### Conflict Factsheet

**North Korea's Famine Refugees**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of conflict</th>
<th>Intensity</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Locality</th>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Asia</td>
<td>1990 – ongoing</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N. Korea, China</td>
<td>Agricultural / Pastoral Land</td>
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#### Conflict Summary

Famine in North Korea has caused refugees to migrate to China. This has been a point of contention between China and North Korea, and other international parties, such as the United Nations.
Conceptual Model

**Climate Change**

- Social and Economic Drivers

**Environmental Change**

- Extreme Weather Event

**Intermediary Mechanisms**

- Livelihood Insecurity

**Fragility and Conflict Risks**

- Interstate Tensions
- Displacements / Migration

Context Factors

- Eroded Social Contract
- Unresponsive Government

Agricultural / Pastoral Land
Resolution Efforts

No conflict resolution process.

Case Study

As a result of famine and human rights abuses perpetuated by the North Korean government, Korean asylum seekers have sought refuge in China. The question of China’s international obligations to North Korean asylum seekers and the pressure placed on China by North Korea to repatriate them has created diplomatic tensions.

In 2007, it was estimated that 30,000 to 50,000 North Korean asylum seekers fleeing famine caused by drought and subsequent floods, along with human rights abuses, lived in China (Bruno et al., 2007). It is illegal for North Korean’s to leave the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) without permission from the government. The Chinese government views North Korean border crossers as illegal migrants and they are exempt from seeking asylum (Congressional Executive Commission of China, 2014). Although China avoids direct confrontation with North Korea, the illegal status of North Koreans in China has been a point of tension and has led to the increased militarisation of the border in China in order to stop border crossings. In 1997, China allowed a North Korean defected politician to flee to South Korea, channelling harsh criticism from North Korea (Dhawan, 2013). South Korea has also criticised China’s compliance with the DPRK’s abuse of asylum seekers, also creating hostilities between these two states.

Following the 2014 UN report on human rights abuses in North Korea, China was found to be complicit in assisting human rights abuses towards refugees and negligent in fulfilling international obligations to refugees. China rejected these allegations and continues to comply with DPRK demands to repatriate North Korean citizens.

Future climate change impacts are predicted to further disrupt North Korea’s agricultural sector and food security by way of decreasing crop yields, changing precipitation cycles, and increasing incidences of extreme weather events. Given that North Korea has suffered from a decade of famine and economic isolation, and relies on a crumbling infrastructure, the country is not well equipped to adapt to climate hazards. The vulnerability of the country’s agricultural sector, coupled with its weakened institutions and political economy may threaten the stability of the totalitarian regime (Habib, 2009).
### Intensities & Influences

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<th>4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTENSITIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>International / Geopolitical Intensity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Suffering</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INFLUENCES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Influences</td>
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<td>Societal Influences</td>
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#### Diplomatic Crisis
- Note of diplomatic crisis in case history, conflict purely verbal

#### Violent Conflict
- No

#### Mass displacement
- None

#### Cross Border Mass Displacement
- Less than 100,000 and less than 10% of the population are displaced across borders.

### Resolution Success

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<tr>
<td><strong>Resolve of displacement problems</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Displacement continues to cause discontent and/or other problems.</td>
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#### Reduction in geographical scope
- There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

#### Increased capacity to address grievance in the future
- There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

#### Grievance Resolution
- Grievances have been mostly ignored.

#### Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity
- There has been no reduction in intensity

### Resources and Materials

References with URL

Further information