

## Children's Rights in the DPRK





















What is mentioned first in dealing with the human rights is the rights of the child. It is because defending the rights of the child is an important problem that has a great bearing on the future of the relevant country. So people say that the progressive nature of a society is reflected in the lives of the children in that society.

Then, how are the rights of the child guaranteed in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea?

According to the international human rights instruments, the children have the right to compulsory and free primary education. In accordance with this, countries have made compulsory education of the children a law though the period and contents of such education are different from one another.

The DPRK stipulates in its law on providing the children's rights that a child has the right to the universal 12-year free compulsory education.

This educational system, covering all children aged between 5 and 16, consists of one-year pre-school course, five-year primary schooling, three-year junior middle schooling and three-year senior middle schooling.

Enjoying such legal protection, the children learn to their heart's content under the good educational conditions provided by the state.

The reality of the DPRK, in which teachers go to the students, is a good example that bespeaks the advantages of its educational system.

The law on providing the children's rights stipulates that the government organs shall take responsibility for providing educational conditions for the children who live in remote mountainous regions and far-flung islands.

Korea, a maritime country, has many islands and islets. Among them are a lot of islets on which only a few indispensable persons like lighthouse keepers live; if there are children on these islets, there are schools for them.

Building a school and posting a teacher there for one or two children is part of the country's educational system that takes into consideration even the children's right to grow under their parents' care, a system that cannot be found elsewhere in the world.

There are palaces and halls for schoolchildren in various parts of the country, including the Mangyongdae Schoolchildren's Palace and Pyongyang Students and Children's Palace in Pyongyang. In these bases the school children take part in the extracurricular activities according to their wishes and aptitudes free of charge. They also enjoy themselves at the Songdowon International Children's Camp and other children's camps situated in scenic spots in the country.

The law of the DPRK on providing the children's rights stipulates that a child shall enjoy the right to free medical care. As this right is directly related with the child's right to life and growth, it constitutes an important element in children's rights.

The country's medical service is comprehensive and completely free, and has no limitation in its objects and range of contents and is applied to all equally, including the children.

The state bears all the expenses—diagnosis, laboratory test, medicine, inpatient service, trip to and stay in sanatoria, checkup, consultation, vaccination and prosthesis for the children irrespective of their family background and social status.

The Pyongyang Maternity Hospital and Okryu Children's Hospital are representative medical organs for the children.

It is widely known that the problem of raising the children with no guardian is a focal point in children's rights, and it is hard to find in the DPRK those children who live on handouts in the street or sleep in the open. The children who have no parents or guardians grow up in palace-like nurseries, kindergartens and schools built exclusively for them in provinces as well as in the capital city. There can be a child bereaved of parents, but there cannot be an orphan—this is the reality of the country.

The children without parents are leading a life happier than that of the children with parents.

The system of providing the children's rights in the DPRK is a sure guarantee for all the children to grow up soundly and healthily.