As the international status of Korea continues to grow, the Korean government continues to play active roles on the world stage. Even though colonization and war pushed the nation to the periphery for the first half of the 20th century, Korea rapidly emerged as a good role model for many of today’s developing countries. Korea’s participation in international cooperation and development has been apparent since the late 1960s. The Korean government established the Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) in 1967 to offer international loans. In 1996, the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) was set up to provide grants and volunteers for a wide range of collaborative projects worldwide. Korea also joined the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in January 2010, signifying its role as an active donor for global development. Specifically, Korea’s official development assistance is both bilateral and multilateral. Korean Overseas Volunteers have been dispatched to many parts of the world. Thus far, Korea’s grants from 2010 to 2012, normalized by National Income (GNI). We can see that the ratio has increased continuously since 1990. An exceptionally high value is observed in 2005 due to the tsunami disaster in the South Asia. The ODA per capita shows how much an individual in the donor country pays for ODA. Even though it is still below DAC average of 31 USD, Korea has made continuous improvements in this type of assistance. The ODA may be classified into two categories: bilateral and multilateral. The bilateral assistance can be further divided into grants and loans. The graph shows that Korea has increased assistance in all types of ODA. In 2013, for instance, the amount of bilateral and multilateral ODA reached to 1,160 million and 350 million USD, respectively. It indicates that these were maintained at 17.4% and 12.0% compared with the previous year, reflecting the fact that Korea has expanded its role as an active donor for global development. The ODA may be classified into two categories: Economic Development Cooperation Fund (Economic Development Cooperation Fund 2013).
The graph shows the trend of Korea’s bilateral grants to Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Latin America, and Africa. The total amount of grants received has increased dramatically since 2010. In fact, aid to the Middle East, which previously received minimal aid, has expanded significantly to include Arab, Africa, and Latin America.

The map shows Korea’s Alternate Official Development Assistance for Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 2012. The darker colors represent the countries that received larger grants from Korea than other DAC member countries. What becomes clear is that Korea provides more contributions to the Asian countries such as Mongolia, Cambodia, and Vietnam than to the other DAC member countries.

The map also shows that a large amount of Korea’s grants go to Afghanistan, Mongolia, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In general, the aid focuses on the infrastructures and services (education, health, population policies, and programs, productive sectors, rural and urban) in economic infrastructure and services (transportation and storage, communications, energy, hospital, and financial services), and production sectors (agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining, construction, trade policies, and regulations).

Meanwhile, the KOICA has funded a variety of projects in Vietnam (shown in the upper-right map), including medical service improvement, telecommunication system development, technical support and training, and overall regional development planning. The projects have focused more on the populated coastal areas than the sparsely populated highlands.
Korea's Grants in Latin America

The pie graph shows the size and sector of the grants by recipient. In terms of size, the largest recipient of Korean aid are Peru, Paraguay, and Ecuador. These grants generally target Social Infrastructure and Service, but the Economic Infrastructure and Production sectors also receive assistance in several countries. Among the recipient countries, the Economic Infrastructure and Production sector support that Korea has provided to the Energy, Ecology, and Industry sectors are relatively evenly distributed to most of the Latin American countries. Peru received grants primarily in the Economic Infrastructure and Production sectors. The Korea’s Grants in Latin America map shows the distribution of the total DAC grants in Latin America (excluding Mexico) in 2012. The dark colors represent the proportion of South Korean aid and the lighter colors represent the proportion of other DAC members. The countries which are more dependent on assistance from South Korea are represented in darker colors. Those countries include many in Central America (including Mexico), as well as the northern coastal regions of South America. Particularly high proportions of South Korean aid appear in Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Paraguay.

Korea’s Grants in Africa

The pie charts represent to which countries, at what amount, and for which sector Korean aid was provided. The largest grant recipients in Africa are Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya, and Senegal. The sectors supported in these countries is Social Infrastructure and Service. In the countries suffering from a civil war and/or famine, grants supported improvement projects in the Economic Infrastructure and Production sectors. An example of one such grants is the 2.5 million USD grants to build the irrigation canal in Oromia region. When this canal project was finished in 2010, it helped local communities increase their agricultural productivity. Another example is the Modernization of the Communication and Information System of the State Communication and Information System of the State of the Ministry of the Republic of Paraguay, which was designed to help the government provide service more effectively. A good example of the Social Infrastructure and Service sector support that Korea has provided includes the 2.5 million USD grants to build the irrigation canal in Oromia region. When this canal project was finished in 2010, it helped local communities increase their agricultural productivity. An example of the Economic Infrastructure and Production sector support that Korea has provided is the Modernization of the Communication and Information System of the State Communication and Information System of the State of the Ministry of the Republic of Paraguay, which was designed to help the government provide service more effectively. An example of one such grants is the 2.5 million USD grants to build the irrigation canal in Oromia region. When this canal project was finished in 2010, it helped local communities increase their agricultural productivity.