed differentiated notions of 'value for money' and 'results' by emerging donors.

### 3. References to the research

- [1]. Soyeun Kim and Simon Lightfoot, 'Does DAC-ability matter? The emergence of non-DAC Donors', *Journal of International Development*, 23.5 (2011), 711-21. Available on request.
- [2]. Soyeun Kim. 'Bridging Two Worlds? An Analysis of the Ethical Case for South Korean Aid', *Journal of International Development* (Special Issue: DSA 2010: Development Paths: Values, Ethics and Morality), 23.6 (2011), 802-22. Listed in REF 2
- [3]. Soyeun Kim. 'Why do we need to discuss the ethical case for aid now?' (in Korean), *ODA Watch Newsletter*, Vol. 56. 1 August 2011). Available: <http://www.odawatch.net/11219> Accessed 17 October 2013
- [4]. Soyeun Kim. 'The Busan discourse on results, effectiveness, impact, and value for money: what do they mean for emerging donors?' *NORRAG Newsletter* 47(2012), 45-47. Available on request.
- [5]. Soyeun Kim, 'Japan's common but differentiated approach to sustainable development and climate change in Africa', *Japanese Studies*, 32.2 (2012), 255-74. Listed in REF 2

#### Indicators of research excellence:

Outputs [1], [2] and [5] were published in leading, scholarly, peer-reviewed journals.

### 4. Details of the impact

The research has influenced policy and practice within civil society organisations at the national and international levels, as well as individual aid workers. The impact has been achieved not only through research publications and Kim's participation in important international fora (as outlined in section 2), but also through the dissemination of this work in journals aimed at a more general readership (in both Korean and English), and through her active involvement as a policy advisor and a senior research fellow, as outlined below.

#### i. Changing Organisational Policy and Planning

As a result of Kim's research on assessing Japan's climate financing in Africa [output 5], ReDI invited her to work as an independent consultant on the evaluation of the East Asia Climate Partnership programme (EACP). This evaluation study of a US\$200,000,000 climate change financing project commissioned by the KOICA (Korean Grant Aid Agency) included critical feedback and suggested amendments to the policy and practice of KOICA's climate change financing. This subsequently resulted in proposals to establish a policy agenda for KOICA's climate financing and the creation of an evaluation framework for EACP and new evaluation guidelines for KOICA's future multilateral climate funds. Kim has worked with a group of researchers from ReDI, who have commented on the significance of Kim's research for proposal design as well as the ways in which her findings gave substance to policy and programmes: 'In Korea, there are very few people who (...) critically engage the issues of

environment, climate change and ODA architecture. (...) Soyeun has not only informed us about the internationally debated issues including changes in debates, various standard/norm settings, but also has offered directions on how to contextualise and understand those issues structurally at policy level. (...) She has (...) enabled us to balance between a rather technical nature of project evaluation (consultancy) and a more theoretically oriented academic research through her research (analysis and review) on evaluation frameworks developed and used by international climate change initiatives, and turning those findings into designing of an evaluation framework that is specific and suitable for the EACP. [A]

The Head of Evaluation & Consulting Office at ReDI further identifies as important impacts Kim's contribution to the development of EACP's strategy for future evaluation of multilateral projects through identifying in her research the 'need to reduce admin burden on the multilateral organisation by working with their monitoring and evaluation cycle (...) need to focus on a broad development result rather than individual outputs' and for 'the importance of follow-up research on the possible changes in Korea's Green ODA and EACP climate finance' [A]

## ii. Influencing Public Bodies

Kim's research outputs [1 & 2] have been circulated widely to both think-tanks and aid-agencies, where they have shaped thinking around emerging donors within the mainstream aid architecture debates. For example output [1] was cited in a special issue of the Japanese aid agency JICA's internal policy briefing reports in 2011, which formed part of the materials used to prepare JICA officials for negotiations on agreeing new aid-effectiveness indicators during the 2011 High Level Forum 4 in Busan, South Korea: 'Her work has provided an analytical [reference point] to evaluate the emerging donors – which is extremely useful in comprehensive understanding (and reviewing) of the various arguments and debates on emerging donors, via her conceptualisation of DAC-ability. In doing so, the nature of emerging donor issues/debates became clear which then has assisted JICA staff build their arguments (and also test the feasibility of those arguments) in preparation for Busan'. [B].

As a policy advisor to ODA Watch, the only Korean NGO dedicated to aid monitoring, and as Senior Research Fellow for the ReDI, which aims to promote global development beyond bilateralism and donor-centred practices, Kim's research and consultancy has been used by both of these organisations to inform their thinking and practices especially in relation to aid-ethics and environmental sustainability in aid practice. Her outreach activities based on her research have led to changes in their policies and practices: 'The field of aid ethics is not popular in Korea, thus her expertise on this issue contributed to raise this in this society by ODA Watch'. 'Her presentation on development ethics in 2010 at ODA Watch policy forum and her column in 2011 in OWL (ODA Watch Newsletter) [led to ODA Watch deciding this issue would be] included in major advocacy items in 2012.' [C]

Based on her suggestions, ODA Watch have recognised the importance of ethics, principles and philosophy of aid ethics which 'is not familiar to Korean international development society.' [C] By raising awareness of the fundamental consideration of ethics and morality in aid provision, Kim's research enables ODA Watch to present arguments based on 'quality of aid' in their campaigning on aid accountability and transparency, to counter the currently dominant 'quantity of aid' trend within Korea that is fixated on increasing scale and volumes of aid provision. [C]. Kim runs free lectures and seminars on behalf of ReDI based on the issues and themes addressed in her research, thereby building and strengthening the analytical capacity of young researchers. [A]

## iii. Enhancing the Understanding and Practice of Aid Workers

The wide distribution of Kim's research through regular contributions to the ODA Watch newsletter (OWL) [3] drawing on her research, has helped the organisation to achieve

increased understanding and exposure of the issue of aid ethics for their core readership of c.5000 subscribers, [C] 'her paper and professional advice contributed to ODA watch, raised the aid ethics as a significant issue in Korea (...) her ideas on aid ethics definitely contributed to ODA watch's advocacy work' [C] feedback on the newsletter article [output 3] has shown that the research has given individual Korean aid workers a deeper understanding of these issues, which subsequently informs their practice. One worker, a Team Leader for Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs at World Vision Korea, wrote that Kim's article had influenced his perspective on his work leading him to become 'increasingly interested in ethical issues in aid (...) and [give] serious consideration for ethics in international development.' As a result he states that he has now integrated these ideas into his frontline work 'for my job, I often give lectures - and I have shared my ideas and thoughts on ethical consideration with my audience. That is why I sincerely hope your article would create positive repercussion in the Korean society'. [D].

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] email testimony, Head of Evaluation & Consulting Office/Programme Specialist, Re-shaping Development Institute (ReDI) 2 October 2013

[B] Email testimony, Research Associate, Japan International Cooperation Research Institute 8 October 2013

[C] email testimony, Secretary General, ODA Watch 6 October 2013

[D] email testimony, Team Leader IHEA (Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs), World Vision Korea, Operations Manager, Asia Pacific Regional Disaster Management Team. Tuesday, 2 August 2011.