

Humanitarian Aid in Authoritarian Contexts

The Case of North Korea

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International Norms

- Humanitarian Imperative
 - Humankind shall be treated humanely in all circumstances by saving lives and alleviating suffering, while ensuring respect for the individual.
 - The right to receive and to give humanitarian assistance. It states the obligation of the international community to provide humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed.
- Responsibility to Protect: limited sovereignty of the state
 - <http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>
 - A state has a responsibility to protect its population from mass atrocities;
 - The international community has a responsibility to assist the state to fulfill its primary responsibility;
 - If the state fails to protect its citizens from mass atrocities and peaceful measures have failed, the international community has the responsibility to intervene through coercive measures such as economic sanctions. Military intervention is considered the last resort.

RTP & North Korea

- (Geneva, March 21, 2013) – The United Nations Human Rights Council took a landmark step by establishing a commission of inquiry for North Korea, Human Rights Watch said today. The commission will investigate crimes against humanity and other serious human rights abuses in North Korea, and make recommendations for accountability.
- The commission is charged with undertaking a one-year investigation into the “violation of the right to food, the violations associated with prison camps, torture and inhuman treatment, arbitrary detention, discrimination, violations of freedom of expression, violations of the right to life, violations of freedom of movement, and enforced disappearances, including in the form of abductions of nationals of other states, with a view to ensuring full accountability, in particular where these violations may amount to crimes against humanity.”

Humanitarian Principles for Delivery of Aid

- Impartiality: on basis of need without discrimination
- Neutrality: to all needy civilians without favoring one side in a conflict
- Independence: not linked to any political or military program
- Unconditionality: without charge and no condition to repay; without regards to politics

Difficult Contexts

- Active conflict: ongoing conflict makes it difficult and dangerous to deliver aid to those most in need. Issue of neutrality is a major concern.
- Fragile states: States affected by “severe development challenges such as insecurity, weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions, violence or the legacy of civil war”
 - <http://www.oecd.org/dacfragilestates/>
- International Dialogue on Peacebuilding & Statebuilding: <http://www.pbsbdialogue.org/>

Delivering Aid in Fragile Contexts

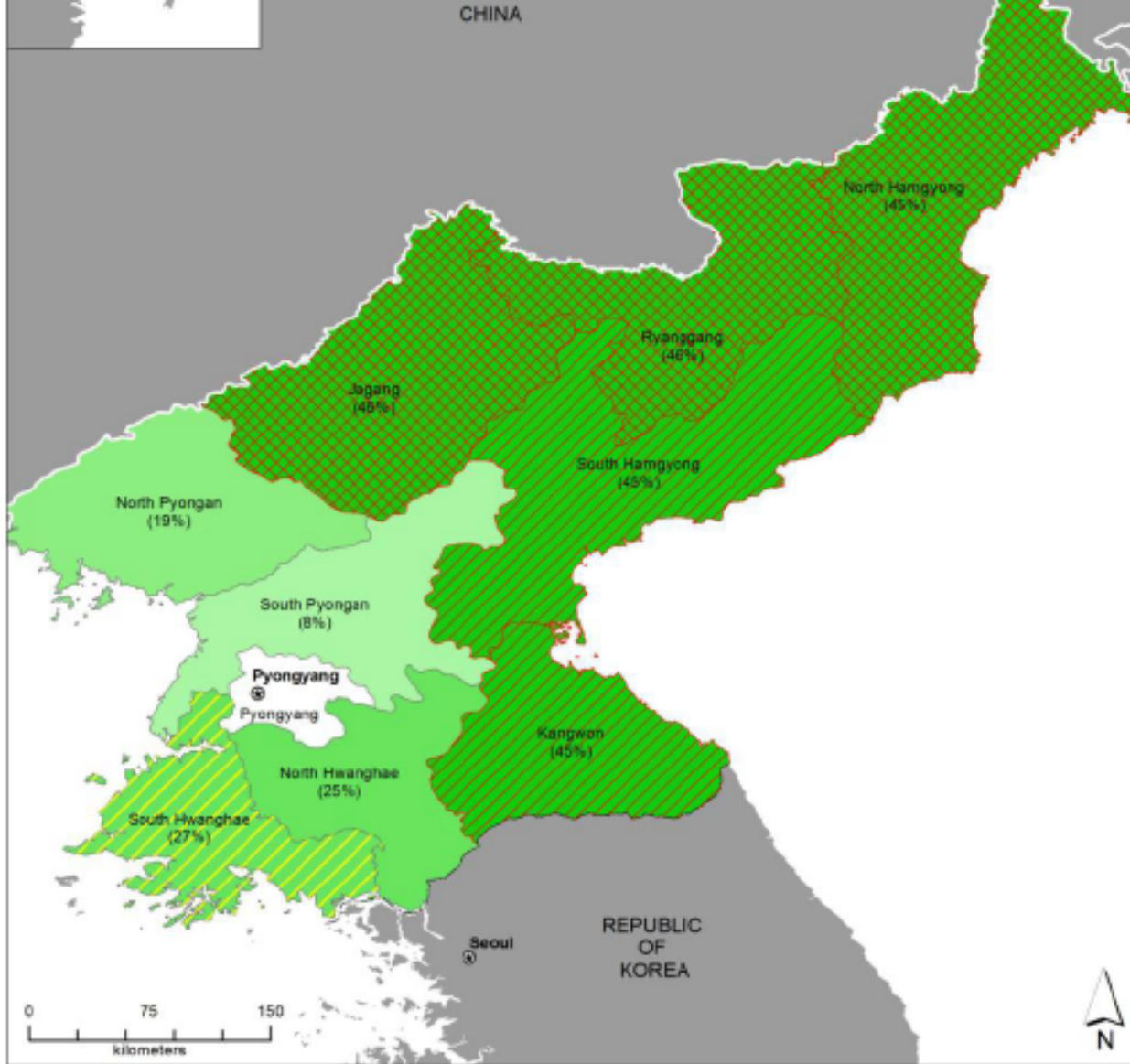
- Building a legitimate & sustainable state is long-term goal.
 - Aid can be catalyst but must be endogenous process
- Rapid improvement of basic services and meeting people's grievances is essential.
 - Aid to local level in ways that build local capacity and improve legitimacy of the state
- Military intervention may be necessary and donors must coordinate carefully to preserve identity
- Inequality & corruption at state level must be addressed (some conditionality?)
- Regional mechanisms should be established to prevent cross-border spread of conflict, advance reconciliation and mobilize assistance.

Authoritarian or Totalitarian Contexts

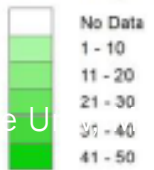
- “Governments exercise full control over their populations but fail to respond in a timely fashion to signs of food distress and limit external access for other political reasons.” (Haggard & Noland 2007)
- Instead of a weak state, it is an extremely strong and controlling state, both internally and externally.
- Examples: Ukraine (1929-30); China (1958-61); Ethiopia (1981-83); Cambodia (under Vietnam control, 1981-91); Myanmar (2008); North Korea

Operational Constraints in North Korea

- Limited access to affected population and most seriously affected regions for conducting needs assessment
- Delivery from port to distribution point by government transport
- At least one-week notice before monitoring visits; limited random monitoring
- Degree of access determined by amount of aid delivered.
- Restriction on Korean-speaking aid workers; working through government interpreters.
- Coordination among agencies discouraged; publicity limited.
- U.S., South Korean, Japanese NGOs not allowed residence in the country.



Affected Population %



Food Security



Created: 18 Oct 2011

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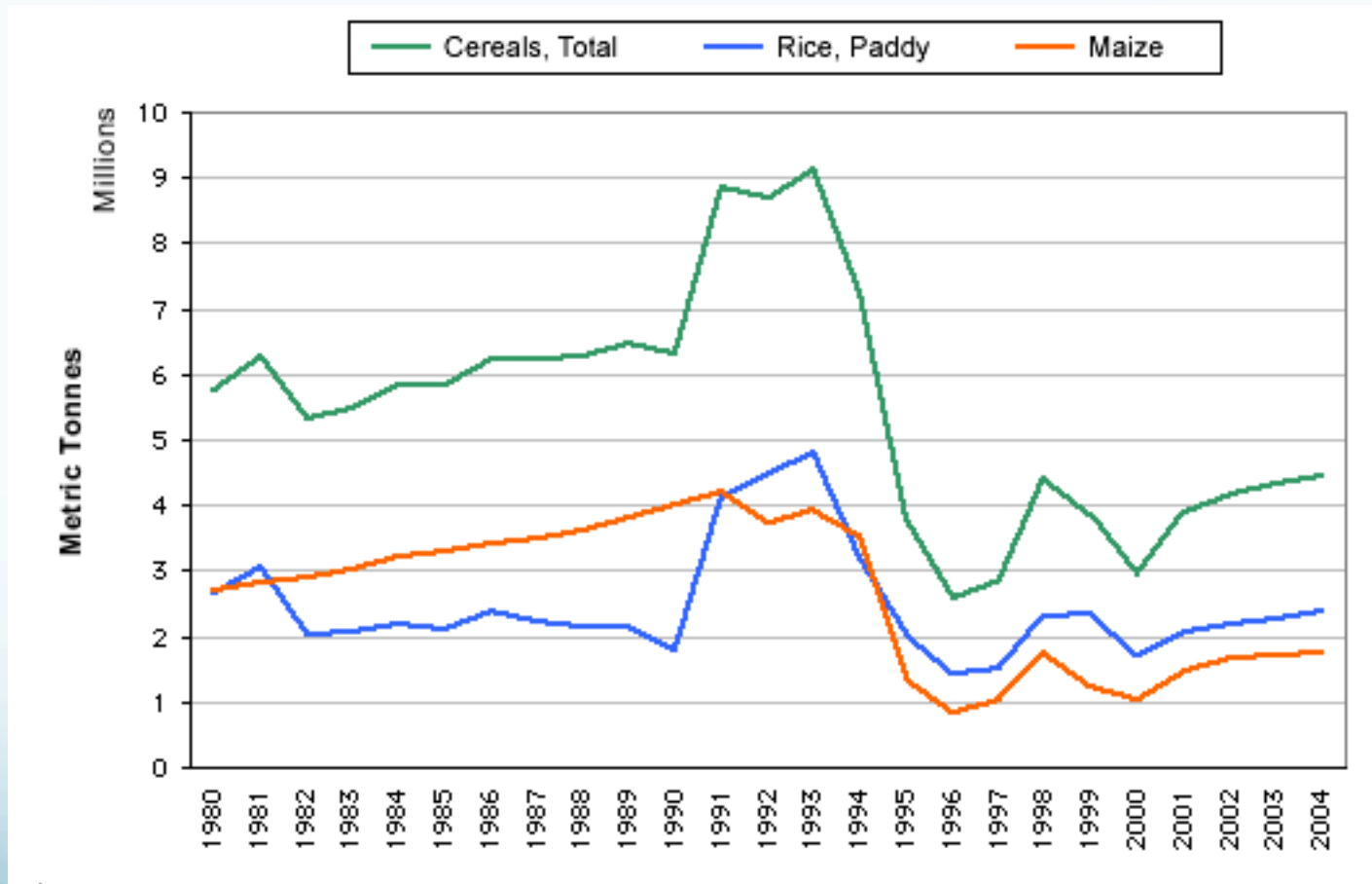
Impossible to Address Underlying Problems

- WFP Program: 18 years and no end in sight
- Underlying problems:
 - Juche agriculture;
 - central planning;
 - no price incentives or signals;
 - isolation from international markets and so limited foreign exchange to purchase inputs and food
- Uncertain policy direction:
 - Other budget priorities
 - Partial reforms
 - Reversal of reforms
 - Outside advice not welcomed

Some NGOs Pulled Out

- *Hong Kong/New York, September 30, 1998* — The international medical relief agency **Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)** today announced that it has been forced to pull out of North Korea (DPRK) this week, despite urgent medical and nutritional needs throughout the country. Since early June, there has been a clear high level policy change to further restrict and limit effective humanitarian aid, which makes it impossible to deliver aid in a principled and accountable manner. MSF is today calling on all donor governments to review their aid policies towards DPRK to ensure it is more accountable, so that humanitarian agencies can freely and impartially assess needs, deliver aid, have direct access to the population and assess the effectiveness of their programs.
 - <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/press/release.cfm?id=460&cat=press-release>
- CARE AND OXFAM, 2000: lack of access and insufficient monitoring
- 2006: North Korea asks almost all international agencies & NGOs to leave.

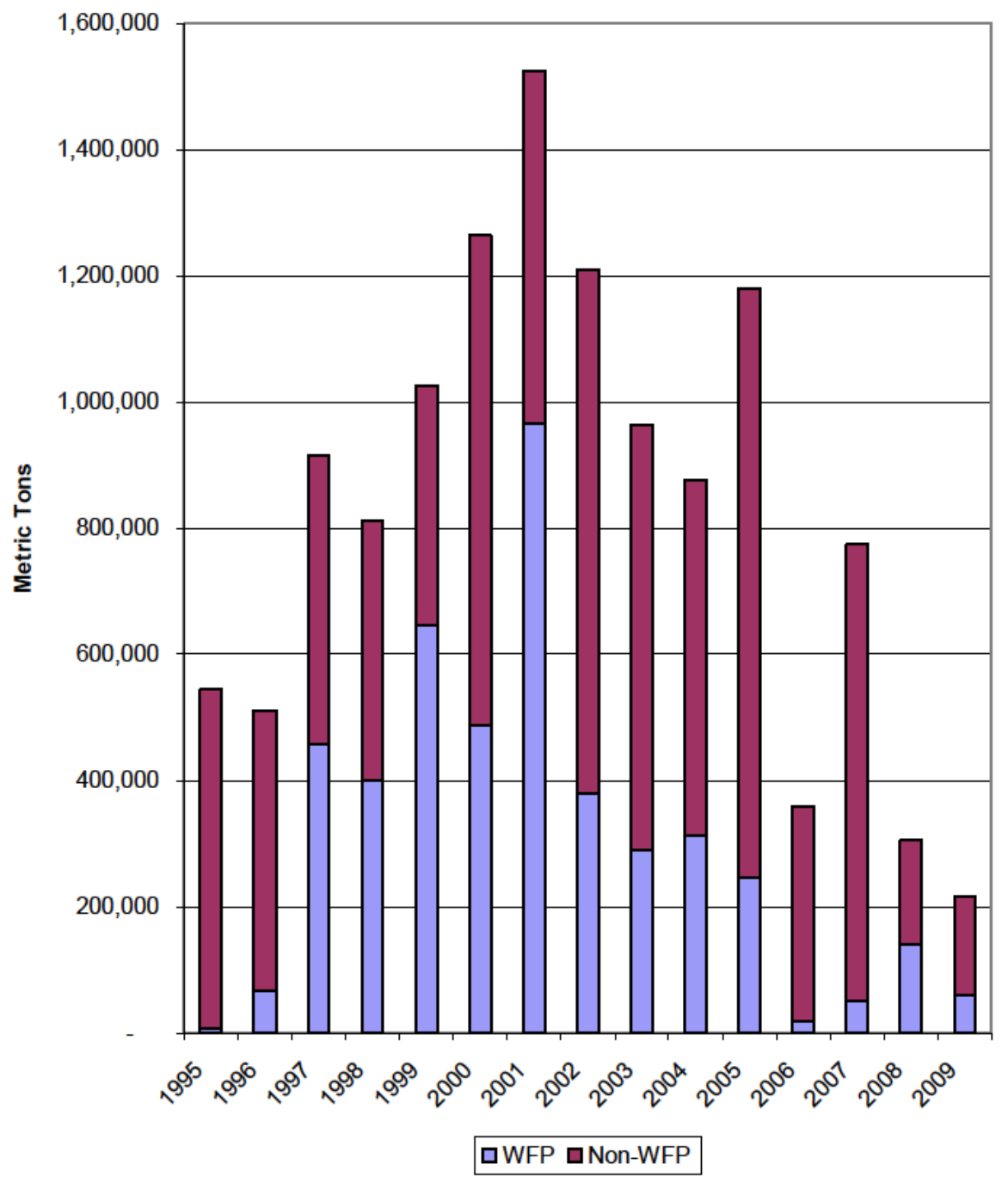
Why a food shortage?



Mismanagement of Agriculture

- Juche ideology: North Korea must be self-reliant in food production.
- Blueprint planning for different ecosystems
- Weak incentives for collective farms to produce more
- 4 modernizations: mechanization, electrification, irrigation, chemicalization
 - Depletion of soils due to overuse of chemicals; then shortage of fertilizer
 - Collapse of irrigation due to lack of electricity for pumps
 - Lack of spare parts for machinery
- Collapse of subsidized imports from China and USSR

Total Food Aid to North Korea, 1995-2009

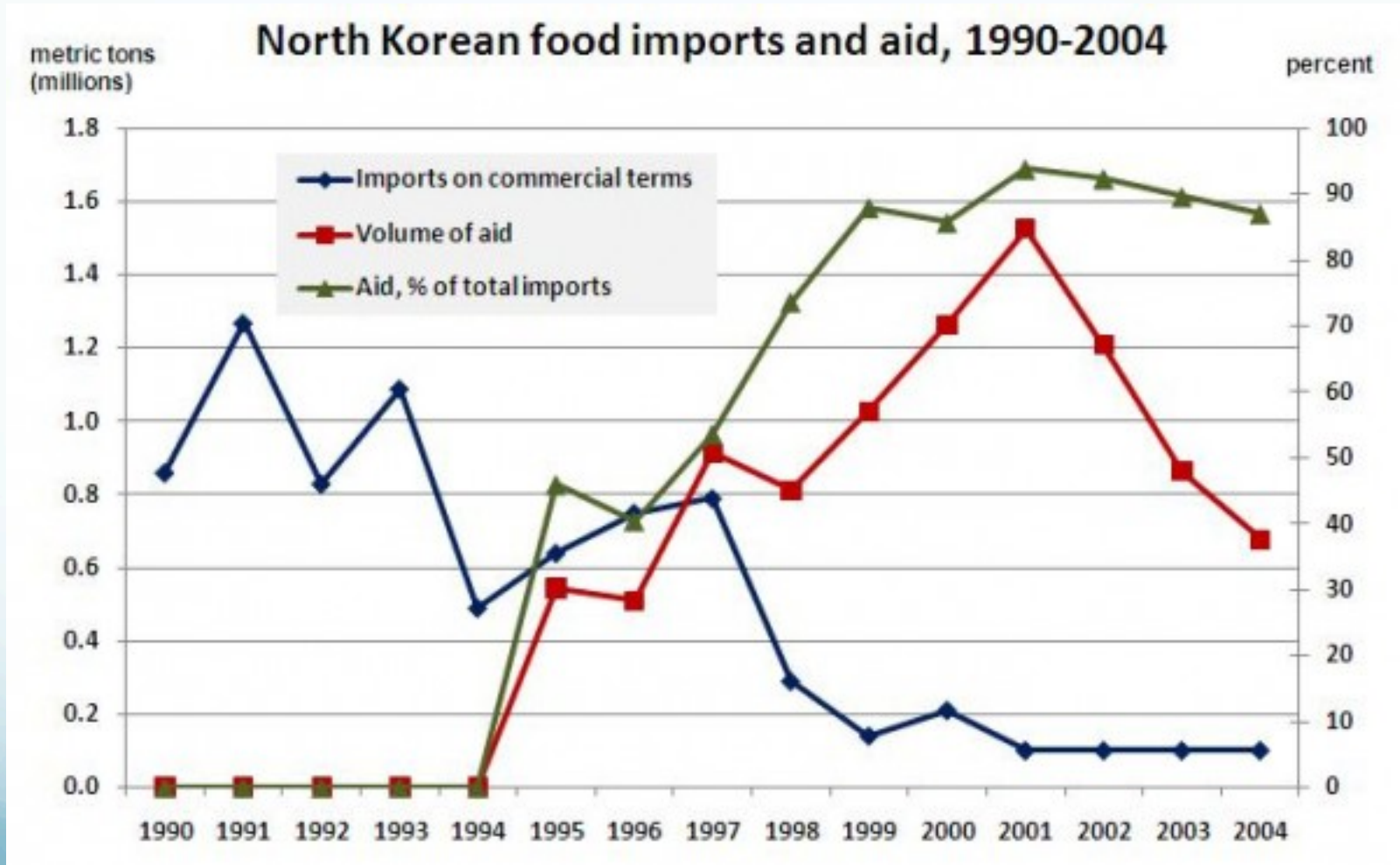


Sources of Food Aid (%) 1995-2008

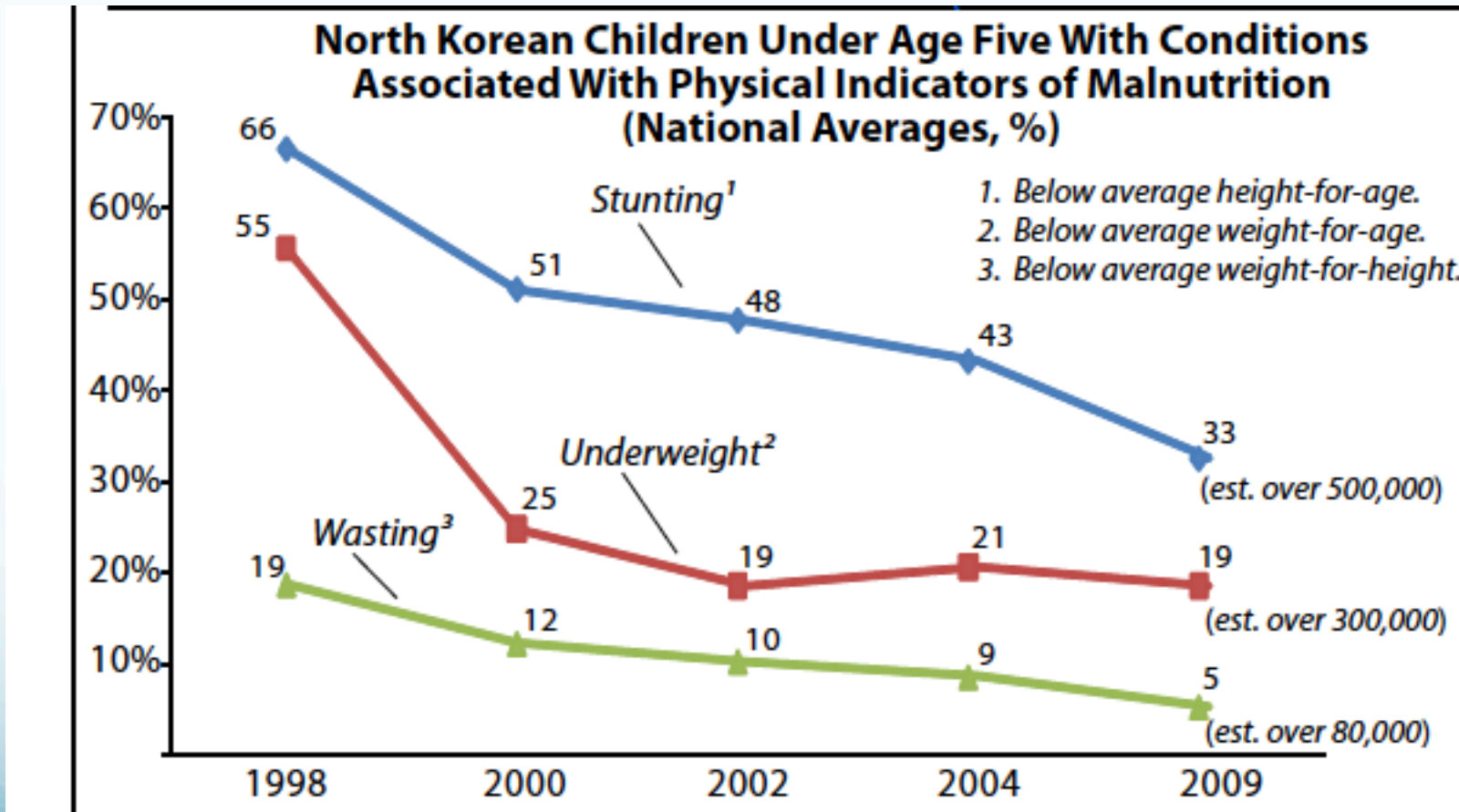
- China (est.): 26.9
- South Korea: 26.5
- United States: 17.5
- Japan: 10.7
- Other: 18.4

Source: WFP Int'l Food Aid Information System

Did food aid add to supply, or allow reallocation? The answer is not clear



Improvement, 1998-2009



Hunger: Assessing the Problem

- CARE: Problem Assessment, 1997
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rpSeToHiTdc>
- WFP: 2011
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUHdmLNvdBg&feature=related>

“As a result of the famine (1996-98) the average 7-year old boy in North Korea now weights 9kg less and is 20cm shorter than his South Korean counterpart”

-Haggard & Noland, 2006

North & South Compared

(2011/2012)

INDICATOR	NORTH	SOUTH	RATIO (S/N)
Population (millions)	24.6	48.9	2:1
GDP (billions \$, ppp)	40	1,574	39:1
GDP/person (\$)	1,800	32,100	18:1
Labor in Agriculture (%)	35.0	6.4	n/a
Electricity (billion kWh)	22.5	459.5	20:1
Oil used (barrels/day)	13,000	2,195,000	169:1
Exports (billions \$)	2.5	556.5	223:1
Paved roads (km.)	724	80,642	111:1
Life Expectancy	69.0	79.3	n/a
Infant Mortality (/1000)	26.2	4.0	n/a