

KOREAN ORPHANS

by Maj. Gen. Chan Ansuchote

Introduction

Every country in the world has always known the problem of caring for children without parents and in the public charge. In those nations in which human compassion and tenderness for the young and helpless are paramount, these orphaned youngsters are a primary concern not only for the state itself but also for religious groups and philanthropic individuals.

Because of years of foreign occupation, stringent economic conditions, and later as a result of a devastating war, the problem in Korea is particularly intense, even appalling. But it is not a neglected one by any means; the Korean Government has been dealing with it to the best of its ability—a serious and heavy burden for a country just beginning to recover from the ravages of recent conflict and struggling toward a firm economic and political basis of its own.

In addition to governmental efforts, it is important and interesting to observe how compassionate foreigners have been in making contributions, directly or indirectly, toward the care and training of these thousands of orphaned children. That the reader may better understand both the extent of the problem and the many efforts being made toward the containment and improvement of the situation, the following background and statistics are included.

The table below indicates the total number of orphans found in the Republic of Korea from the year 1947 to the present time. It will be seen that of the total population of 26 millions there are now in this country 56,960 orphans. In a country where the population growth is so rapid, it is likely that the number of these dependent children will also continue to increase.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Orphans*</i>
1947	6,881
1948	7,416
1949	10,419

* The Figures shown above are those of orphans accommodated in the facilities registered at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Republic of Korea.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of Orphans</i>
1950	24,945
1951	39,817
1952	53,964
1953	54,428
1954	54,927
1955	53,592
1956	54,829
1957	56,016
1958	57,155
1959	60,504
1960	62,607
1961	63,335
1962	56,960

Sources of the Problem

In general, children have been orphaned by different factors, namely:

- a) Broken homes, mainly caused by divorce, desertion, separation, death or hospitalization of either parent.
- b) Illegitimate birth of children who, unfortunately, are disowned by their parents.
- c) Death of their parents.
- d) Poverty of their parents, which is so extreme that parents are unable to support their own children.

In the Republic of Korea the number of children having been orphaned by the factors described under c) and d) is greater than that under a) and b).

State Responsibility

It is generally known that the State is mainly responsible for seeing that these poor orphans are given due care and proper education so that, after growing-up, they may become good citizens of their country.

In any civilised country the following standard measures are taken to help and support its orphans:

1. To provide shelter in a comfortable atmosphere and environment featuring warmth, understanding, affection, tolerance, encouragement and stimulation.
2. To provide a comprehensive treatment program in an effort to maintain health, teach habits of health and cleanliness, and correct physical and psychological disabilities.
3. To provide the opportunity to grow physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually to their full limits of such growth. Special emphasis is laid upon their training in respect of regulations, courtesy, order, spirit of cooperation and consideration for the rights of others. Obviously these qualities are essential in any human society. Particular care is also taken to see that female orphans undergo training in a manner that will enable them to become good housewives, counselors and companions to their future husbands.
4. To-day, no one can expect to make progress unless he equips himself with knowledge and keeps abreast of the times. It is therefore necessary for the orphans to be reasonably furnished with education. Vocational training is playing an important part in developing skills for the orphans to enable them to stand on their own feet and face the future.
5. To guide and encourage the orphans to profess some religious faith in accordance with their own free will.

Accomplishments by the Republic of Korea Government

The first Korean orphanage was established in April, 1903, by Mr. Lee Pil Hwa on the outskirts of Seoul. During the Japanese occupation, this institution came directly under the Japanese Government. After the attainment of national independence, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of the Republic of Korea, which is directly responsible for the problem of orphans, has made immense efforts in dealing with orphans. Space does not permit me to go into details; however, law No. 912 known as the Child Welfare Law was promulgated on December 30, 1961. This law aims to secure the welfare of children so that they may grow up happy and healthy in case they are lost, separated from or abandoned by their guardians, or if their guardians are not fit to assume responsibility for bringing them up or are unable to care for them. The main contents of this legislation largely deals with the scope and practices of various child welfare institutions such as Child Guidance Clinic, Children's Home, Maternity Wards, Feeble-minded Children's Home, Home for the Blind, Deaf-mute Children, Infirm Children's Home, Crippled Children's Home, Mother's Home, Day Nursery, Children's Recreation Center, Reformatory, Street Children's Home, Boy's Trade Training

Center and other institutions for child welfare. Other agencies concerned with similar matters have also been established. A Central Child Welfare Committee has also been set up, and various functions and responsibilities of the authorities concerned with the child welfare have been clearly defined.

This law, promulgated on January 1, 1962 replaced the old one (Chosun Kamwha Ryung) which had been valid since September, 1922. The reason for the repeal of this old law was that many welfare institutions which had come into existence under this law were outmoded.

On October 15, 1962 the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs issued another Ordinance, No. 92, prescribing the standards of administration of child welfare institutions. All these measures only serve to show that the Korean Government has left no stone unturned in coming to grips with this problem of orphans. It is of interest to note the efficiency and devotion with which the Korean authorities concerned at all levels have been grappling with the problem.

Adoption and Foster Care Program

One of the interesting documents worth mentioning is "The Program of Promotion of Brotherly Love with Regard to Child Adoption and Foster Care" prepared by the Children's Section of the Women's Bureau, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. The purpose of this program is to promote child welfare, to correct the poor practices that arose with unilateral dependence of welfare service on institutions, and to enable all those who are qualified to be helped through the means of normal family life to realize and demonstrate their abilities in society, as members of society, through adoption and foster care. Foster care program was started from 1962. The achievement by this program is shown below and shows the number of children placed in homes by adoption or foster care from institutional care.

Year	Home care	Paid foster care	Non-paid foster care	Working home	Adoption	Other	Total
1962	6,995	1,734	1,274	658	1,057	1,098	12,818
1963	1,184	370	201	96	312	75	2,238
(end of April)							
Total	8,179	2,104	1,477	754	1,369	1,173	15,056

The Training of Social Workers

In many countries institutional orphans are treated by specialists. In order to fill this requirement, beginning in 1957, social leaders and social workers were trained in several educational organizations and training institutes.

The following table shows the number of persons trained in social work.

Year	Leaders	Workers	Officials	Nurses	Others	Total
1957	—	50	—	—	—	50
1958	72	—	29	—	—	101
1959	237	32	53	—	—	322
1960	93	15	36	54	59	257
1961	25	307	18	—	42	392
1962	—	141	262	—	—	403
1963	—	—	206	—	—	206

After the military revolution, the government changed the policy from the short-period training program to a long-term period, emphasizing the social work course in universities, and there were 147 graduates in 1962. Within five (5) years, the government is planning to secure approximately 3,000 qualified social workers.

The Training of Orphans

The training of orphans began to take shape when, in 1953, the ROK Government was given financial aid by the UNKRA and with that aid it put up a building at Sosa. This building provides both a training ground and a dormitory. Thus began the first institution for the training of Korean orphans.

Later, on August 2, 1957 the name of this institution was changed to the Central Boys' Vocational Training Institute. Among the training courses offered to the orphans and the destitute at this institute are:

- Agriculture and animal husbandry
- Horticulture
- Iron-works
- Carpentry
- Barbering
- Printing
- Radio Mechanics
- Plastic making
- Commercial painting
- and
- General drafting

After one year of training at the institute, thus completing its full course, the orphan will be helped by the institute in finding employment.

Perhaps it is of interest for the Thai people to know that Thanpuying Vichitra Dhana-rajata, wife of the Prime Minister of Thailand, who takes deep interest in the field of social welfare took the opportunity to visit this Institute on May 18, 1963. On this occasion Thanpuying donated a sum of approximately 240 U.S. dollars to the Institute.

Foreign Assistance

It is known that many foreign philanthropists and agencies have voluntarily contributed to the improvement of the lot of the orphans in the Republic of Korea. Among these are:

1. The Christian Children's Fund Inc.
2. The World Vision, Inc.
3. Everett Suranson's Evangelistic Association.
4. Unitarian Service Committee of Canada.
5. Foster Parents Plan.
6. National Catholic Welfare Conference.
7. Korea Church World Service.
8. Cooperation American Remittance to Everywhere.
9. Friends of International Social Service.

In addition, the forces from many nations under the United Nations Command have also offered their positive contribution to this humanitarian work. They are indeed playing an important part in their service to humanity by giving various forms of assistance to the ROK orphans. Some of the children have been adopted and sent to study in the United States and other countries. These acts of humanity have helped many poor orphans to enjoy a new life and hope and have been animated solely by the desire to help, brought about by generous and warm hearts representing the love of humanity with never a thought of material gain or glory. Indeed, this is a real symbol of mutual friendship and cooperation.
