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**Master's Degree in International Development Policy**

**Saemaul Undong in Korea and Challenges for  
Replication to Myanmar**

February, 2014

Program in International Development Policy

Graduate School of International Studies

Seoul National University

**Aung Thu Win**

# **Saemaul Undong in Korea and Challenges for Replication to Myanmar**

A thesis presented

by

**Aung Thu Win**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of International Development Policy

**Graduate School of International Studies  
Seoul National University  
Seoul, Korea**

February 2014

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## **Abstract**

### **Saemaul Undong in Korea and Challenges for Replication to Myanmar**

**Aung Thu Win**

Saemaul Undong, a Korean community development movement initiated in early 1970s, was the most successful movement for rural transformation of Korea into a modern state within a short period of time. This paper attempts to portray how Korean experience of rural transformation be a lesson to other developing countries in order to overcome their rural poverty. Indeed, Saemaul experience of ‘we can do’ spirit is helpful to share to developing countries. Yet, the paper concludes that blindly adopting the Saemaul Movement model definitely does not produce successful result so developing countries should carefully study their own enabling environment and devise workable and practical solutions of their own. The study is to explore Korea’s Saemaul Undong specially focused on Good Governance, Community Participation and National Leadership, and its replication to Myanmar, and what the challenges will be replicating it.

**Keywords:** Rural Development, Saemaul Undong, Myanmar, Poverty reduction and Governance.

**Student ID:** 2012 – 24125.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

All the developing countries are striving to fight poverty to live or enjoy the quality of life. The government, various organizations and the people of the developing countries are needed the financial assistance and the sharing of development experience of the successful countries like, South Korea. The Korean economy has developed rapidly over the last 1960s.

In this era of globalization, where there have been rapid changes in various human aspects as a result of the global acceleration of information, communication, and technology, country really needs to be prepared to meet the challenges driven by the global demands. One way is by empowering our communities so that they can stand side by - side and even hand - in - hand with other in all walks of life. This means empower communities in order to actualize themselves and to be fruitful citizens, able to address and overcome the increasing problems of national development. Empowering community and strengthening their participation, at both

local and national level, is at the heart of sustainable socioeconomic development of the country.

The implementation of Saemaul Undong (“New Village”) movement in 1970s marked the start of a cross-cutting change not only from the economic point of view but also to Korean peoples’ attitude. Saemaul Undong is a community-based integrated rural development program (Park, 2009) which rescued Korea’s rural populace. Saemaul Undong is claimed to increase rural incomes, reduce rural poverty and improve basic rural living conditions in Korea which were immediately felt within some years after its implementation. Saemaul Undong is also a “Social Revolution of Korean Rural Society” which changed people’s attitude from laziness to diligence, from dependence to self-reliance, and from individual selfishness to cooperation (Choe, 2005).

### **1.1 Purpose and Significance of the Study**

This study aims to give more light to the Myanmar government upon implementation of the Saemaul Undong in Myanmar.

Deciding whether to adopt the movement, or otherwise, is beyond the concern as of the moment since the Myanmar government already entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Korean government for the implementation of the movement within the year (2013). However, this paper is to analyze Korea's Key Success factors and give implications to Myanmar.

There are several other success factors which can be considered and delved on future researches about the adoption/implementation of Saemaul Undong in Myanmar and other countries similarly situated. This paper is focused on only three success factors of Korean Saemaul Undong – national leadership, good governance and community participation.

## **1.2 Literature Review**

Kwon examines Korea Saemaul Undong Movement, arguing that it could be a missing link, policy and market development between states (Kwon, 2010). Saemaul Undong community self-help movement is not only the social and economic development in South Korea to contribute, but also as a mechanism for social inclusion. The success is based on a community organization more open to rising movement, such as the 1950 land reform. To understand the political consequences of the international development from Saemaul Undong, the developing countries should be considering the context of the social and political background of their own.

Eom reexamines the practicing the mode of good governance in the Saemaul Undong (Eom, 2011). It examines the structural factors, good governance, the public sector, characteristics liberal democracies in the developing world, but also the relevant institutions the Saemaul Undong. He determines the characteristics of multifaceted of the Saemaul Undong, but also reassess the value of governance in the 21st century.

Han mentions that the study of social and economic change in South Korea features an excellent chance to have a better understanding of the elements (Han, 2012). Development of self within a generation, Korea changes from a poor rural community into a modern developed country, a work that has never been seen earlier. What makes the experience of Korea is so outstanding that its fast economic growth was rather large, which means that the fruits of rapid growth in Korea is shared by many. The challenge is the secret back of the fast and comprehensive development of Korea, valuable information and experience and knowledge is shared with the rest of the universal community can reveal.

Gnawali attempts to portray how Korean experience of rural transformation be a lesson to other developing countries in order to overcome their rural poverty (Gnawali, 2011). Indeed, Saemaul experience of 'we can do' spirit is helpful to share to developing countries. Yet, the paper concludes that blindly adopting the Saemaul Movement model definitely does not produce successful result so developing countries should carefully study their own enabling environment and devise workable and practical solutions of their own.

Choe explains the several key factors to the success of the Saemaul Undong (Choe, 2005). As first, he describes that the guidance and support of the government for the movement played a very important role. And a wide range of people's participation in the movement is second successful key factor. The third successful key factor is that community leadership which made a big success and was selected by rural people themselves. The spiritual reform is the final success factor for the Saemaul Undong infused the people with the spirits of diligence, the self-reliance, and cooperation.

Park emphasizes the contribution the development gap between rural communities for a decade (Park, 2009). Its success can be attributed to poor basic strategy and its implementation, reduce and adapt to promote the use of contextual Korea ability to extend opportunity to promote rural. She focuses the most important lessons; develop appropriate strategies and measures reflect and the use of political, economic and social. He also stressed that developing countries should carefully examine their Situation, and workable solutions, develop their practices.

Hassan (2010) in his article examines the significant achievements of the movement in other countries, not just rural infrastructure and the creation of income-generating projects to improve, but also a strengthening of the local authority, make the bottom of the method type. It also explains the improve local management critical success factors, people learn how to deal with their problems, and how to match their vision, their own villages, towns and activities designed actually teach people how to work together to infrastructure improve, limited resources in their villages. The application model for other countries shows that rural sports, sports village rural village spirit, hard work, self-help and co-operation is very efficient and effective in reducing rural poverty, the establishment of local government system, building up capital for a better life together. It can also be applied to other countries or other communities, rural Sports Village, the spirit, and to adjust to the different situations.

Eom analyzed the 1970 New Village Movement in Korea rural sports, from the perspective of good governance (Eom, 2010). He defines that the different characteristics of good governance in the village, especially people in the town spontaneous joint. He describes

such participation is not only a leader in the village of performance, but also a consensus-oriented, responding to the village level decision-making and execution of projects and transparent. He also mentions that the Saemaul Undong was involved in the promotion and support of the government's intervention and strategies, not only the efficiency and accountability, but also greater equity and inclusive rural village.

### **1.3 Research Questions:**

This research aims to provide answer to the following questions:

- How did national leadership, good governance and community participation contributed to the success of Saemaul Undong in Korea during 1970s?
- Considering Myanmar's social characteristics, what is the potential challenge/s that Myanmar could encounter in implementing/replicating Saemaul Undong?

## **Chapter II**

### **South Korea before 1970s and Current Myanmar**

South Korea has the experience after the Second World War the little nations in the world, peace activist, at the helm of the state's land reform and general welfare redistribution. The impacts of socio-economic change, Korea Rural drive rural economic and social structures in a relatively small direct farm owners and landless families. As a result, the 1950-1960 political stability in rural areas the government pays for the development of the industrial sector.

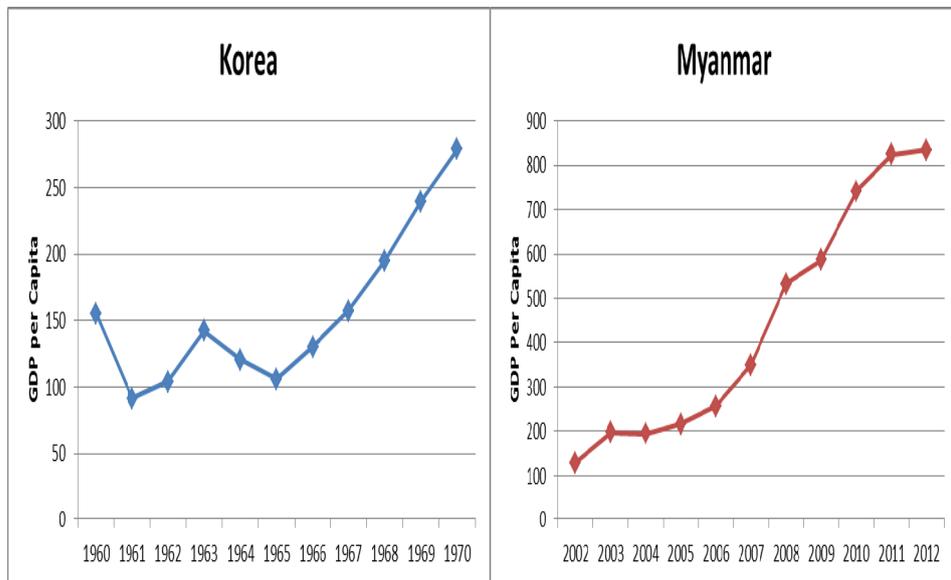
Myanmar is located in a historical phase of its development. A new Constitution was adopted; elections and bi-elections were held in May 2008; in November 2010 and in April 2012 respectively. Parliament and the government were formed at the national and regional/country levels. New constitution is more definite in the provision of basic democratic principles, the rule of law and human rights executive, legislative and judicial powers parted. It also retains a major military and political role. Many yet fully reflected in the current violence in the state laws, regulations and policies principle.

The President has a good government reform program priorities and to ensure that the fundamental rights.

## 2.1 GDP Per Capita 10 years

Myanmar's economy 10 years (from 2002 to 2012) prior the Saemaul Undong is somehow similar with what South Korea experienced during the 60's (from 1960 to 1970) and grew better compared to what South Korea experienced until they implementing the Saemaul Undong.

**Figure 1. GDP Per Capita 10 years before Implementation of Korea and Myanmar**

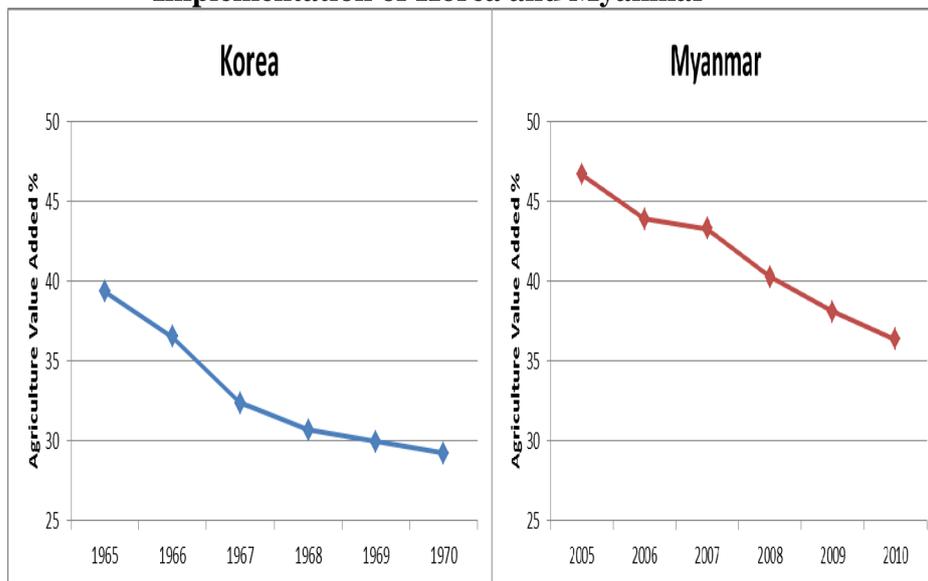


Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

## 2.2 The share of agricultural value added, 6 years

The share of agricultural value added are also similar with South Korea even though it was declining faster from around 40% to only 30% compared to what Myanmar experienced from around 46% to 36%.

**Figure 2. The share of agricultural value added, 6 years, before Implementation of Korea and Myanmar**

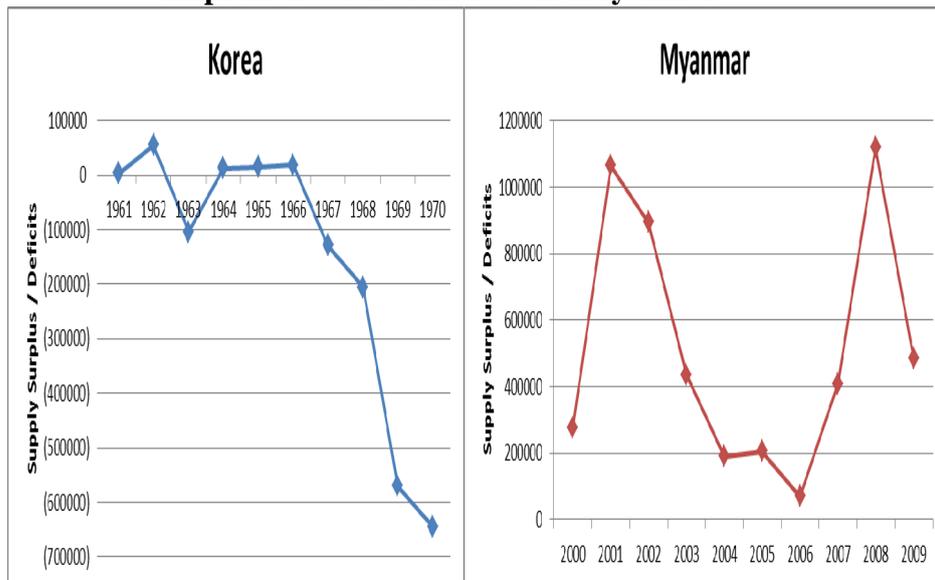


Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

### 2.3 Self-Reliance on Rice Production, 10 years

Even though they have the similar declining pattern, Myanmar can still maintain its rice production so it can maintain its self-reliance on rice production compared to South Korea, where they experienced deficit in production to meet their own national demand.

**Figure 3. Self-Reliance on Rice Production, 10 years, before Implementation of Korea and Myanmar**

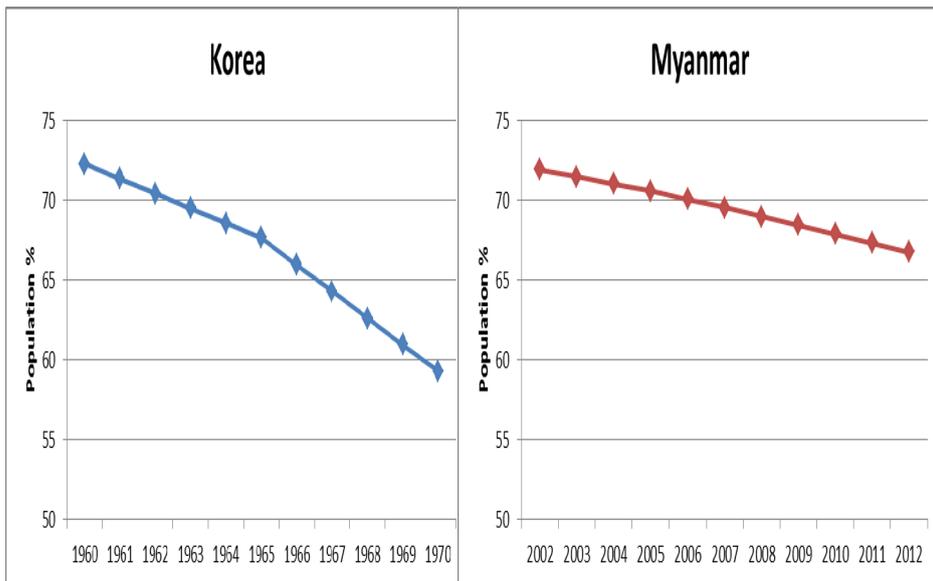


Source: FAO

## 2.4 Rural population, 11 years

Despite its similar decline in agriculture share, Myanmar's rural population does not experiencing rapid declining as South Korea experienced, where Myanmar's rural population tend to remain at the same level.

**Figure 4. Rural population, 11 years, before implementation of Korea and Myanmar**



Source: World Bank World Development Indicators

## **Chapter III**

### **Successes of Saemaul Undong**

#### **3.1 Positive impact on the agriculture sector**

Korea was poor and destroyed in 1950 in the war suffered severe food shortages. In 1960, the priority for the growing urban working period in supporting the country's industrialization is low-cost grain distribution. The Government depends on the import of rice and barley. In 1970/71 annual rice importations accounted for 25% (Lie, 1991).

The new agricultural technologies, crop varieties and chemical inputs and fertilizers become broader with the Saemaul Undong (Park 2009). Enhanced physical structure helps increase productivity and revenue growth opportunities to work with residents and the opening of a new window venturing into new activities and markets, resources and activities are necessary to provide them with efficient access. The average yield of rice per hectare increase from 3.1 tons in the period from 1965 to 1971 4.0 million tons in the 1972-

1978 period, by farmers for their rice prices have also increased (Lie, 1991).

Plus several agricultural livelihood policies are gained (for example, the price of high corn). Rice self-reliance ratio is been 88.7 in 1970, and in 1975 to 1978, no import rice. Korea since 1984, almost self-reliant in poor yields rice, 1988 production is been successful 670 million, far exceeding domestic consumption 5.6 million M/T (Lie, 1991).

### **3.2 Rural income increased**

Discussions of the farmers' income-generating projects have been implemented to increase revenue and reduce poverty purposes. The average farm household income increased from 21,317 won in 1970 and to 185,624 in 1979, an increase of almost nine times the decade (see Table 1). Other indicators support an increase in the purchase of a TV and a fridge, rural electrification (Reed, 2010).

**Table 1. Ratio of rural household income to urban household income**

**(Korean won), 1967 - 1979**

Average Monthly Income of Urban Wage Warner Household (1)		Average Monthly Income of Farm Household (2)	2/1 (%)
1967	20,720	12,456	60.1
1970	31,700	21,317	67.1
1973	45,850	40,059	67.1
1976	95,980	96,355	100.4
1979	219,133	185,624	87.4

Source: Shreejana (2011)

### **Decline in rural poverty**

The rural poverty has dropped from 27.9 percent in 1970 to 9.0% in 1980 as showing in Table 2 (Kwon, 2010).

**Table 2. Incidence of absolute poverty (percentage)**

	1965	1970	1976	1980	1991
Urban households	54.9	16.2	18.1	10.4	8.7
Rural households	35.8	27.9	11.7	9.0	2.8
All households	40.9	23.4	14.8	9.8	7.6

Source: Kwon (2010)

### **3.3 Living environment improvement and basic rural infrastructure establishment**

Saemaul Undong has resulted in a important progress in rural breathing situation and structure. Some major infrastructure projects have shown in Table 3. Extend and expand the road as possible, agricultural mechanization, and the phone line extension and electrification have been enabled the inhabitants to provide timely, to respond to the changing market conditions. Improved structure will help to improve productivity and income, better access and greater opportunities, but also creates a healthier environment and offer better health. This has been leaded to the power of the people and reformed the local admin (Shreejana, 2011).

**Table 3. Achievements of major Saemaul projects in the 1970s**

Project Name	Unit	Objective	Performance
Expanding Village Roads	Km	26,266	43,558
Constructing New Agricultural Roads	Km	49,167	61,797
Installing Small Bridges	Unit	76,749	79,516
Constructing Village Centers	Unit	35,608	37,012
Building Warehouses	Unit	34,665	22,143
Housing Improvements	Unit	544,000	225,000
Improving Village Layout	Village		2,747
Constructing Sewage Systems	Km	8,654	15,559
Supplying Electricity	Household	2,834,000	2,777,500
Operating Saemaul Factories	Unit	950	717

Source: Choe (2005)

### **3.4 Change in Local Governance, People's Participation and Attitude**

Later, Saemaul Undong is somewhat a bottom-up approach; the duty of the villagers has taken for village level activities, adapting them to the needs. Community Village in the case has also launched a new community-based leadership, Saemaul Undong leaders, usually at a relatively young person, elected by the villagers, without any advantage, and served in villages. Under the new guidance, the villagers have together worked for a shared objective.

The new experiences have accepted the awareness of their own capabilities and its power to the government (Park, 2009).

In addition, through Saemaul Undong, the change of the local governments have been played an agent of the central government and also a tool a rural development representative supporting residents. Local governments, villagers and the central government are related to each other instructions and the field of sound government policy guidance. With the support of Saemaul leaders, it delivers government facilities and support to rural villages and organized various types of Government assistance to escape any confusion, needless replication and clashes. Local administration policies have consequently become to better represent their residents.

Villagers' label idea is not much different. Farmers are conservative and eager to contribute in supportive efforts, hedonism and laziness. Over 500,000 people have participated in Saemaul Undong courses from 1972 to 1979; a change in attitude was noted. Park (2009) summarized them, as follows:

- **Diligence.** Korean farmers, as with other farmers in developing countries, seemed to have lived a very challenging life. Farm wives, for example, had to raise children, make clothes, do the laundry, cook meals, collect firewood, fetch water, work all day in the fields and do some additional side jobs. It was even more absurd to assert that, before 1971, farmers held values that made them lazy, while at the same time workers in the city, who were mostly of farm origin, created the industrial “miracle. If there was a new industriousness linked to the success of Saemaul Undong, it would be caused by the new opportunities and resources created for profitable agriculture rather than by a change in values.
- **Self-reliance.** Saemaul Undong contributed to rural farmers becoming self-sufficient and free from shortages of food by being able to produce enough food for themselves, and more confident about their capability.

- **Cooperation.** Saemaul Undong linked the traditional sense of cooperation to individual gains and modified the concept to fit into the modernization process. Over a period of several years, people learned how to work together to develop estimates on the resources required, to get necessary assistance from outside and to motivate some reluctant farmers. Based on a survey of the 150 Saemaul Undong leaders conducted in 1974, 38 percent chose increased cooperation spirit among villagers as the most positive result brought about by Saemaul Undong.

### **3.5 Improvement in gender equality**

A small window for rural women participates in social activities and engages formally with the government to open opportunities in Saemaul Undong. Firstly limited their participation, the so-called "women's work", but gradually increase their participation in the activities of the village. Some Saemaul women

leaders launched and successfully applied projects are measured part of a male field. In general considered, persistent efforts and outstanding achievements of women have openly appreciated their ability and positive changes in the role of women in society (Park, 2009).

## **Chapter IV**

### **Characteristics of Korean Saemaul Undong (1971-79)**

#### **4.1 Saemaul Undong and Good Governance**

The key concepts of good governance and elements, especially in developing countries is recommend by the World Bank that good governance is considered “a requisite for many different forms of growth, whereas the various features of bad governance ... corruption, waste, abuse of power and exploitation of public means for private ends ... tend to drive unfortunate nations into vicious spirals of decline, disruption and destruction” (Eom, 2011). The institutionalization of democracy and economic presentation of developing countries to succeed, good governance is not only efficient and effective value model, but also minorities, transparent, inclusive and low-level corruption as an economic and social development of the most important elements. In addition, it highlighted transparency, participation and responsibility for the present and upcoming needs of the community. For example, UNESCAP (2007) said that good governance has the following eight characteristics as follows:

- ***Participation:*** Participation by both men and women is a key cornerstone of good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. Participation needs to be informed and organized. This means freedom of association and expression on the one hand and an organized civil society on the other hand.
- ***Consensus-orientation:*** Good governance requires mediation of the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the whole community and how this can be achieved. It also requires a broad and long-term perspective on what is needed for sustainable human development and how to achieve the goals of such development. This can only result from an understanding of the historical, cultural and social contexts of a given society or community.
- ***Responsiveness:*** Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame.

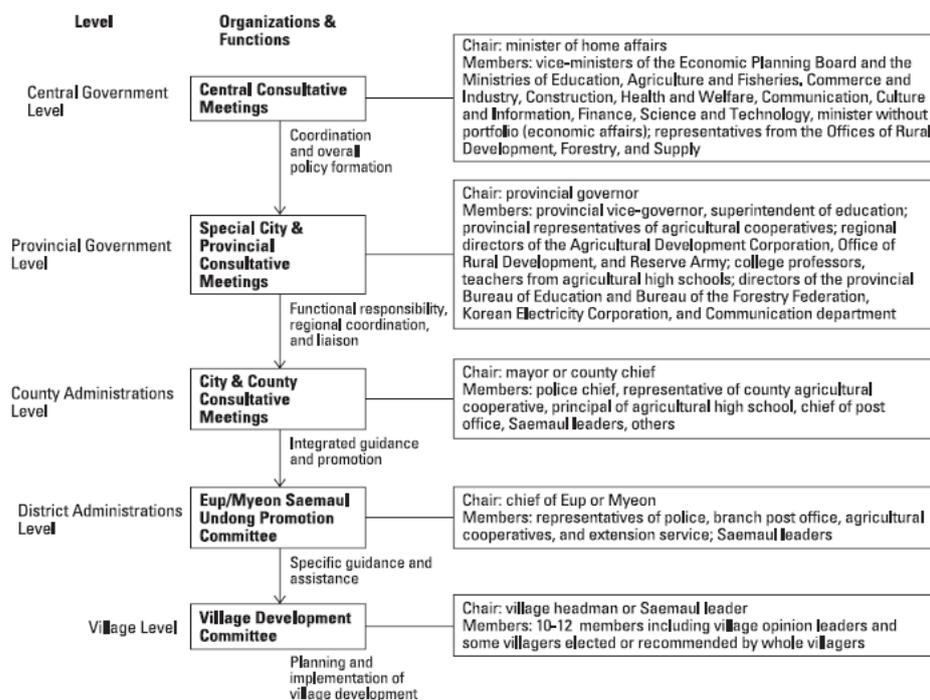
- ***Transparency***: Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.
- ***Rule of Law***: Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires full protection of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.
- ***Equity and Inclusiveness***: A society's well-being depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.
- ***Effectiveness and Efficiency***: Good governance means that processes and institutions produce results that meet

the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. The concept of efficiency in the context of good governance also covers the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment.

- **Accountability:** Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders in good governance. Who is accountable to whom varies depending on whether decisions or actions taken are internal or external to an organization or institution. In general an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

Eom reviews that the Saemaul Undong of the 1970s from the view of good governance (Eom, 2011). He found many of the features of good governance in the Saemaul Undong, which made to a series of results. In actual, the villagers establish that the different

types of contribution. Participation Agreement for Saemaul Undong led to the decision and policy-making in response transparency and implementation of the project at the village level. These are involved in the promotion and support of administrative intervention to



improve the efficiency and accountability and equity and included in the Saemaul Undong. It is important that the Saemaul Undong embodies the features of good governance.

**Figure 5. Organizational Arrangements for the Saemaul Undong**

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981.

Note: Eup and Myeon are levels of district in local administrative system in Korea.

President Park establishes from the central government level to the village level as in the figure 5. The Central government level has structured all key ministries and structured dialogue participants more systematic and effective organization to promote and coordinate with the overall objective of the Saemaul Undong. In addition, they are used levels in the medium and long term plans and action plans for educational and promotional activities for the Saemaul Undong.

Promotional committees set at each local level. And their responsibility is to promote the Saemaul Undong at that time. The upper-level councils contribute the lower-level council's comprehensive plans and guidance for carrying out projects. Lower level council is transferring the results to its jurisdiction vesting responsible and has the power to a higher level of parliamentary support required for the project.

Through these systems such as vertical and horizontal promotion ones, marketing, upgrading plans for each system are molded and adjusted. Projects in each region report the results of Saemaul Undong, Central Administrator give rewards and punishments, therefore transferred to encourage maximum efficiency.

The system has become the global market of institutional support and evaluation requirements, and fast, is responsible for the management and regulation of the Saemaul Undong.

Local administrative organizations are also restructured encourage the Saemaul Undong. In February 1973, the city and the province of the renovated executive, and city by city and provincial authorities and a general Ministry has set up a bureau Saemaul Department. On January 1, 1975, Saemaul Department is relocated to the executive vice-governor. New deputy governor is in charge of all Saemaul Undong planning, budgeting and control authorities in all operations.

Korean politics are not the same from the politics of developing countries. The key objective of the policy would be a national leadership. Viewed from this point, the Saemaul Undong is the best significant and truthful form of political deed. The Saemaul Undong is the forcing power for completing nationwide problems; a movement acceleration nationwide construction. President Park remarked: "The Saemaul Undong is a national movement for better living. But better living does not mean that one eats and dresses

better, living in a huge gorgeous mansion. It means that people help each other so as to make everybody happy, so that all the villages and the nation can live better.”

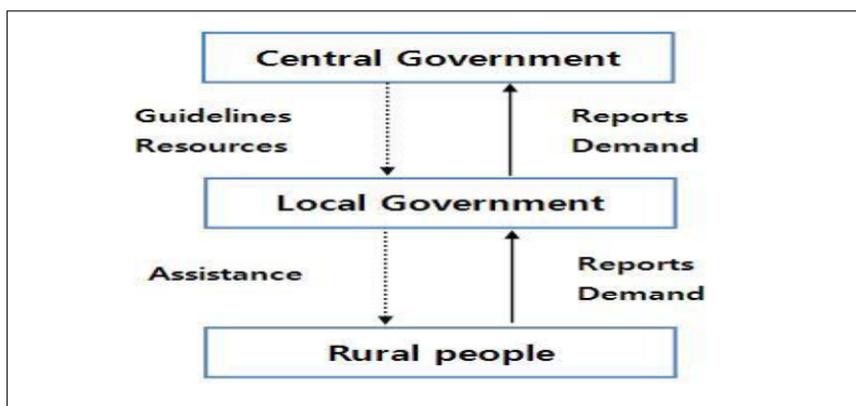
The strong funding and involvement of the government are measured one of the main causes for the achievement of Saemaul Undong. Under the strong guidance of the then President Chung-Hee Park, the central administration consciously prepared a plan for the sequential arrangements of several types of funding and aid to a certain era of period. The Saemaul Undong leadership began the political will as a top national rural development projects. Thus, both the State and local governments have played vital characters during the expansion of the Saemaul Undong.

From 1972, the central government gives the definition of the Saemaul Undong as a drive for state building and economic growth. The Saemaul Undong Central Consultative Council was organized under the chairmanship of the Minister of Home Affairs, and makeup of the vice-ministers of all the associated ministries and agencies as members. Moreover, the Saemaul Leaders Training Institute was

established in 1972 to educate rural people. Certainly, the Saemaul projects got the highest primacy of all the projects of the government.

The Central government provided guidelines and directions and managed overall plans. The top-down approach under governmental commitment facilitated smooth delivery of orders from the Central government. However, Korea utilized bottom-up approach for reflection the will of the people by sharing authority with local governments and working groups. The Central government kept connected with rural people under the Interaction (Figure 6) and it played critical role to success of Saemaul Undong.

**Figure 6. Interaction between Central Government, Local Government and Rural People**



Source: The National Council of Saemaul Undong Movement in Korea (1999)

The roles of the government are required in Saemaul Undong to encourage and make the people's self-discipline and wish for the development of their communities on a volunteer base. The Government manages whole procedure of Saemaul Undong by guiding and supporting orders and provision to the community and also allowing actively participate from the community aiming at the progress of bottom-up approaches. It was the factor that made top-down and bottom-up approaches probable in the policymaking process of Saemaul Undong and forward to achievement.

Local administrations are also involved in the projects of the Saemaul. The role of local administrations was also vital support to societies and operated as pipe work connecting local resources. The rural people also positive contributed to the process of assessment and work without pay as the Saemaul Leader, The leaders considered with local government interests.

## **4.2. Saemaul Undong and Community Participation**

In 1970, the people in Korea Rural desire to get rid of the vicious circle of poverty, in the entire history of problems. Their desire to progress living situations is vital to the success of the Saemaul Undong. The government boosts people to provide support and hope for a better life. The goal of the Saemaul Undong is same interest of rural people's, and let to active contribution. Although in its infancy, people's contribution is narrow and passive, more active, the series was expanded participation.

Active contribution and ownership among villagers are a requirement for the success of rural development program. Earlier, the Korea government is forced villagers to promote and develop in rural. This method is mainly rebuilt in 1960 responsible for the failure of the national movement. The Saemaul Undong Movement is mainly introduced from "top-down". After all, the authorities accept that the only government cannot work to increase living standards in rural areas. It emphasizes the need for the active participation, support and support of residents. When applied to maintain the

movement is emphasized the bringing about in the first place, a wide range of voluntary villages and farmers (Park, 2009).

As the Saemaul Undong introduced governance system in the process, people are actively engaged decision-making process as the projects progressed with ownership and responsibility. Some people have served as Saemaul leaders for nothing representing the people, and most of village people worked for community development activities without a cost. The active involvement of people might result from raising awareness of development under governance system which permits people to voice their opinion in decision-making. Not only active participation, but also the strong linkage between the rural people with tradition of cooperation has played a significant role. In general, many rural villages in Asia countries have tradition of cooperation for a long time. Especially, each of Korean rural villages had their own customs and autonomous rules for cooperation based on Confusion tradition. This traditional distinct feature has served as the advantage in Saemaul Undong process as the people working hard for the benefit of community rather than themselves. The dedication of the Saemaul leaders and the total involvement of the villagers made surprising results and

accomplishment. This accomplishment has led to self-confidence and it has been given purpose for success to the people.

With Saemaul Undong, the tradition of cooperation has developed to become calculated participation with the experience of consensus building, and collective decision-making and implementation in managing village projects. According to a report by the Ministry of Home Affairs, between 1971 and 1979, each rural person is contributing to work 12 days per year, a total of 110 million days of work, to Saemaul Undong. In 1978, a large-scale by the Korea Rural Economic Institute survey showed that 67 % of respondents supposed they had participated in the village meetings held their settlements. While the other 28% said that they regularly participated. It can be attributed to the close relationship between individual benefits and village projects, and actively participate in the most important reason. When this has activated, the participating of village level is mobilized by the local administration and passive labor supply is limited. The relations assistance from the Government improves the interest of the residents and to increase competition between them (Boyer 1991).

Saemaul Undong shows almost equally bottom-up somehow in spite the political and social of Korea, it has also top-down and central. Although the major component of the central government is limited to primary and organizations of numerous stakeholders, took to serve the village-level activities in the case of the community. Saemaul Undong has a new leadership based on the community. The villagers choose the youngvillager as Saemaul leaders and worked for the free of payment. They indicate for their villages to the local authorities. Under the fresh guidance, the villagers drive with the community goals. So that people with disabilities their functions achieve with the new experience.

Table 4 was the number of participants in Saemaul projects per town sharply increased—from 216 in 1971 to 7,472 in 1978.

**Table 4. Expansion and Diffusion of the Rural Saemaul Undong**

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
Number of villages	33,267	22,708	34,665	34,665	36,547	36,557	36,557	36,257
Number of participants (1,000)	7,200	32,000	69,280	106,852	116,880	117,528	137,193	270,928
Number of projects (1,000)	385	320	1,093	1,099	1,598	887	2,463	2,667
Average per town								
Participants	216	1,409	1,999	3,082	3,198	3,215	3,753	7,472
Number of projects	12	13	32	32	44	24	67	74
Investment (1,000 won)	367	1,378	2,839	3,831	8,096	8,825	12,764	17,492

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 1981

The construction of Saemaul villages is the way of building their capabilities. A particular attention should be given to the program of spiritual enlightenment which is in line with the human resource development endeavor through training and education. That would be called Saemaul Education may be measured one of the well-known and one of features of the Saemaul Undong style (Choe, 2005). As part of the Saemaul education, the government has launched the Saemaul Training in an effort to foster Saemaul leadership. The government is opened the Saemaul Leaders Training Institute at the central level and 10 provincial-level training institutes. This training means to provide more than 500,000 people during the course of Saemaul Undong from 1972 to 1980. The presentation of the experiences of successful Saemaul leaders (case studies) are used as an effective and persuasive means of educating other Saemaul and social leaders. The course consists of one or two weeks of training courses, with a focus on promoting students to rural development, which has convinced them of the importance of the leadership role, building leadership skills, the ability to convince the villagers. Describing of the experience of successful Saemaul leaders (case

study) is used as an active way to educate and persuade other leaders and social Saemaul (Koh, 2010).

Another cited reason for the success of Saemaul Undong in Korea is the community-level leadership. Community leadership provided a ground for people to look for strong ties with others under the realization of “we-ness,” the latter made the Saemaul Undong cooperative efforts for joint development and joint progress (Choe, 2005). The Central government established a village development committee (VDC) at Ri/Dong level which is responsible for Saemaul Undong projects as an implementing unit. The Saemaul leaders, both men and women, are selected by the villagers and their functions are performed in cooperation with the village chief.

The Saemaul leaders are who personally in training the spirit of the Saemaul. Almost all cases, the success of a share in common are a leader in the country and commitment. These Saemaul village leaders are observed as political "entrepreneur" to mobilize and bring people in shared activities is considered successful local development one of the main factors, and plays an important role in encouraging the establishment of democratic participation and the final leadership.

Most of the residents are that the Saemaul leader of dedication and hard work to become the number one factor (Park, 2009).

In addition to the construction of the village leadership, the promotion of social capital in the countryside of rural women in the sport Korean Village is another way. In many developing nations, women have traditionally not been invited to South Korea involved in social issues (Park, 2009). Saemaul Undong officially opened the opportunity to contribute in social actions for women in rural areas, a small window, the government has to participate. First, the participation of women in rural areas, continue to slowly increase the "women's work", but their contribution is also in the activities of the village. Continuous efforts and achievements of women and the role of women in society to get a common vision completely has changed.

#### **4.3. Saemaul Undong and National Leadership (under Pres. Park Chung-Hee)**

The success of the Saemaul Undong in rural communities is another important reason is that the national leadership in addition to leadership. President Park system is mainly the development of

agricultural consumption. But the mid-1960s, emphasis on export industries agriculture and rural areas caused by the tasks. In pursuit of this policy, the Government has needed primarily for employees to provide cheap rice. In the agricultural sector in 1964 and 1970 growth of just 2.8 percent in South Korea, as an overall economic growth rate of 10% of overall growth, but the growth of the non-agricultural sector is 14.5% (Choi, 2005).

With the goal of urban and rural development, the President Park also planned rural development programs. At first, they won National Reconstruction Movement, the more rural mentality, when the government failed to provide adequate reasons to move to stop restructuring rebuild. Another attempt named Special Projects for Rural People's Income Increase in the second half of 1960. This cannot be achieved remarkable results, especially because it has only the economic aspects.

There is a changed focus on agriculture and the rural sector over the Saemaul Undong Movement and further programs in 1970. The purpose of these creativities is to help the rural sector to the establishment of the Korean villages spread to improve the living

values of rural societies to achieve. It is crucial sector balance between economic growth and migration to slow to the cities in order the problem of food supply rising and growing gap between the political rural populations to meet to resolve, has won the support of land reform (Reed, 2010).

President Park Chung-hee and his team make for Saemaul Undong in 1970 (Reed, 2010). President Park has paid attention to the rural areas, major concerning on the development of rural areas. Parks Government's annual average of 2.5% of gross domestic product spent the items in the Saemaul Undong projects.

The government has been organized the Central Consultative Council for Saemaul Undong at the national level. The Minister of Home Affairs was chaired the Council and contained with Vice Ministers of Agriculture and Fishery, Commerce, Education, etc. as council members. The council makes government policies and guidelines. The Saemaul Bureau is also set up at the Ministry of Home Affairs. The bureau, served as executive secretary for the council, is also to function as a central strategy- and policy-making body for the Saemaul Undong Movement.

The state government is also elaborated in local government. Therefore, local officials frequently visit every change agent distribution; identify problems, and promoting the project progress monitoring appropriate services and villagers. As the organizer, the local government extension staff has played a role. Local government officials and community leaders meet regularly, sometimes in the community meetings. Every government official is designated as the authority of the local government high effective implementation of the project responsible (Choi, 2005). The following figure describes the structure of interaction among national government and local government in the process of the Saemaul Undong:

Figure 7. **Structure of interaction among national government, local government and rural people under the Saemaul Undong Movement**



Source: Choe, 2005

## **Chapter V**

### **Potential Challenges to Myanmar**

To detect potential challenge and problem in implementing Saemaul Undong in Myanmar, it is necessary to determine how similar or different the pre-conditions of South Korea prior to implementation of the Saemaul Undong Movement in the 1970s. It is important to examine these similarities/differences so that Myanmar's policymakers would be guided and informed in implementing the Saemaul Undong Movement. These Korean pre-conditions are among the many interacting factors that made the movement work for the country's rural development. Myanmar should also study its current conditions so that success of the Saemaul Undong implementation could more or less succeed.

#### **5.1. Homogeneous communities with strong tradition of cooperation**

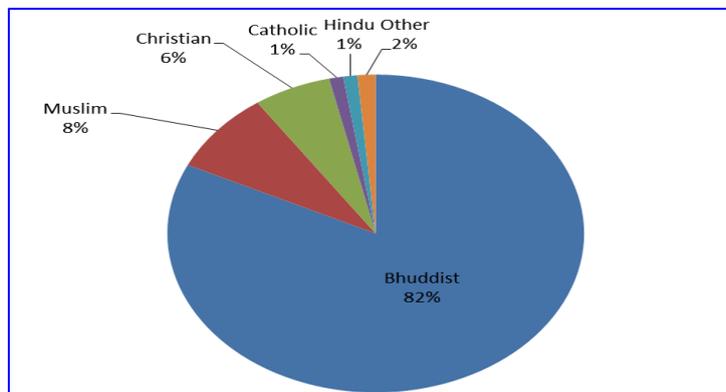
Rural communities in Korea had some distinct features: a long history of settlement by people usually related to each other by kinship; rice farming as their main

economic activity; and sharing traditional customs and autonomous norms based on Confucian teaching. Ethnic homogeneity also contributed much towards cohesive cooperation, thus reducing the possibility of disputes and conflicts (Park, 2009). Most Korean villages have long been characterized by tight social bonds based on the concept of common home place (*gohyang*) and frequently common family lineages (*dongjok*). Villages traditionally selected their own leaders, held meetings to settle problems, and organized mutual aid societies (*gye*) as well as cooperative work teams (*dure, pumassi*) for rice transplanting, harvesting and village projects (Reed, 2010).

As of 2011, Myanmar's total population reached 48.337 million, 67% of which resides in the rural areas. The population, since 1990 to-date, has been growing at an average rate of 1.03% per year. This population comprises of 130 ethnic groups. The majority of Myanmar people are Bamars (75% of the population, from which the country's former name "Burma" was derived). However, there are also Shan, Kachin, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine and other which constitute a significant portion of the total population (Inoguchi et al, 2005).

Aside from the ethnic diversity, Myanmar also hosts several religions. Majority (82.1%) of Myanmar people subscribe to Buddhism. Other major religious group is the Muslim (8.3%) and Christian (6%).

**Figure 8. Distribution of Religions in Myanmar**

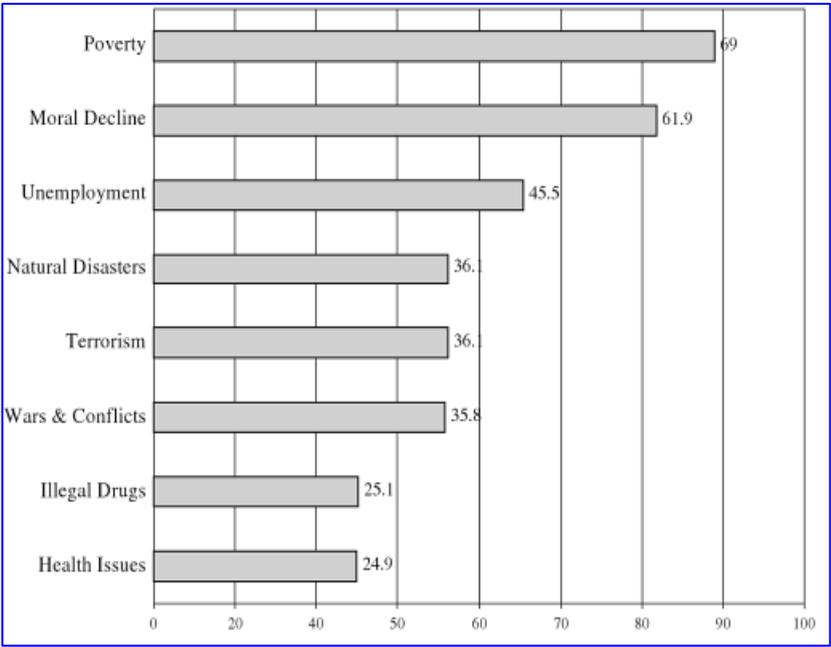


Source: Inoguchi et al, 2005

Based on AsiaBarometer survey in 2003, some 16.4% of the Myanmar people surveyed said that they are “very happy” compared to only 10.2% for Japan or 8.8% of Korea, both with a much higher Human Development Index (HDI) rankings. Since Myanmar people are regarded as happy citizens, then introducing a community-driven development like Saemaul Undong Movement may be less-challenging notwithstanding diversity in their religious and ethnic origins. These Myanmar people, even if they are happy, can

cooperate and work together since they are bound with common greatest worry – poverty. Also based on AsiaBarometer survey, 69% of the respondents answered that they are worried more about poverty while only 35.8% of the respondents are worried about conflicts (which may include religious or ethnic conflicts).

**Figure 9. Greatest worry, in order of importance (percent of respondents)**



Source: AsiaBarometer, 2003

## **5.2. Relatively egalitarian rural sector**

South Korea is one of the few countries in the post-World War II era to have experienced a comprehensive, radical and generally peaceful redistribution of wealth through a land-to-the-tiller land reform. The socio-economic impact was profound, transforming rural Korea from a landlord dominated economy and social structure to a relatively egalitarian rural society characterized by small-farm owners and few landless households. One result was to bring political stability to the rural areas during the 1950s and 60s, allowing the government to turn its attention to promoting development of the industrial sector (Reed, 2010).

It has been noted that large inequalities in assets, such as property and land, land prestige have a tendency to reduce community solidarity and hinders the possible impact of any community development program (Park, 2009). The land reform, which took place in three waves from 1946 to 1955, made every Korean farmer an independent economic actor operating under a market economy (Kwon, 2009 and Koh, 2010). Undoubtedly, one of the major reasons for the relative success of Saemaul Undong is the

egalitarian rural village structure created after the comprehensive land reform. In 1970, when Saemaul Undong was initiated, 94 per cent of rural households held farms smaller than two hectares, while 64 per cent held less than one hectare. With the demise of traditional ruling elites, the social and political structure in the village became more equitable (Park, 2009). This equitable condition of the rural society made the community development program embodied in Saemaul Undong movement work. Since they own their lands, they can donate a portion of it to income-generating or compound projects; both are modalities under the Saemaul Undong movement.

Land has long been a politically and economically contentious issue in Myanmar. Under the past 50 years of military rule, land was frequently taken from farmers with little or no compensation and given to cronies of the former government. It is estimated that approximately 1.9 million acres were illegally transferred to private companies in the past 20 years, even though 70 percent of that land has never been developed and is still used for farming by the original owners. As Myanmar undergoes economic liberalization, foreign investors demand a guarantee that they have legally protected rights

to use land over the long term since they are not allowed to own land in Myanmar<sup>1</sup>.

One-third of Myanmar's 47 million rural residents are landless laborers, while others struggle to hold onto their farms through funds borrowed from the informal market. In the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, rural poverty peaked when many small-scale farmers could no longer afford to make payments on their loans and were forced to find non-agricultural employment<sup>2</sup>. In 2012, President Thein Sein signed two new laws—the Farmland Law and the Vacant, Fallow, and Virgin Land Management Law—that will serve as the legal framework for the country's land reform. The new laws lay down several important guidelines, as follows:

- The state remains the ultimate owner of all land. Farmers are allowed to cultivate but only in accordance with the government's prescriptions.
- Farmers can now transfer or mortgage their land to repay their loans. This measure offers new avenues for farmers to raise credit and continue their agricultural activities.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://csis.org/publication/land-reform-critical-test-myanmars-government>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- The new laws established a Central Farmland Management Body that is in charge of ensuring compliance with the new regulations and is largely independent of the judicial system. This body can transfer or revoke the right to work farmland, and provide land evaluation for various purposes. It operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and has subsidiaries extending from the region/state to village levels.

However, some scholars expressed their reservations to these laws. They stated that these laws are not conducive to promoting commercial farming, which is a first step to addressing rural poverty. Farmers still lack land tenure security and are subject to the government's crop prescriptions and production quotas<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, the government should pay close attention to the land distribution conditions in the country, which in the case of Korea, made Saemaul Undong successful. Generally, Myanmar government should re-think its land use/ownership policies to be

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

more focused on improving rural living conditions and ensure food security and job creation for the population outside of major cities. Without this, uncertainty about land use rights and land speculation will still linger and might pose a threat to Saemaul Undong implementation.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Saemaul Undong was a great success for the uplifting the rural conditions in Korea during the 1970s. Several factors can be identified as contributor to the success of Saemaul Undong in Korea. This study focused on three major success factors – governance, national leadership and community participation.

The Myanmar's present condition needs a successful rural development program such as Saemaul Undong. Myanmar traditionally lagged vis-à-vis its Asian counterparts when it comes to economic development. However recently, an economic “catch-up” was observed. Majority of the population resides in the rural areas (67% as of 2011). The poverty of the country is predominantly a rural phenomenon (29.2% rural poverty incidence as of 2010). Based on AsiaBarometer Survey of 2003, Myanmar lags way behind the region, in terms of living conditions (home fixtures). As opposed to Korea's present affluence, Myanmar's typical homes were devoid of electrical appliances and other durable goods.

Considering the present conditions of rural living in Myanmar, it is very tempting to hastily adopt Saemaul Undong. However, a lot of scholars expressed cautions in blindly adopting the movement (see for example Shreejana, 2011; Reed, 2010; Koh, 2010; Park, 2009). These scholars argued that without a comprehensive study of the Korean case which contributed to the success of Saemaul Undong in Korea during the 1970s, success could not be automatically guaranteed. This study aims to give more light to the Myanmar government upon implementation of the Saemaul Undong in Myanmar. Deciding whether to adopt the movement, or otherwise, is beyond the concern as of the moment since the Myanmar government already entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Korean government for the implementation of the movement within the year (2013).

Two Korean pre-conditions seem to be similar to the present Myanmar conditions. First, the Korea achieved near-universal literacy prior to Saemaul Undong implementation. At present, the 2011 MDG Report of Myanmar remarked that the country has achieved a universal primary literacy rates. Second, Korea has achieved a solid and continuous economic growth prior to Saemaul

Undong implementation. This economic growth enabled government spending and massive infrastructure establishment for the rural areas, which form part of the entire Saemaul Undong movement. At present, Myanmar's GDP per capita is catching-up with the rest of the Asian countries from being a traditional laggard a decade ago. The only question is whether this economic growth is enough to support the Saemaul Undong as in the case of Korea prior to 1970s.

However, two Korean pre-conditions seem differ from Myanmar's present state. First, Korea has a homogenous culture with a strong tradition of cooperation, to begin with. This was further fostered by the implementation of Saemaul Undong in the 1970s. On the contrary, Myanmar is a socially diverse nation divided by various ethnicities (75% belong to the Bamars ethnic group) and religion (82% are Buddhist). However, this does not mean that Saemaul Undong will not work for Myanmar. On the contrary, Saemaul Undong can help unify Myanmar people. The key here is implement Saemaul Undong as a program that could address the cross-cutting concern of the Myanmar people whatever ethnicity or religion they belong to – poverty. Second, Korea has been an egalitarian society due to the completion of land reform initiatives prior to Saemaul

Undong implementation. The Myanmar government has recently addressed land-related issues via legislation of the Farmland Law and Vacant, Fallow, and Virgin Land Management Law. Scholars express reservation as to the sufficiency of these laws to address Myanmar's land ownership problem and whether these laws are as radical as that of Korea's land reform initiatives prior to 1970s. This is an area where the Myanmar government can turn their attention to, regardless of the presence or absence of Saemaul Undong in the country.

The Present government, U Thein Sein's Government, encompasses greater attention to the delivery of services, a greater proportion of government budget to health and education, and a shift from "top-down" to "bottom-up" planning. This shift holds out the

promise of change in state society relations. This will both empower communities and allow the government to deliver visible results of reform at the community level. Nowhere will this paradigm shift have a bigger impact than in Myanmar's rural villages.

Myanmar's peasants suffer from relatively poor, and hope "to live better." In this sense, the three pillars of the "New Village Movement", "diligence, self-reliance, and cooperation", are important for Myanmar farmers in order to escape from the poverty. The Saemaul Undong can be expanded agricultural community in Myanmar, because the most important thing is to have specific goal (s) cooperation among individuals and organizations. The New Village Movement as Myanmar's version will be useful to rural agricultural community to encourage collaboration to achieve their goal(s) and target(s). Yet, the paper concludes that blindly accepting the Saemaul Movement model absolutely does not produce fruitful outcome so developing countries should carefully consider their environment and develop workable solutions and practices.

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# Acknowledgement

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratefulness to my advisor Professor Tae-Gyun Park for his guidance and tolerance in helping me to complete the dissertation. Furthermore I would like to thank Professor Sheen Seong-Ho and Professor Suh Jang-Won for their academic insights and supportive comments which had made the completion of this thesis possible.

Special thanks to my colleagues and friends who continuously encouraged me and made my life at GSIS such a memorable and precious time. I would like to thank to Seniors Officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who choose me to attend this scholarship. I am also grateful to Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) for awarding me scholarship.

In addition, I am deeply thankful to my family and my special one for giving me their endless love, prayer, and belief in me. I would never be able to complete my study without their supports.

I am greatly indebted to Professor Ki-Soo Eun, and Professors and Staffs from Department of International Development Policy, DIDP, Graduate School of International Studies for their support and incisive comments. The 14 months of engagement with Korean life has been one of the greatest gifts bestowed to me during the Master program. I would like to thank all the professors including Korean Language Lecturers, those who have nurtured my intellect through their courses and personal communication. Without the Korean Government Scholarship support, all these accomplishment would not be possible. In addition, I am grateful to my parents and sisters for their unrelenting belief in me.

Many developing countries found out what Saemaul Undong Movement is, a successful model to develop communities. Saemaul Undong is good will for all over nations. Knowing that Saemaul Undong as “life for better”, spreading should be made further. Those who know about Saemaul Undong should be more spread, because it is “life for better”.