

# Annual Report 2020

조선  
교류 | CHOSON  
EXCHANGE



## Executive Summary

We entered 2020 with a slate of detailed programs planned across all parts of the year that aimed to lay the groundwork for our long-term initiatives. Shortly after the COVID-19 outbreak began DPR Korea became the first country to close its borders and we were confronted with immediate and severe disruptions to our programs and funding. As the pandemic worsened, we realized that this border lockdown would likely outlast the year and that we had to adapt.

In response to this situation, we managed to conduct a historic and successful pivot to launch two new online education formats with DPR Koreans. This allowed us not only to continue our education efforts, but also to build new communities.

It is often said that necessity is the mother of invention; this challenging situation has led us to innovate our teaching methods and we see blended education involving both online and offline elements to be core components of our work even post-COVID-19. Our in-person programs did not stop completely, however; we also continued an overseas scholarship program, albeit in a more limited and COVID-19 compliant manner.

This year we realized a longstanding goal by beginning a five-year training initiative focused on Kangwon province in the north, with the aim of bringing a mindset of international cooperation to the region. Whilst travel restrictions meant that detailed planned activities inside the country could not take place, our volunteers completed a research project mapping out developments in the region. We plan to use the outcomes of this research to guide our future training programs.

The team also launched a microsite ([www.kangwonkorea.com](http://www.kangwonkorea.com)) at a panel with Governor Choi Moon-soon of Gangwon province in South Korea at this year's Jeju Peace Forum on a joint panel with the World Economic Forum. During the transition in the US administration, our team has also been more active sharing our experience working with DPR Korea at international forums, with the hope of building greater understanding between the US and DPR Korea as we head into 2021 and 2022.

While we expect 2021 to continue to be another challenging year, we are confident in our team's abilities to innovate and continue building bridges between DPR Korea and the rest of the world. We hope that there will be a broader re-evaluation of past efforts towards negotiations with Korea, and that lessons will be drawn from recent experiences to pave the way for more productive engagement in the years ahead.



Geoffrey See, Founder

# Our Values

Whilst we have had to adapt our methods of project implementation to the present challenging circumstances, our core organizational principles remain unchanged, namely-

## Encouraging Innovation

- Enable better lives for DPR Koreans by encouraging economic experimentation and driving innovation through facilitation of two-way knowledge exchange

## Building Understanding

- Build understanding of DPR Korea; sharing experiential knowledge to demystify and inform

## DPR Korea as a Global Citizen

- Encourage DPR Korea's integration into the world as a responsible global citizen

## Maintaining Operational Expertise

- Maintain our position as the leading implementation experts of innovative ideas through operational expertise in DPR Korea by maintaining strong networks inside and outside the country

## Working to a Sustainable Operating Model

- Ensure our work is sustainable through a streamlined and efficient operating model



## 2020 in Numbers

**2680**

Cumulative Program Participants  
Since 2010

**37\***

2020 Program Participants

\*Includes overseas programs and online program participants. Estimated number including secondary audiences.

Numbers published annually at <https://www.chosonexchange.org/about>

# Programs

## Project Changers

This year we expanded our programs to the DPR Korean community living overseas, particularly students who will return home eventually and play a role in shaping the business and economic environment in their country.

Setting up this program was not without its challenges. For a successful run, we needed high quality content delivered by noted academic staff, and we needed to recruit DPR Korean participants abroad who are typically hesitant to be first movers on such schemes. We also needed to deliver the program remotely and securely across multiple time zones.

We partnered with the EU Business School in Geneva, Switzerland to develop the course content. Working with them we compiled a six-week syllabus covering a range of contemporary trends in the world of digital economy. Topics included digital business models, customer relationship management, organizational change, and management styles.

We also ensured content and participants were compliant with existing United Nations Security Council sanctions.



Students received certificates of attendance from the EU Business School at successful conclusion of the course, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

We were ably assisted in this program by interns from the Tuck School of Business, Dartford, NH, whose work was invaluable and gratefully received. We also thank our content partners at the EU Business School.

In addition to this program, we are also working on a separate virtual training of trainers platform that we hope to launch in early 2021.

In partnership with



The program was hosted in real time using Adobe Connect remote teaching software with lecturers in Geneva.

The course content (course materials plus lecture recordings) was further shared with a secondary audience. We anticipate this content reaching over 30 students.



## Programs

### Kangwon Development Initiative

This year we completed a preliminary economic mapping of Kangwon Province. At the state-level, resources have been poured into building up the tourism sector in this area through key projects such as the Wonsan-Kalma Tourism Zone. These projects have been touted as the catalyst for economic development on North Korea's east coast.

Since 2013, we have conducted several training programs in Wonsan and led study visits to encourage small and medium-size enterprises in this region. Given the region's importance, we restarted a multi-year education initiative to lay the groundwork for continued engagement in Kangwon province.

The project consisted of analysing existing economic activities in Kangwon province, developing ideas for the region and building a microsite ([www.kangwonkorea.com](http://www.kangwonkorea.com)) to track future developments and for international outreach. We were assisted in this research by interns from Tuck School of Business and Yale-NUS College.

Complementing the microsite, we presented our research and economic mapping at the Jeju Peace Forum alongside South Korea's Gangwon province governor Choi Moon-soon and citizens of Gangwon province. Our session was co-organized with the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on the Korean Peninsula.

We also published an op-ed for the World Economic Forum on the importance of Kangwon province as a potential site to restart inter-Korea and US-North Korea relations.



### Overseas Programs

In 2020, we managed to conduct 1 overseas programs. We are proud to be able to complete this program despite the disruptions from COVID-19 to in-person programs.

# Outreach

## Yale University

July

Presented a session to over 600 students online on the Impact Panel of Yale Young Global Scholars. The goal was to inspire them to start having a social impact early.

## World Economic Forum

October

Member of Global Future Council on the Korean Peninsula  
Chaired by Angela Kane (former UN Under Secretary) and Moon Chung-in (Special Advisor to the South Korean President)

## The New Southern Policy

October

Contributed a chapter to this 2020 publication from the Malaysian Institute of Strategic and International Studies

## Harvard Business School

November

Presented our work to two classes of MBA students in the form of a case study and Q&A session

## Jeju Peace Forum

November

Joint panel with Gangwon governor Choi Moon-soon and the World Economic Forum.  
Discussed the future of inter-Korean and international cooperation, and launched our Kangwon microsite documenting our work in North Korea on the East Coast ([www.kangwonkorea.com](http://www.kangwonkorea.com))

## US National Committee on North Korea

November

Presented a virtual roundtable on our work promoting entrepreneurship in North Korea, covering principles for effective engagement with DPR Koreans at a grassroots level.

## Stanford/ INSS

December

Spoke at an event organized by the Stanford Center for International Security and Cooperation and the Institute for National Security and Strategy (South Korea) on humanitarian engagement with North Korea.

## University of Vienna

December

Online lecture on practical experiences of working in North Korea

In line with our goal of building operational expertise and understanding of North Korea, we continue to share our experience internationally.

In addition to the highlights listed, we engaged in a wide range of other outreach activities throughout the year, including-

- Presentation to the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs (extending to the Asia NZ Foundation and North Asia Centre for Asia Pacific Excellence)
- Speaking on our Kangwon development initiative at the NEASCN (Northeast Asia Smart Cities Network) Online Workshop
- Participation in 2020 online Campus Party conference
- Participation in the 2020 IUE International Emerging Leaders Fellowship online conference
- Interviews on three separate podcasts and regular website blogs

2020 also saw the publication of our former colleague and co-founder Andray Abrahamian's 'Being in North Korea' (<https://www.amazon.com/Being-North-Korea-Andray-Abrahamian/dp/1931368562>), a memoir of his time working with Choson Exchange.

## Looking Ahead

In 2021, we will continue developing online programs with North Korea. We continue to innovate in this area by experimenting with different online and virtual training formats to reach different communities of North Koreans.

We believe in the importance of these education platforms as we aim to deliver blended programs involving both offline and virtual components when travel resumes.

We also aim to experiment with content for these programs to make them more relevant for our audience.

In addition to our programs, we continue to share expertise to support efforts that would lay a stronger foundation for dialogue with North Korea.

We hope 2021 brings progress in building a sustainable relationship between North Korea and the US, South Korea and the world.

