

**DEVELOPMENT STATE, KOREA'S EXPERIENCE OF  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY:  
FOCUS ON THE SAEMAUL UNDONG DEVELOPMENT IN  
1970'S**

**Yangsoo Yi**

Park Chung Hee School of Policy and Saemaul, Yeungnam University  
yiys@yu.ac.kr

**Abstract**

*This study explains how Korean government and their citizens overcame poverty and achieved a development feat within one generational period. It illustrates the emergence of Saemaul Undong Development in the developmental state of Korea, that by instilling a new ethos on the basic ideals of diligence, self-help and cooperation, Saemaul Undong inspired the Koreans with a 'can-do' spirit in achieving 'prosperity through hard work'. The study covers four key themes such as: Korean experiences in the 1970s, discussion on Saemaul Undong, success factors of Saemaul Undong, and Saemaul Undong as a community development strategy for developing countries. Government-established incentive systems and capacity-building activities accelerated Saemaul Undong's nationwide implementation. Some aspects of Saemaul Undong are also helpful with the right policies and strategies, based on individual, politics, social, economic and political contexts. Adoption of Saemaul Undong will produce successful results if developing countries carefully study their situation and devise a workable and practical solution of their own.*

**Keywords:** *saemaul undong; developmental state; community development; green revolution*

## INTRODUCTION

South Korea is the typical embodiment of a developmental state. The Saemaul Undong Development is a community development model that is state initiated with partial government intervention. The government interventions come in front of provisions of various supports in the form of material, financial, and administrative; and the advocacy of spiritual reform of the villagers through education. Furthermore, military troops were also mobilised to implement and assist Saemaul program.

In Korea, the rural community was completely transformed through a comprehensive rural development policy called the Saemaul Undong. It has been evaluated as the key program which overcame rural poverty and accelerated rural development. This unique experience of successful rural development has become a model for many developing countries<sup>1</sup>. Korea's rural transformation coincided with the launching and implementation of Saemaul Undong, a nationwide government initiated and community-based integrated rural development program. Saemaul Undong began with the aim of improving the physical environment

of villages and at the same time, introducing Saemaul Undong spirits (self-help, diligence and cooperation) and new skills among the villagers. Small-scale self-help projects that were implemented through cooperation were also introduced in order to generate incomes.

In this study, the researcher will explain how the Korean government and their citizens overcame the poverty and achieved such a development feat within one generational period. Saemaul Undong was a community-driven integrated rural development and modernization movement. The Korean government achieved successful economic development in the 1970s with the adequate usage of selective industrial policies and export-oriented trade policies. This selective strategy, however, put rural development on hold and widened the gap between urban and rural living standards (Park, 2009, 114-115).

The study covers four key themes. First, is to describe Korean experiences in the 1970s. The second part discusses the Saemaul Undong. The third, focuses on the success factors of the Saemaul Undong. The final part, makes the suggestion that Saemaul Undong should be a community development strategy for the developing countries.

---

<sup>1</sup> OECD has signed to research Saemaul Undong as a strategy of rural development for the developing countries at 2013 with Korean government. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has adopted Saemaul Undong as a basic model for sustainable modernization of agriculture and rural transformation program at 2008 (Choi, 2013).

## **Theoretical background and research model**

### *A Review of the Developmental State Theory*

In all countries the state plays some role in shaping the structure and output of the economy. States in different countries use a variety of instruments and policies such as the regulation of industry and trade, the redistribution of incomes and assets, the use of fiscal and monetary policies and direct state ownership of key industries. The degree of state intervention largely depends on whether a government chooses to leave economic development and redistribution to those in the free market, or to be a more interventionist or developmental state. The term 'state' would be conceived in the mode of Weber as 'a set of organizations, including the administrative and legislative order, with the authority to make and implement binding rules over all people and all action in a particular territory, using force if necessary' (Rueschemeyer and Evans, 1985, 46-47).

Developmental states combine high bureaucratic capacity and strategic allocation of resources to industrial sectors, in order to generate industrial advancement. Developmental state theory was first introduced by Chalmers Johnson in 1982 to explain the industrialization of Northeast Asia, especially Japan. State developmentalism is the driving force of the theory where a state or nation concentrates its governance on economic development and promotion of

growth of new industries (Johnson, 1982). Notable features of the developmental state or developmentalist state include: well qualified government officials and pilot agencies, a government that is relatively free from political conflicts and possesses a growth oriented administration; and also strong leadership of the head of state, which was especially true in the case of Korea (Han, 2011).

The developmental state can be defined as a state in which the political elites aim for rapid economic development and give power and authority to the bureaucracy to plan and implement efficient policies. According to Johnson, the developmental state aims at rational and deliberate development and implements state-driven industrial policies, with cooperation between the government and private enterprises (Johnson, 1982, p. 10). Specifically, what is meant by a developmental state is a government with sufficient organization and power to achieve its developmental goals. It must be a state with the ability to provide consistent economic guidance and rational and efficient organization, and also possess the power to back up its long-range economic policies.

A developmental state plays an active role in guiding economic development and uses the resources of the country to meet the needs of the people. A developmental state tries to balance economic growth and social development. It uses state resources and state influences to attack poverty and expand economic opportunities for national

prosperity. A developmental state must be able to unite public sectors, businesses, labor unions and civil societies in a partnership geared toward the implementation of common national agenda. A developmental state must also play a much stronger role in establishing clear, measurable and time-bound targets for common programs, and for monitoring their implementation.

The entire decade of 1970 in Korea was known as the government planning stage. During this period, the government played a great role in developing the communities. The Saemaul Undong program started with material provisions from the government which were used to create active self-help projects in the communities. This was subsequently connected with the advent of the 'Green Revolution' in rice production. Over time, the Saemaul Undong has become a nationwide program for rural development and it is a national symbol of Korean way of guided participatory development. The 'Green Revolution' in the rice field was highly dependent upon government support. The strong government system made Green Revolution possible through the provisions of new seeds of high-yield grain (*tongil* rice variety), expanded irrigation systems, construction and widening of rural roads and the management of credit system.

Hence we can assume that without government intervention in the market, rural development and economic growth in Korea would have been impossible, even though it did appear to be an urban versus rural bias in government planning. The radical land reform, agricultural

and industrial growth and the capacity of the government to mobilise rural households were due to a social cohesion in the general idea of a sense of community in rural Korea.

The government provided small startup subsidies for projects to develop local communities economically such as the allocation of materials for constructing village roads, bridges, electrification infrastructures, and storage sheds which were all crucial to the communities' economic development.

#### *Government roles in Saemaul Undong in the 1970s*

The Saemaul Undong as a rural development program was initiated by the political will of the top national leader. Accordingly, both the national government and local governments played important roles throughout the development of the Saemaul Undong.

Government implemented Saemaul Undong fostered rural reform in the 1970's in Korea. It is necessary to encourage and support strong national-level leadership with a commitment to sustained improvements in the rural sector. Especially during the beginning stage, Saemaul Undong needs the government to stimulate and ignite the people's willingness and desire to develop their community on a voluntary basis. Governments need to provide technical guidance during the course of project implementation and also provide the material and financial resources required for the effective development of rural villages. Governments need to find a

way to encourage the village leaders to contribute to community development.

Saemaul Undong is characterized by close cooperation between various levels of government sectors and villagers in the planning and implementing of the Saemaul projects. Close coordination and integration of different functions and agencies were essential to the success of the Saemaul Undong. It covers various projects and activities ranging from improvements in physical and social infrastructure to income generation projects, education and capacity building activities, shared value for greater participation, and changes in values and attitudes of villagers (Whang, 1987).

With mobilization and direction from an authoritarian government, Saemaul Undong's success was built on the ironic combination of cooperation at the village level. In the 1970s, the Korean government began to piece together a large technocratic capacity, consisting of policy think tanks and planning bureaus established and headed by economists, business school graduates and engineers who had mostly graduated from U.S. universities (Park, 2008). The Korean model of rural development, paradoxically, could be defined as a 'bottom-up development model of government initiating'. Rural development in Korea has been attributed to strong government intervention, in particular, enlightenment campaigns, new seeds, credit systems, infrastructure

of roads and storage facilities which boosted agricultural production.

The local governments' roles in the Saemaul Undong implementation process embraced the agenda setting stage to evaluation stage, which included distribution of information and 'know-hows' about various kinds of community projects. Government interventions and support during the implementation of Saemaul Undong occurred mainly through administrative and material assistance. The central government cooperated with mass media in producing information about Saemaul Undong projects and publicised the success stories of villages which motivated the villagers to participate more actively in Saemaul Undong. Igniting and inspiring the villagers' vivid participation is the role of the local government. To gain the compliance from the grassroots level, the government should administered all Saemaul Undong projects with clear principles that reflect respective localities and characteristics of individual communities. Another important role of government was to conduct annual monitoring and evaluations of the achievement and progress of Saemaul Undong projects. It then provided the villages with feedback that resulted in better performances based on incentives such as financial aids, cash grants, equipment leasing or consultancy services. Project evaluation was an interim process, between project planning and execution, needed to collect necessary data to decide proper support levels for villages or plan future projects in a more realistic way.

During the goal selection and decision making processes in Saemaul Undong, the government initiated the Saemaul Undong and made plans for support and administrative assistance and this was conducted by the Saemaul

*Research Model*

Although developing countries have implemented strong state leadership, Saemaul Undong has not achieved the success it did in Korea. This is mainly because of the different development strategies used in various settings and different capabilities of the state or different

Central Promotional Council Meetings in the central government. In this meeting, long-term goals and overall planning and implementation schedules were set and annual action plans for Saemaul Undong nationwide were developed. social contexts in each state. This research tries to reveal how and when the government intervened in Saemaul projects. Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical background of the role of the government in Saemaul Undong in a developmental state and its social contextual conditions.

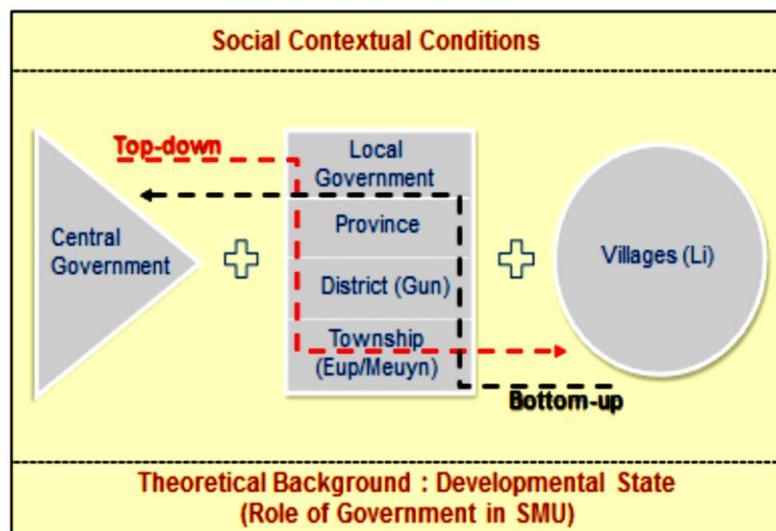


Figure 1: Research Model

**Historical background of Saemaul Undong**

*Korea's experiences in the past time*

The Korean War in the 1950's destroyed almost everything and therefore, Korean had to restart from the ashes. South Korea in the 1960's was one of the poorest countries in the world. In 1961, the

Gross National Income (GNI) was only US \$81 dollars. At that time, South Korea was an icon of hunger and poverty. Alcohol and gambling were pervasive in rural communities and the villagers were desperate for the future and tended to depend on outside help.

The general conditions of rural communities in the 1960s and

70s were as follows: the rural housing and farming infrastructures were very poor, for example the village roads were narrow and or rice straw was used for roofs; only twenty percent of rural housing has access to electricity; and repeated natural disasters such as floods and drought brought about low agricultural productivity. South Korea had received US \$12.69 billion of Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the international community by 1995.

Currently, South Korea is one of the most advanced industrialized countries in the world. Korea joined Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996 and DAC (Development Assistance Committee) in 2009. In 2012, South Korea provided 1.6 billion in aid for developing countries and it will increase that amount to US \$2.5 billion by 2015. How did Koreans and Korean government overcome hunger and poverty and how did they achieve such an accomplishment within such a short period?

*What is Saemaul Undong:  
Characteristics of Saemaul Undong*

Saemaul Undong which is defined as the promotion of better living for rural people in order to modernise Korea. It has four objectives which were the 'improvement of production infrastructure', 'increase of income', 'improvement of life conditions' and 'development of mindset' through diligence, self-help and cooperation under government plan and initiatives.

Aimed at improving the

economic and social conditions as well as the quality of life of the people and their environmental conditions, the Saemaul Undong was a community-driven development movement. This was achieved through the inculcation of attitudes and values of diligence, self-help, cooperation; cultivation of grass-roots leadership; and active voluntary participation of the people in the community (Kim and Kim, 1997). The Saemaul Undong, however, was a people-centered community development model.

The Saemaul Undong emphasized values of *diligence*, which led to sincerity and the awakening of a pioneer spirit, or the awakening of a strong will; self-help which awakened a sense of responsibility and the villages and the villagers' responsibility by extension; and cooperation which led to the dispositions toward participation, unity and efficiency being awakened (Claassen, 2011). The primary purposes of Saemaul Undong were the building of infrastructure, spiritual enlightenment and social interaction, the improvement of living standards and increased income (Park, 2009, 5~8). Ultimately, the community-driven Saemaul Undong aimed to develop villages where people could enjoy both physical and spiritual wealth by motivating and generating villagers' participation.

The Saemaul Undong can be characterized by several features. It was conducted by a so-called integrated approach that was a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The Saemaul Undong is a pure Korean way of

community-based development. It means that the implementation of which was based on the positive aspects of Korean culture and traditions. It was also a way to escape poverty and overcome hunger and as a better-living movement, it emphasized diversification of income sources of farm households that were largely limited to rice production. The Saemaul Undong was a movement for spiritual reform of the Korean people (Choe, 2005). It comprehensively dealt with various challenges that the villagers identified by themselves, coping with the multidimensional challenges of the village. Comprehensive Saemaul Undong projects were designed to minimize the time required for transformation of the traditional rural sector. The government also did not limit the Saemaul activities to one specific sector alone. Instead, the villagers could implement the projects on where and how they wanted it and on whether they were related to income generation, women's empowerment, training of village leaders, agricultural productivity or infrastructure development.

#### **Success factors of Saemaul Undong and developmental state**

There are many factors that lead to the Saemaul Undong's success. It is important to stress the main success factors. The following five factors played an integral part which are government initiating bottom-up approach, integrated approach of policy and institutions, more supports for the better performance, two tier change agents, and triangle of stakeholders.

#### *Government Initiating a Bottom-up Approach*

Government intervention was very effective as a top-down approach; while the community/people, through the Saemaul Undong, participated cooperatively using a bottom-up approach.

During the 1970s, the implementation and success of Saemaul Undong in Korea depended on government intervention. Although Saemaul Undong began as a top-down movement, its success would not be possible without the bottom-up participation at the grass-root level. Strong commitment from the top leaders enabled effective vertical integration, which linked all levels of government. In the beginning stage, village level participation was mobilized by the government and their participation was passive to the projects designed and ordered by the government. Having observed the positive changes and realized the possible benefits, village people gradually became more proactive (Park, 2009).

The strong government guidance of the top-down may have been an effective impetus for the farmers in the initial stage, but if increased authoritarian and bureaucratic ways of program implementation into the latter stage, it may have discouraged farmers' volunteer participation without the guarantee of autonomy at the grassroots level (Kim and Kim, 1997). The involvement at the grassroots level and the villagers' willingness to participate democratically changed their society and also improved their living

standards.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Korean government used top-down approaches at the macroeconomic level to improve national economic growth. On the other hand, the bottom-up approach was used at the microeconomic level starting from the village/grass-root level. Both approaches were implemented hand-in-hand, authoritatively and democratically in order to enhance national development (Lee, 2013). From the macroscopic perspective, the government should implement policies that meet villages' or residents' actual needs. From the microscopic perspective, willingness to cooperate and voluntary participation from the villagers should be continued. This combination would be a dynamic process in which the interaction between macroscopic policies and microscopic participation enlarges the social capital within a nation. However, one of the most important facts is that, to provide substantial benefits to participants, a participatory decision-making process should be embedded within an interactive mechanism linking the macroscopic dimension (state) and microscopic dimension (village) (Baek et al, 2012).

#### *Integrated Approach of Policy and Institutions*

The coexistence of bureaucratic autonomy and public-

private cooperation allow the state and the bureaucratic elites to develop independent national goals and to translate broad national goals into effective policy action. The coexistence of these two conditions is critical (Onis, 1991). Within the bureaucracy, a pilot agency plays a key role in policy formulation and implementation.

The developmental state requires a pilot agency to oversee and guide the developmental process. Usually the pilot agency is staffed by the smartest and best in the nation and enjoys a degree of prestige (Evans, 1998).

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) was the ideal 'pilot agency' of the Saemaul Undong implementation, coordinating the activities of the Economic Planning Bureau (EPB), and other relevant ministries. The MOHA played a key role in coordination between domestic policies relating to the Saemaul Undong, e.g. priority of community development project, Saemaul training programs, and evaluation of outputs. The MOHA has the responsibility to manage the local administrative process. Figure 2 shows the operational structure of the government initiating bottom-up approach integration in relation to the top-down approach of government interventions initiated by the president and central governments.

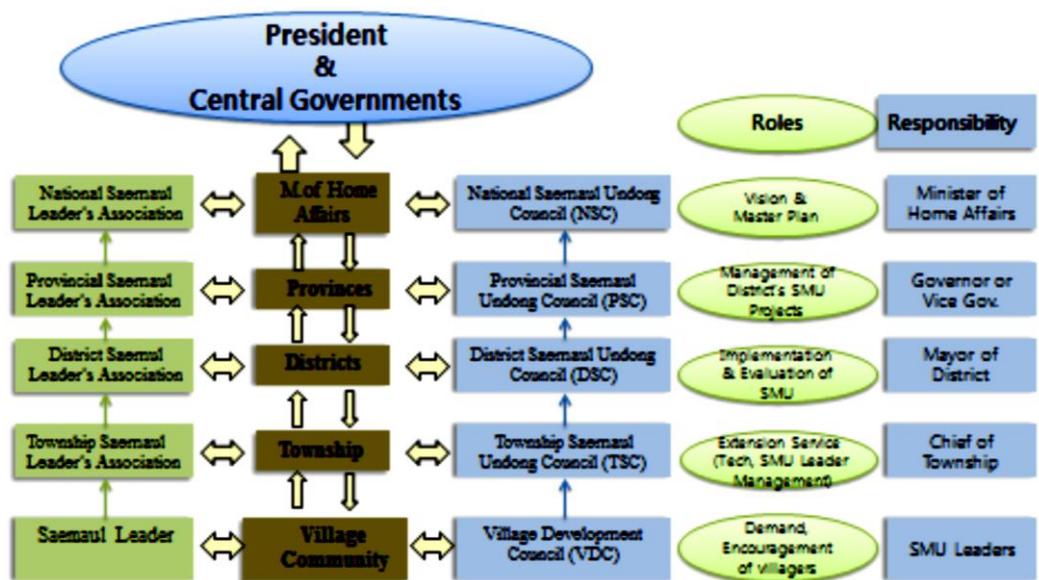


Figure 2: Government initiating bottom-up approach for integration

Developmental state is a function of the administrative structures or principles of governance. The central government realized that effective coordination among the ministries was crucial, since no single ministry could deal with all the development issues alone. As shown also in Figure 2, the government delegated authority of coordination to the MOHA, under which all relevant ministries were mobilized. In each level of local administration, a special committee for coordination was also created. Comprehensive development plans for each village were managed by the relevant department congruent to their work and channeled up to the relevant ministries in the central government (ADB, 2012).

Government intervention and support during the implementation of Saemaul Undong occurred specifically in administrative assistance.

Administrative guidance refers to government supported activities that foster and promote necessary conditions for a successful project outcomes in the course of selecting and carrying out a project. It refers to the provision of advice or consultation services on legal, administrative, technical, and educational issues.

Using centralized and hierarchical administrative system, Saemaul Undong effectively created vertical integration linking village, local governments and the central government. Each level of government managed programs under their control and reported to a higher level authority. The central government provided a guideline of the vision and overall goals and coordinated the overall management of the plan. Local governments acted as a pipeline, conveying the voices from the villages to the top, and transferring directions from the top

to the village. Local governments were allowed to modify, at their own discretion, the action plans under their jurisdiction, which to some extent reflected local conditions and opinions of the village people.

Under the bureaucratic government system, policy coordination was achieved through Saemaul Undong promotional councils which were organized by a presidential decree on various hierarchical government organizational levels. It was put into place to ensure a constant and undisturbed execution of the plans along a hierarchical administrative structure and it was under the top leadership of the MOHA.

*More support for better performance*

Saemaul Undong was a movement based on selective incentives and competition between villages. The competition was to reward villages by selective incentives contributed by the internal unity of villages and developed into a practical force for Saemaul Undong to be performed effectively. Also, the Saemaul leaders of the better performing villages were awarded and publicized.

The MOHA classified villages into three levels based on degree of performance and level of development. These three levels of classifications were: (a) basic, (b) self-help, and (c) self-reliance. The government adopted different approaches for each class village, giving greater assistance to the higher-level villages. This was intended to create a sense of competitiveness among villages and to stimulate the lower-level class

villages to make a greater efforts toward advancing to a higher village class.

'An experience of successes' was important, and the government pushed this status by providing economic incentives to villages where community tasks, such as road construction, were successfully completed. As a result, residents in rural villages enjoyed the experience of success, and it shifted their mindset from a negative and skeptical attitude towards a more positive and independent attitude. In other words, the experience of success was transformed into self-efficacy.

Saemaul Undong first started with relatively small projects which could produce distinctive changes in the village, but can be relatively accomplished, so that the village people could realize their capacity and build confidence in themselves by experiencing success (Eom, 2011). At the same time, it provided training to Saemaul leaders in successful villages and delivered practical knowledge and technical skills necessary for project management. Village people could better manage their activities with newly acquired knowledge, which in turn produced better results and strengthened their confidence even further, creating a virtuous circle of development.

The competitive style of giving subsidies to villages was another good way to encourage Saemaul works. During the 1970s, local government officials were dispatched by the central government, so the government could control the administration very

easily. Also, government officials played a very effective and efficient role at the community level. However, the village people, along with the Saemaul leaders, had a full freedom to make decisions about what they wanted to do for community development. They used this freedom to choose their own projects and government officials helped them to carry out each project.

The government also used the system of competition between communities by giving incentives to better performing villages, so as to raise participation of the already active communities and those who were lagging behind, as well as, individual participation through giving honorable medals and personnel incentive to the best performing ones. The government also convened monthly meetings to evaluate the progress of the Saemaul Undong projects and this enabled its awareness of the problems associated with the process in order to give appropriate advices and possible solutions.

#### *Two tier change agents*

The goal of mindset changes through strengthening the 'diligence', 'self-help' and 'cooperation' of individuals and rural communities was deemed to be successful. The gist of this goal was to change the people's view of the world to a more positive and independent attitude from that of an idle and dependent attitude rooted in extreme poverty for a long period of times (Baek *et al.*, 2012).

The government set up and developed a support system of

village-level organizations and detailed contents and directions of Saemaul Undong in 1971. It was decided in 1971 that the MOHA would be responsible for Saemaul Undong on the central government level. Each village had one public official specifically designated to oversee Saemaul Undong projects at the village level. In each village, there were male and female Saemaul leaders who were responsible for organizing internal cooperation for the village projects. Under the Saemaul Undong, two Saemaul leaders (one male and one female) were elected by vote in each village. One of the most important things that the government did was to provide training and management for Saemaul Undong leaders. A sense of duty, a feeling of achievement, and acknowledgement by community members were the intangible rewards given to the leaders.

Prior to the implementation of Saemaul projects, the local administration office recommended that each village organize a Village Development Committee (VDC) consisting of five to ten people to make decisions on the appropriate utilization of the government-assisted materials. In most cases, the VDC members were recommended by villagers and the chair of committee was usually male Saemaul Undong leader. The VDC consists with mainly men, women, young group leaders, village chiefs and Saemaul Undong leaders who were representing their villages. Saemaul leaders and VDC members worked without any payment. Figure 3 represents the two tier changing agents and good partnership that

shows the interaction between the macroscopic (state) mobilization and

the microscopic (villager) participation in the Saemaul Undong.

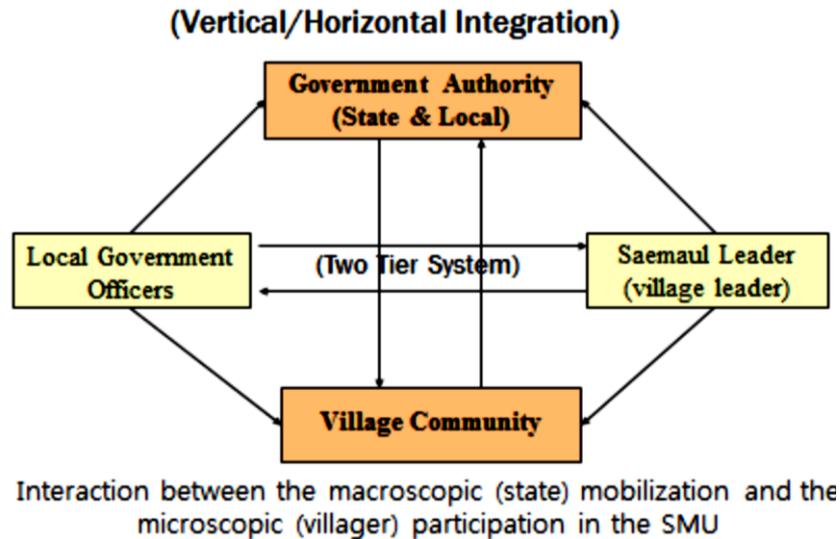


Figure 3: Two tier changing agents and good partnership

Effective and distinctive governmental implementation strategies need to be credited to the practical education programs offered at various levels to village participants, including separate training programs of male and female Saemaul leaders. The government established an educational training system for Saemaul leaders and farmers. In 1972, the government constructed the 'Diligent Farmer Training Facility' to teach agricultural skills. In 1973, the facility was renamed the 'Saemaul Undong Leader Training Facility'.

The active and passionate involvement of local government officials, especially those at the lower level of local administration, led to the conviction that Saemaul Undong was a government-guided

movement or a unilaterally imposed state-project. Indeed, the rural community residents, especially the farmers, played a central role in carrying out Saemaul projects in close cooperation with local governments.

#### *Triangle of stakeholders*

*National government.* The national government creates a general planning for the Saemaul Undong based on community needs. As the 1970s' program to cultivate better villages presented impressive results, the government saw the need for a more systematic approach to the drive. To guarantee effective rural development, the government set the general course for related projects from other ministries and limited its assistance by providing minimum basic materials needed for the

projects. The central government was seriously involved and dedicated to the Saemaul Undong, particularly the President.

*Local governments.* Local governments were also involved in implementing the Saemaul projects. To increase the efficiency and efficacy of the project, officials of local governments frequently met with village leaders, and sometimes participated in the village meetings. Local government officials, who were in-charge of the implementation in provinces, districts, townships and villages, were held responsible and accountable for any progress their areas were making.

*Village Development Committee.* The VDC at the *ri* (village) played an important role in making decisions at the community level. The chairperson of this organization was the Saemaul leader. The main functions of the VDC were to coordinate the activities of various functional residents' organizations while discussing and determining Saemaul projects, and effectively implementing administrative policies.

The village was the basic unit primarily responsible for planning, organizing and implementing various kinds of community development projects during the 1970s. Hence, the rural village became the focus for coordination and management of all types of government support and

assistance. Farmers in Korea came to live in clustered villages which helped the Saemaul Undong. It was common for the number of households in a village to vary from twenty to over 200. Compact villages made it easier to discuss village affairs and also convenient to work together on village development projects.

Saemaul Undong was a Korean rural community development policy focused on the 'village'-level which is the basic unit of administrative support, assessment of performance and rewards of Saemaul Undong. Also, the traditional Korean village had very good social capital, such as trust, social ties, and networks. It was important to induce villagers' voluntary participation on the basis of traditional social capital in local communities. For rural communities, in developing countries, traditional solidarity or social capital had much more important than modern social ties.

A community-based approach was embodied in the established principles of participation, social and gender inclusion, equity, and local stakeholders' ownership of the decision-making and development processes. Figure 4 further illustrates the relationships of the three stakeholders: the national government, local government and the rural people.



Figure 4: Triangle of Stakeholders

The developmental state requires the existence of a bureaucratic apparatus to implement the planned process of development. In addition to this point, the developmental state requires a pilot agency to oversee and guide the developmental process. The existence of such a bureaucratic apparatus requires a meritocratic- and techno-bureaucracy capable of formulating policy and possessing the required freedom. The developmental state requires the active participation and response of the private sector to state intervention (Johnson, 1982; Caldentey, 2008).

The Saemaul Central Promotional Council was created to systemize all Saemaul projects by the government and other related organizations. The role of the council was to ensure a consistent and undisturbed execution of the plans along with the hierarchy of the administration network (central government → province → district → Township or eup/myun → village). Government officials were

asked to visit regularly to check and guide the progress of Saemaul projects in their jurisdiction. The council was headed by the MOHA and composed of deputy ministers from the twenty-two related departments, accompanied by the chairman of the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation. The council performed the function of deliberation and coordination only, so that the responsibility for a project still belonged to the ministry in-charge. In 1973, the government created a new bureau with the sole purpose of monitoring the progress of Saemaul Undong in each local office and established a system whereby each village had one public official specifically designed to oversee the Saemaul Undong project at the village level (Park, 2009; Chung, 2009; Baek *et al*, 2012).

Various promotional councils for Saemaul Undong were also created at both central and local government levels in line with the effort to enhance consultation and coordination among related bodies (Chung, 2009). The centralized

nature of government administration under the authoritarian regime in the early 1970s facilitated coordination of government agencies and local community organizations through the Saemaul promotional councils (ADB, 2012. 36).

In the early stages of the movement, local administrative officers at the district (*gun*) and township (*eup/myun*) levels played an important role in planning and executing Saemaul Undong projects. The primary contact the government had with villagers was through officers of the local *eup/myun* or *gun*. These officers advised and consulted with villagers relating to administrative guidance and technology. These local administrative officials actively participated in meetings of the Saemaul promotional councils at the district and township levels (ADB, 2012. 36).

## CONCLUSION

To apply the Saemaul Undong into developing countries and to address the concerns on poverty alleviation, first, the government should implement policies that meet the villages' or residents' actual needs. A community-based development project that considers local needs to be established by the government along with a stable national leadership and a clear development vision. Second, Saemaul Undong should be preceded by encouraging village residents' strong willingness to cooperate, in order to motivate voluntary participation in village projects and experience success.

These experiences of success would encourage residents to escape a pessimistic mentality and to have self-efficacy and the belief that they would be better off. Third, the restructuring of governmental institutions and the implementation of redistribution policies on administrative resources should be performed for these successful cases to spread.

The Saemaul Undong was about instilling a new ethos based on the basic ideals of diligence, self-help, and cooperation, inspiring the people of this nation with a "can-do" spirit and a drive to achieve "prosperity through hard work." Government provided more incentives such as electricity to those villages that had demonstrated their willingness to make some contributions to improve their communities. In addition, the government arranged study tours and training sessions so that villages could benchmark other villages with similar endowments. Great progress was achieved by many villages through collective efforts and sacrifices. The pillar of training and fostering missionaries within the Korean rural reconstruction campaign offered nation-wide training and education program for poverty reduction and spiritual modernization. It rendered nation-wide training for politicians, government officials, village leaders and farmers.

Saemaul Undong can be transferred and applied to other types of rural communities, including heterogeneous, pluralistic and multi-cultural communities. In such different social settings of different

societies, Saemaul Undong can and should be revised and readapted or localized to fit into the different local socio-structural and cultural environments.

This study argues that with the right policies and right strategies, based on individual political, social, economic and political contexts, some aspects of the Saemaul Undong can be helpful. This paper cautions that blindly adopting the Saemaul Undong may not produce successful results, and therefore developing countries should carefully study their own situation and devise a workable and practical solution of their own. The most important lesson learned from Saemaul Undong is the "we can do it" spirit based on appropriate strategies and measures depending on the enabling environment (Wom, 2011; Kwon, 2010; Shreeiana, 2011).

## REFERENCES

- Asia Development Bank (2012) *The Saemaul Undong Movement in the Republic of Korea: Sharing knowledge on community-driven development*, ADB, Mandaluyong, Philippines.
- Ahn, B. M. and Boyer, William, W. (1984) *Rural Development and Leadership Patterns in South Korea*, Korean Studies 8, pp. 83-94.
- Baek, I. R. Kim, P S and Lee, S. C. (2012) *Contributions and Limitations of Saemaul Undong in Korea for Regional Development and Welfare Improvement in Less Developed Countries*, Public Administration and Development 32, pp. 416-429.
- Choe, C. S. (2005) *Key Factors to Successful Community Development: The Korean Experience*, Discussion Paper No. 39, Institute of Developing Economies.
- Chung, K. J. (2009) *Experiences and Application from Korea's Saemaul Undong in the 1970s*, KDI (Korea Development Institute).
- Claassen, C. H. (2011) *An Aristotelian Communitarian Reading of South Korea's Saemaul Undong and South Korean Society: Originality & the Importance of Language vis-a-vis Sub Saharan Africa and South Africa*, Asian Social Science 7(7), pp. 124-136.
- Domjahn, T. D. (2013) *What (if anything) can developing countries learn from South Korea?*, Asian Culture and History 5(2), pp. 16-24.
- Douglass, M. (2013) *The Saemaul Undong: South Korea's Rural Development Miracle in Historical Perspective*, Asia Research Institute Working Paper Series No. 197, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore.
- Eom, S. J. (2011) *Synergy between State and Rural Society for Development: An Analysis of the Government System of the Rural Saemaul Undong in South Korea*, paper presented at the 2011 KAPA International Conference,

- 29-30 April 2011, Busan, Korea, pp. 1-35.
- Han, D. H. (2011) *The Successful Cases of the Korea's Saemaul Undong (New Community Movement)*, Ministry of Strategy and Finance, Republic of Korea.
- Kim, K. D. and Kim, O. J. (1977) *Korea's Saemaul Undong: Social Structure and the Role of Government in Integrated Rural Development*, Bulletin of the Population and Development Studies Center 6(1997. 10), pp. 1-16.
- Kim, K. S. and Kim, J. K. (1997) *Korean Economic Development: Overview In The Korean Economy 1945-95: Performance and Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Edited by Cha, K & Perkins, KDI, Seoul, Korea.
- Kwon, H. (2010) Implications of Korea's Saemaul Undong for International Development Policy: A Structural Perspective, *The Korean Journal of Policy Studies* 25 (3), pp. 87-100.
- Onis, Z. (1991) *The Logic of the Developmental State*. *Comparative Politics* 24 (1), pp. 109-126.
- Park, S. Y. (2009) Analysis of Saemaul Undong: A Korean Rural Development Programme in the 1970s. *Asia-Pacific Development Journal* 16 (2), pp. 113-140.
- Park, S. Y. (2008) *Saemaul Undong for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in International Development Cooperation*, edited by KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency), Korea.
- Reed, E. P. (2010) *Is Saemaul Undong a Model for Developing Countries Today?*, paper presented at the International Symposium in Commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Saemaul Undong hosted by the Korea Saemaul Undong Center, 30 September 2010, Seoul, Korea.
- Rueschemeyer, D. and Evans, P, 1985. *The state and economic transformation: Toward an analysis of the conditions underlying effective intervention*. Bringing the State Back in, (ed) and Envas, P, Rueschemeyer, D & Skocpol. T, Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 46-47.
- Shreejana, G. (2011) Review of Community Development Model of S. Korea (Saemaul Undong) and its Lesson to Developing Country. *Sonsik Journal* 3, pp. 72-78.
- Whang, I. J. (1987) *The role of government in agricultural and rural development in Korean, 1970-85*, paper presented at UCLA, SNU and GSPA Joint Conference on the Role of the State in Economic Development, 14-16 August 1987, James E. West Center, UCLA, Los Angeles, California.