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## THE SAEMAUL UNDONG MODEL OF KOREA AS A NEW HOPE AND TOOL FOR RURAL TRANSFORMATION IN LAO PDR

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### ABSTRACT:

This paper critically examines the *Saemaul Undong* movement model or New village Movement, a highly successful rural development initiative implemented in South Korea during the 1970s, and its potential applicability as a government model for rural transformation in Laos. The study employ a systematic literature review (SLRs) combined with comparative document analysis. The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the key principles, strategies, and outcomes of the *Saemaul Undong*, considering the unique socio-cultural, economic, and political contexts of Laos. By incorporating relevant citations in critical sentences, the essay ensures academic rigor and credibility. By adopting the ideology of self-help and voluntary participation in community projects, Laos can tap into the potential of its rural population and accelerate rural development and poverty eradication efforts. Laos' government and policymakers should raise people's awareness of the importance of community development projects, as well as increase capacity in mindset skills for a better life and self-help mindsets.

**KEYWORDS:** Hope, rural transformation aspect, Saemaul Undong model.

### INTRODUCTION

Rural development remains a major concern for developing countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, despite rapid urbanization in most parts of the world during the last two decades (Reed, 2010). Rural development has long been a priority for many countries seeking to address poverty, improve living standards, and promote sustainable economic growth. One

model that has garnered significant attention is the Saemaul Undong, called the New Village Movement as well, implemented in South Korea during the 1970s. The Saemaul Undong was a comprehensive rural development initiative that aimed to transform rural communities through self-help, diligence, and cooperation. The Saemaul Undong has been recognized as a model for developing countries. One rural development model, promoted by the Korean government, is the Saemaul Undong (SMU) or the New Village Movement which features Korea's rhetoric on progress and development by using the country's own successful experience as promotional leverage. Against this backdrop, this essay explores the potential of adopting the *Saemaul Undong* model as a government model for rural transformation in Laos. Laos, a landlocked nation in Southeast Asia, faces similar challenges to those faced by South Korea during the early stages of the *SMU*. With a predominantly rural population and an agrarian economy, Laos grapples with issues such as poverty, limited infrastructure, and underdeveloped agricultural practices. By examining the historical background, key principles, and strategies of the *SMU* model, this essay aims to assess its applicability and effectiveness in the specific context of Laos. Furthermore, it will critically analyze the socio-cultural, economic, and political factors that may influence the implementation of the *SMU* model in Laos. In Laos, there is a policy called "Sam Sang" or "Three builds policy" which government of Laos launched this policy to battle poverty eradication, improve living conditions and new hope policy to help Laos graduate from Least Developed country. The Sam Sang directive core principle is to build provinces to be the units for designing the development strategy to build the districts as the units of planning and budgeting, and build villages to be units of implementation (Xayasith & Lee, 2018). Xayasith & Lee (2018) who studies on comparative study on the Sam Sang Directive and the SMU Movement as a Rural Development Policy in Lao PDR urged that it needs an examination on the background of the success and lessons learned from the SMU movement and they assert that districts and villages should have enlarged accountability for the use of unexploited potential resources (Xayasith & Lee, 2018). "*Developing countries are paying keen attention to the usefulness of Saemaul Undong as a development model. Saemaul Undong has a huge meaning as the Korea's model of development cooperation.*" UN secretary General, Ban Ki Moon said (KOICA, 2015). Overall, this paper seeks to contribute to the scholarly understanding of rural development models and provide valuable insights into the potential of the SMU model as a government model for rural transformation in Laos. By examining the successes, challenges, and lessons learned from the SMU and applicability from another countries; by then policymakers and researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the model's applicability

and adaptability in different contexts. The official documents of international institutions, regional organizations, and national governments will be evaluated using a qualitative method in this study. It will investigate thoroughly a data set of secondary sources, such as academic journal articles and media.

### **Materials and Method**

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLRs) combined with comparative document analysis to critically examine the *Saemaul Undong* ideology model and assess its applicability as a rural transformation tool in Lao PDR. The review process followed a structured and replicable procedure. First, the research questions were defined to focus on the relevance of Saemaul Undong model to rural development in Laos. Relevant studies were identified through comprehensive search in wen of science and google scholar using combinations of keywords such as “Applied *Saemaul Undong* application”, “Self-efficiency”. Studies published between 2015 to 2024 were privilege considered. A total 15 studies met all inclusion criteria. Data were extracted and analyzed thematically to identify similar concept of 2 development model in two countries. The research adopts a qualitative approach using the PRISMA framework to unsure methodological rigor, transparency, and replicability.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Historical Overview of The SMU movement and its accomplishment**

The implementation of SMU movement in Korea during the 1970s became the key program of the country’s long term economic development. In 1962 to 1966, the government introduced its industrialization oriented First Five-Year Economic Development Plan to raise urban income level. The economic development plan was successful; however, it also resulted to a widening gap between the rural and urban incomes. Because of this imbalance, President *Park Chung Hee* initiated a community driven development program, called *Saemaul Undong* Movement, to modernize the rural communities. According to Asian Development Bank reports, SMU was not the first organization to work on rural community development in South Korea. Christian 4-H (Head, Heart, Hand and Health), a non-government rural community movement predated SMU movement, as well as the nationalistic *Chondogyo* agricultural cooperative movement during the colonial period. In the 1950s, United Nation Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea introduced a government sponsored-rural community development program. The Korean government also implemented its Six-year Rural Development Plan in 1965.

According to Soo Choe (2005), the development of SMU can be explained in four stages; (1) Foundation Building Stage; (2) Self-Help Development Stage; (3) Spiritual Enlightenment of the Rural People, & (4) Privatization of *Saemaul Undong*. In the first stage, the improvement of the farmers' immediate living environment is the main focus. Villagers will benefit from programs such as infrastructure development and the renovation of traditional farming houses. Self-Help Development stage comes after the Foundation Building stage. In this part, the people are encouraged to participate in income generating projects. The third stage of the development of SMU is focused on the spiritual enlightenment of the rural people. And for the last stage, SMU has shifted from being controlled by government agency into the hands of private organizations and people, after the *Park Chung Hee* administration.

Furthermore, based on SMU, Korea implemented three main strategies to advance and modernize rural areas. First of all, it awoke people, banishing defeatism and fostering confidence. Secondly, it improved rural living environments by house remodeling and supplying electricity. Lastly, it developed rural economies by laying the foundation for increased agricultural production and income (KOICA, 2015). Following is the succeed of Korea under SMU movement. (1) Village renovation and rehabilitation: From 1971 through 1978, 43,631km of entrance roads as well as farm roads have been established and 42,220km of village roads have been laid and this means a total of 85,851km of roads have been newly constructed, which translates into 2,601m of road per village, and roads leading to each village house have been expanded by about 13m (KOICA, 2015). In addition, from 1971 to 1975, over 65,000 bridges were completed (On average, each village acquired two new bridges.). Village renewal projects were mainly carried out during the off-season to put idle labor to use. These efforts have greatly improved living conditions of rural communities (KOICA, 2015). (2) Income generation: Income generation projects can be categorized into agricultural and non-agricultural projects. Under SMU, the government set the goal of achieving the self-sufficiency of rice and barley supply and developed and distributed a high-yielding variety called Tong-il Byu or "Unification Rice"(KOICA, 2015). Productivity increased dramatically as the new variety was soon adopted by farmers. Farmers were also urged to produce chicken and hogs, as well as establish fish farming or sericulture, in order to boost agricultural exports. (3) Distribution and processing facilities were built and expanded to lay the groundwork for efficient and sustainable production and distribution (KOICA, 2015). Unemployed people were encouraged to take on other money-generating tasks, such producing sacks or oatmeal, in order to improve off-farm income. In order to increase

productivity and consequently increase their profits, farmers also learnt new agricultural techniques for reconditioning soil, deep cultivation, and fertilizer production. In addition, Villagers were encouraged to organize streams and create agricultural water as part of the Saemaul Income Through Work Project in order to boost their off-farm income. Income generating programs effectively ended the cycle of low revenue and poverty by putting idle labor to productive use and providing income for farmers. (4) Rural Enlightenment: As part of SMU, rural enlightenment aiming at changing people's mentality was launched. To this end, people were encouraged to abide by order and manner and keep their surroundings clean(KOICA, 2015). Along with it, SMU promoted thriftiness, education, reading, and saving money in banks. In particular, book and banking programs already existed before SMU, and SMU chose to focus mostly on these initiatives to change people's perspectives. As a result, 35,000 tiny libraries have been built in total., and people's savings in Saemaul Cooperative Banks have increased.

### **Overview of Laos in rural development**

As one of the primary priorities outlined in the Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the Lao Government places a high value on rural development and poverty alleviation. To achieve the goal of poverty reduction, A National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication was formed by the government in 2007, which was charged with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the rural development and poverty eradication policy throughout the country. Key aspects of this development policy include permanent settlement and creation of permanent jobs for the people in rural areas; the conduct of vocational and labor skills training for the poor; the establishment of a financing mechanism at the local level to provide access to financial resources; the promotion of commercial production, development of socio-economic infrastructure and adopting an incentives policy to attract domestic and foreign investors to the rural areas (Xayasith & Lee, 2018).

Since 2012 the Government of Laos has been employing a "Three builds directive" known as "Sam-Sang" is the process of transforming a province into a strategic body, a district into a comprehensively powerful body, and a village into a development body. The government has also mobilized resources for the development of infrastructure and promotion of commercial production by, among others, providing credit for commodity production in 51 pilot districts and 109 pilot villages with a total of 943 pilot projects (Xayasith & Lee, 2018). Important

accomplishments have been noted via the implementation of these pilot projects, including the strengthening of district and village authorities through an increase in sense of ownership. Local communities have been increasingly enthusiastic and active in their support of initiatives to reduce poverty that directly benefit them. The "Sam-Sang" initiative is thought to have contributed significantly to more equitable and sustainable rural development, steadily enhancing people's quality of life by raising their income.

Subsequent guidance from the National Assembly (Resolution of the NA Standing Committee No. 050/NA SC, dated June 13,2012), HE President Choummaly Xayasone has emphasis about Sam sang model that:

- (1) A political manifesto, *“Sam Sang represents a deep and thorough change in a new development context. It is called revolution because Sam Sang includes both short-term and long-term strategies. Its strategic purpose is to protect the Lao PDR regime. To achieve our ambitious objectives of national prosperity, people's spiritual and material well-being, solidarity, democracy, justice, and civilization, the regime must first be securitized.”*
- (2) An approach to decentralized administration – *“Sam Sang is to permit or authorize local authorities. The adoption of Sam Sang is intended to boost the ruling Party's leadership and ruling capacity. In addition, Sam Sang attempts to improve the government's management-administration effectiveness. As a result, authority, mandates, and advantages will be decentralized and allocated to local Party committees and authorities in an appropriate manner.”*
- (3) A national targeted development program – *“Sam Sang is to support the new transition period of development of transition to meet criteria for graduation from LDC status, so that each province, district and village...will make a significant impact and change in the growth of our country.”*

Sam Sang is a means for rural communities, and the village and district administrations designed to support them, to engage and develop a voice in the strategic choices and political processes that determine what is done for social and economic development in Lao PDR as well as how it is delivered and Districts are the core focus for efficient delivery of development change at village and household levels (Vongxay & Yi, 2017) .

The process of dispatching government experts to help work at grass root levels has been strengthened. To date, 6,424 government officials have been dispatched to the village and



Kum Ban level to work on a building political base; of these, 307 are from the central level, 579 are from the provincial level, 5,438 are from the district level, and some are student.(Vongxay & Yi, 2017) The political system at the village and *Kum Ban* (village group) level has been significantly strengthened. The proportion of villages with solid political organizations possessing strong provincial Party unit leadership has increased to 68% of all villages in the country (Vongxay & Yi, 2017).

*Sam Sang* has been on the development of economic infrastructure at a grassroots level and remote and poor areas to create necessary conditions for people to have and in remote expansion of commercial production, meanwhile income generation and commercial production are among the priority development projects of the Sam Sang pilot (Vongxay & Yi, 2017). In 2012, total road access covered 81 percent of all villages. When compared to the 2015 aim, road connectivity to all villages is highly achievable. In addition to improving road access to settlements, road access to production areas has improved, allowing for higher commercial production and marketability. There have been ongoing initiatives to extend the reach of health, clean water, and education networks to poor and isolated rural communities. Based on criteria for village development and assessments of poverty, the proportion of villages with primary education that is compulsory increased from 80 percent in 2011 to 88 percent in 2012, and the proportion of villages with health facilities increased from 24.5 percent in 2011 to 40.9 percent in 2012(Vongxay & Yi, 2017).

### **Rural Transformation Challenges in Laos**

Laos, being a predominantly rural country, faces several challenges in rural transformation. Here are some of the key challenges: (1) Lack of adequate infrastructure: The absence of suitable infrastructure, including roads, transportation networks, energy, and communication systems, is one of the primary problems in Laos' rural transformation. Poor infrastructure impedes access to markets, basic services, and technology, making economic development in remote places difficult. Rural areas in Laos frequently have higher levels of poverty and income inequality than metropolitan areas. This discrepancy is exacerbated by limited access to resources, education, and healthcare services. Addressing rural poverty and decreasing inequality are critical for long-term rural transformation. (2) Agriculture and Subsistence Farming: Agriculture provides the majority of Laos' rural inhabitants with their primary source of income. Subsistence farming practices, reliance on traditional methods, and restricted access to modern farming techniques, on the other hand, impede agricultural

productivity and income generation. Promoting sustainable agriculture, upgrading farming techniques, and increasing market access can all help rural communities transform. (3) Access to Education and Healthcare: In many rural parts of Laos, there is inadequate access to high-quality healthcare and educational services. Low human capital development in rural locations is a result of a lack of healthcare resources, including personnel and infrastructure. For rural development and disparity reduction, bettering access to healthcare and education is crucial.

(4) Natural Resource Management: Laos is endowed with abundant natural resources such as forests, rivers, and minerals. However, excessive resource use, deforestation, and land degradation all offer significant hurdles to rural change. Long-term rural development requires the establishment of sustainable natural resource management techniques and the promotion of conservation activities. (5) Climate Change and Environmental Vulnerability: Laos' rural inhabitants are predominantly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as unpredictable rainfall patterns, floods, and droughts. These climate-related issues have an impact on rural communities' general development, livelihoods, and agricultural productivity. Rural transformation depends on fostering sustainable practices and enhancing climate resilience. (6) Limited Access to Financial Services: In Laos, many rural areas lack adequate access to financial services like credit, savings, and insurance. Entrepreneurship, investment, and economic progress in rural areas are hampered by a lack of financial inclusion. Rural change can be facilitated by increasing access to financial services, especially for smallholder farmers and rural entrepreneurs.

### **Lessons Learned and constraints from rural development model - "Sam Sang"**

In the past ten years, a wide range of rural development projects have been implemented. Even if an overall evaluation has not yet been done, these experiences have taught us a few important lessons. however this list is undoubtedly still lacking several lessons, the following stand out as the most important ones:: (1) Many programs have prioritized the construction of rural and social infrastructure while failing to take into account the perceived requirements of the people themselves.(2) Several programs appear to have taken a "top-down" approach at the expense of the necessary "bottom-up" process; women's participation in rural development - and general consideration of shifting gender roles and challenges.– needs to be strengthened; (3) A participatory needs assessment process will help priorities project activities for designing a suitable project strategy; (4) Flexibility is essential in project



interventions in order to provide potential beneficiaries with a diverse range of options and allow them to choose and commit to what they believe is best for them; (5) Lao variety necessitates close attention to local people's location-specific requirements, particularly in rural areas; (6) Rural development projects should last 5 - 7 years; (7) A simple monitoring and assessment system should be put in place to allow project impacts to be measured; and (8) Rural development efforts should focus on a small number of settlements in a limited area.

### **Applicability of the Saemaul Undong Model**

Above analysis presented an overview of rural development context and the Sam Sang program in Laos. There are several resemblances between this program and Korea's SMU, which is why experiences from SMU are particularly relevant to the present nationwide program in Laos. Although SMU occurred many years ago, its objectives, principles, and approaches are still relevant to today's rural development programs. In the reality, Lao policymakers have been learning and applying these lessons for several years, particularly in Sam Sang. However, despite certain achievements over the past three years of implementation, several limits remain, and it is required to reevaluate the process, regulations, and learn how to effectively utilize Korea's experiences in the specific context of Laos. This section of the paper will provide a brief overview of the factors that contributed to the success of SMU as well as broader lessons for today's rural development programs. This may aid in determining a solution for Sam Sang's present implementation. Then, Sam Sang's progress is reconsidered in light of the lessons acquired from Korea's SMU.

Many elements can be ascribed to SMU's accomplishments, including favorable preconditions unique to the Korean context, government initiatives, and the contribution of the rural community. According to (Reed, 2010), SMU flew with two wings. One of its wings was a comprehensive, national program for agricultural and rural development that was actively promoted by a strong government and supported by significant resources. The program's other wing involved encouraging village-level collaboration so that farmers could take part and profit from it.

The four key factors to the success of Saemaul Undong (Soo Choe, 2005). First, the Throughout the whole length of the movement, the national government's direction and assistance were crucial. Second, there was participation from a diverse group of people in the process of putting the plan into action. Third, SMU could achieve great success by supporting local leaders who were chosen by rural communities themselves. Finally, as a spiritual reform

movement, the SMU instilled in the people the spirits of diligence, self-reliance, and cooperation. SMU had several distinguishing characteristics that distinguished it from other rural development programs. (Mike Douglass, 2013) investigated these characteristics as explanations for the program's effectiveness. complete land reform Many years before the program started, a set of experiences and institutional arrangements that distinguished Korea and the Saemaul Undong from most other rural development experiences included the initial focus on village modernization rather than agriculture, the utilization of industry to subsidize farm incomes and the green revolution, as well as the integration of programs with a national philosophy of development cooperation. Land reform, for example, has fallen off of the rural development agenda in most countries; yet it was fundamental as a foundation laid before the Saemaul Undong began (Mike Douglass, 2013). Village remodeling also included characteristics unique to Korea. The first is Korean society's homogeneity. The lack of significant ethnic minorities may have contributed to the fusion of national identity and the Saemaul Undong philosophy, which tapped into long-held cultural qualities of the Korean people.

S. Park (2009) conducted a thorough analysis of Saemaul Undong's success elements. Accordingly, there were several favorable pre-conditions for the program's success, such as a homogeneous community with a long tradition of collaboration, an equal society with land reform, and steady and ongoing economic growth. Additionally, President Park's strong commitment and leadership at the top were key factors in Saemaul Undong's success. This enabled successful vertical integration across all levels of government, as well as a holistic approach to horizontally mobilizing resources and coordinating plans among the necessary ministries.

Resources Mobilization by Self-Help Approach to Rural Development Program in Vietnam: Lessons from Saemaul Undong in Korea aims to compare and contrast National rural development and SMU to explore explanations for the different results in rural area between the two countries and they concluded that resource mobilization strategies to change villagers' attitude and increase their involvement in Vietnam's rural development movement, then these recommendations align with the NRD inclusivity principle "people know, people discuss, people do and people check (Trang et al., 2015).

Ethiopia's rural development program could be improved if the concepts of SMU are carefully fitted to the inadequacies in current programs. They has concluded and highlighted

that the factors that have been key for the success of SMU in Korea such as land reform; social ties among villagers; strong institutional support; strong leadership and political commitment on the part of government; and promotion of ownership and empowerment of rural communities could be judiciously incorporated into the Ethiopian rural development strategies to attain similar results (Abafita & Abddisa, 2013). They urged that a precondition for achieving such results is the restructuring of existing rural infrastructure programs and incentive systems in favor of these programs, as well as the implementation of piloting schemes in chosen villages.

In Bangladesh, Based on an understanding of Korea's historical context and development approach, government, policy makers and local leaders of Bangladesh and other developing countries can draw general lessons and ideas (Rafiqul & Milon, 2017). Recovery from economic slump, elimination of poverty, and quick economic growth are all possible if they learn from the South Korean SU Movement and apply its lessons there. The government of Bangladesh needs to provide strong government sponsorship to motivate, make people participate and change attitude and awareness, encourage community participation for willingness to work hard and provide free labor with the spirit of diligence, self-help, and cooperation (Rafiqul & Milon, 2017).

In Laos, Education is one of the government's most significant direct services for SMU in rural areas. Therefore, In order to train farmers with the maximum possible impact on development projects, a training center must be built. All people in social ranking counting from the high ranking government officials, social elites, community leaders, mass media as well as the merchant are relatively included to be trained in their best understanding of the meaningful benefits of development (Vongxay & Yi, 2017).

The application of Saemaul Undong in African countries can indeed provide beneficial results similar to what Korea was able to achieve, depending on the scope and intensity of execution. The value of any strategy or model should be assessed according to how well it "fits" into the existing circumstances of those it is intended to benefit rather than how easily it can be replicated. Instead, the assessment should be made according to how well the model in question embodies or includes the fundamentals and essentials of development and how well it is geared towards real success when properly implemented (J. D. Park, 2022). (J. D. Park, 2022) added the biggest mistake made in the world of development is over relying on elaborate blueprints, roadmaps, or masterplans, that looks attractive in paper but which can

actually hinder inner thinking, creativity, imagination, and ownership that are needed to produce the expected outcomes. It leads to a huge misunderstanding that we already have the answers in hand. He has emphasized that development cannot be gotten by 'copy and paste' method; it is the outcome of dynamic process of persistent endeavors of searching, focusing, belaboring, enduring, and overcoming obstacles; most of all, it is about taking actions and implementing. We are used to solution-oriented approach which is about following a ready-made 'solutions. But in the end, a problem-oriented strategy that is concentrated on problem solving at each level of the procedure and whenever difficulties or impediments arise makes the difference.

Even though Saemaul Undong happened a long time ago, its lessons are still relevant to current development initiatives. The program is recognized on a global scale as a novel and extremely effective strategy. No other developing country's program has garnered as much social, administrative, and public support or had such a significant impact on local development and national integration as Korea's Saemaul Undong. The findings of various recent investigations are summarized in the following lessons:

*Create the foundation for rural development:* Invest early and consistently in rural education and health programs that help create the human capital that will be capable of taking advantage of new economic opportunities; Strengthen the capacity of local governance institutions to plan and administer national policies and programs at the local level; Invest in agricultural research capacity and extension services that test and introduce appropriate technologies and cropping systems for increased productivity and more market-responsive agriculture; Create institutions and infrastructure to support the rural economy, including finance, processing, storage, transport, communication, etc (Reed, 2010).

*Cultivate strong leadership skills:* Encourage and support effective national leadership that is dedicated to long-term development of the rural sector. Not every country can expect a Park Chung Hee to emerge, but champions within the government can be identified and supported; Create a program to identify and train a cohort of village-level change agents and support them with continuing education and resources linked to the extension service; Organize study trips for national and village-level leaders together to travel to other regions or other countries to observe best practices in rural and community development; Support the empowerment of rural women to play leadership roles in the local economy (Reed, 2010).

*Enact national policies that favor the rural sector:* Make including rural development in the national economic development strategy a top priority; Implement price mechanisms that encourage output and promote increasing farm incomes in order to market agricultural inputs and purchase products; Promote decentralized industrial development to expand non-farm employment opportunities in rural areas (Reed, 2010).

*Add the special ingredient, the Saemaul spirit:* Launch and manage a nationwide campaign that places farmers at the heart of the nation's quest for strength and prosperity. Cultivate the universal belief that “farmers are the foundation of the nation”; Engage villagers in the development and implementation of community initiatives by beginning with their objectives and providing them with the resources they require. Rural communities that are successful should be rewarded with increased resources and investment, and they should be held up as models for the rest of the country. Reward local authorities and bureaucrats based on village assessments under their authority.

The achievement of Saemaul Undong also marked by appropriate policies and strategies of the Government as well as the participation of rural community (Luan & Bauer, 2016). They added that The program employed a unique holistic approach, combining capacity-building and institution-building training with physical development activities tailored to the requirements of the people. It dealt with the varied but interconnected adversities that rural villages faced by not focusing on a specific topic. Priorities were set by the people and implemented step by step under wide government guidelines. Today's concepts on horizontal coordination and vertical integration were also created in Saemaul Undong by reasonable policies (Luan & Bauer, 2016). In the central government, a committee was established that was presided over by the Ministry of Home Affairs and comprised of key departments and institutions. There was also established a specific committee for coordination at each level of municipal government. Every level of government oversaw initiatives under its jurisdiction and provided information to higher-level authorities. The central Government provided general guidelines and directions and coordinated the overall management of the plan (Park, 2009). Park (2009) added local government acted as a channel assigning the voices from the villages to the top and shifting instructions from the top to the village. In this process, the principle of "more assistance to more successful villages" played a significant part in raising rivalry amongst villages and encouraging greater engagement for better outcomes. Especially, the Korea's Government provided successful villages and their leaders with reward, and those

who rewarded were regarded as national heroes and presented their stories at cabinet meetings and training courses and in schools (Luan & Bauer, 2016). Another key component is the capacity-building training program, which was provided to almost 500 thousand people between 1972 and 1980. Not only did these training sessions teach participants actual project management skills and technology, but they also gave them the opportunity to share expertise and ideas.

### **Voluntary community participation issues and rural development path**

The one of ultimate efficiency of SMU in Korea achieved rural community development and modernization; it awoke people, eradicating defeatism and fostering confidence. Then, it come with voluntarism to participation in SMU projects in community led to SMU accomplishment. The factors contributing to community Participation in SMU movement as following Political and bureaucratic leadership in government, ideological guidance, growing the role of women in local communities, and the availability of resources and money all encouraged or contributed to SMU movement participation. In terms of political leadership, Park Chung Hee's rural upbringing led him to be adamant about using all of his authoritarian political influence to advance the SMU movement. In this task, he was assisted by an uncorrupted government that efficiently implemented Park's vision (Asian Development Bank, 2012). According to the report of ADB (2012) in the topic of sharing knowledge on community- driven development of SMU movement has concluded the factors contributing to community Participation in SMU movement such as (1) role of the government since the government played a central role in encouraging local community participation in the SMU movement; (2) Government campaign in six categories achievement including basic production infrastructure, increases in household income, welfare and environment, spiritual enlightenment, the industrial SU movement, and others, such as the school movement; (3) Government-Village cooperation: However, the SMU movement formalised government-village cooperation by providing technical advice and financial advice to local government representatives; (4) Publicity : The government promoted the successes of the SMU movement by using its influence over the country's mainstream media, which also increased involvement.; (5) Influence of leadership : Participation in the SMU movement, a CDD program, depended heavily on democratic community leadership. (6) Gender: The SMU movement gave women new responsibilities and opportunities for community service outside of household work. Women's participation increased in community productive activities including SMU projects; (7) Household Productivity: The productivity movement led by

women made a significant contribution to raising household productivity in both rural and urban areas. (8) Ideological guidance: One of the key elements in boosting community involvement in the SMU movement was the importance of ideological direction. Ideological counseling strengthened community members by changing their attitude from passive compliance to assertiveness, which was then channeled towards community development. (9) Availability of resources and financing: Effective community investment contributed to active participation in the SMU movement. Saemaul projects were increasingly funded from community resources and financing instead of from the government budget. However, community participatory approach in many countries is facing problem. There is synchronization between Global Saemaul Undong Project and Village Fund Program in program design level. However, insignificant indirect effect from participation in Global Saemaul Undong Project to participation in Village Fund Program shows that there is obstacle in realizing mindset change into participation (Pramadha & Lee, 2018). The Saemaul Undong Movement in the village was well responded to and the program could better connect the relation between government and rural communities in rural agricultural development (Puspitasari et al., 2019). The program enhanced the idea of self-quality growth through sharing of experience and information. However, there were several obstacles to greater local participation. The solutions include rural organization capacity building, access enhancement and infrastructure development, system strengthening, and skill and income improvement. The core finding was the significance of organization or institution (rural, government, and Saemaul Undong Organization) in improving program performance.

According to finding by Abigail & Ayesa (2018), For other nations interested in using *Saemaul Undong* to develop their rural areas, it cannot and should not be viewed as a universal model. They gave reason that due to the fact that different countries have varying geographical, political, economic, technological and socio-cultural contexts, an expectation of similar results is irrational. However, other nations can gain valuable insight from the *Saemaul Undong* experiences of those nations that have adopted the program in their own nations. They point ed out two vital points that must be considered in applying lessons from SMU: the local context and the level of government intervention. Their research has demonstrated the necessity for Korean SMU experts to examine and evaluate the local environment or situation of a target or potential pilot village in order to be able to recommend the suitable social or collaborative activities, development, and infrastructural projects. To be successful, the Korean specialists must collaborate closely with officials from Local



Government Units as well as officials from various government departments. The government agencies have the technical expertise, programs and resources that can be utilized in the implementation of the *Saemaul Undong* in different rural communities.

According to Fitria et al (2021) found that the Saemaul Movement Pilot Project in Tanjungwangi Village has direct and indirect positive effect on the Village Fund Program concerning involvement. Direct impact occurred as a result of harmonizing that both community engagement and the indirect effect occurred as a result of positive aspects that tends to result from the execution of the Saemaul Movement Project and enhanced perspective of the Village Fund Program, which signifies a perspective change effort. Improved implementation strategy of the Saemaul Movement Project, attempting to bring a positive value that supports development such as self-help, diligence, cooperation, and perseverance in performing the Saemaul Movement Project are the factors that have a positive impact on participation in the Village Fund Program.

Vongxay & Yi (2017) pointed out that according to pilot implemented Sam Sang still have some challenges in practice as uncertainly about assigned functions under Sam Sang directive especially at the province and district levels, lack of practical experience and limited expertise for Sam Sang training; limited capacity of citizens and village committees to absorb coordinated and targeted development support; limited human resource capacity at provincial, district and village levels; and limited SME and other economic opportunities for smallholders to sustain development in many remote areas (Vongxay & Yi, 2017). As a result, the outstanding factors success of Korea's SMU can support the Sam Sang strategy model for Sam Sang model's wider deployment.

Furthermore, He added that Korea's SMU model integrated approach strategy top-down and bottom-up produced numbers of accomplishment in which the role of the government and the people participation towards the program, play such a important factor in activating to approach the accomplishment as aimed, by the followings are the analysis contributed to the success of the SMU: the role of the government and the role of rural people (Vongxay & Yi, 2017). The first one is a strong guidance and support from the government, services, and assistance are provided in the community in various kinds, such as the introduction of new technologies, funds and materials for shaping the ground of development (Vongxay & Yi, 2017). The second is the broad range of rural residents' participation. This participation was enticed by practical and visible development initiatives that rural residents could witness as

the movement progressed. These accomplishments gave rural residents a sense of confidence that eventually served as the impetus for other development initiatives. The study shows that the achievement of Saemaul is undertaken by the consensus, commitment of rural people towards community development projects and since the benefits of each project are distributed to communities, the massive participation of rural people and cooperation in planning and implementing the Saemaul projects model it to be widespread across the nation (Vongxay & Yi, 2017).

The success factors of Saemaul Undong, a rural development movement in South Korea, can provide valuable insights for implications and adaptations in Laos. Here's how these factors can be applied: National Government's Guidance and Support: The government of Laos can play a crucial role in providing guidance and support for rural transformation efforts. This includes developing policies, allocating resources, and establishing a conducive regulatory environment. The government should prioritize rural development and provide the necessary infrastructure, financial support, and technical assistance to empower rural communities.

People's Contribution: Encouraging active participation from a wide range of stakeholders, including rural communities, local leaders, civil society organizations, and relevant government agencies, is vital. Promoting community engagement, participation in decision-making processes, and fostering a sense of ownership among the rural population will contribute to successful rural transformation in Laos.

Support for Local Leaders: Emphasizing the selection and support of local leaders chosen by rural communities themselves can be beneficial. These leaders can act as catalysts for change, mobilizing and inspiring communities to actively participate in rural development initiatives. The government and relevant organizations can provide training, resources, and support to strengthen the capacities of local leaders in driving sustainable development.

Spiritual Reform and Values: Saemaul Undong's focus on instilling values such as diligence, self-reliance, and cooperation had a significant impact on its success. In the context of Laos, promoting values such as hard work, self-sufficiency, and collaboration can foster a positive mindset and motivation for rural development. Encouraging a sense of pride, identity, and unity among rural communities can lead to improved livelihoods and sustainable transformation.

In conclusion, adapting Saemaul Undong to the Lao context would require taking into account the unique socio-cultural, economic, and environmental factors of Laos. Additionally, it is crucial to tailor the strategies to address the specific challenges faced by rural communities in Laos, such as infrastructure development, agricultural modernization, access to education and healthcare, natural resource management, and climate resilience. Collaboration between the government, local communities, NGOs, and international partners will be essential for the successful implementation and adaptation of the Saemaul Undong principles in Laos.

## CONCLUSION

In South Korea's effort for sharing its own development experience with other nations, the SMU Movement has become a national brand. Governments, policymakers, and local leaders in Laos and other developing nations can take broad lessons and ideas from an understanding of Korea's historical context and development method. They can learn from the South Korean SMU Movement's experience and apply it to their own condition to achieve early recovery from economic recession, poverty eradication, and quick economic growth. The success of Saemaul Undong in Korea, driven by the consensus and commitment of rural people, can inspire a similar approach in Laos. By fostering a spirit of self-reliance and encouraging communities to actively contribute to development projects, Laos can harness the potential and resources of its rural population. Overall, by adopting the ideology of self-help and voluntary participation in community projects, Laos can tap into the potential of its rural population and accelerate rural development and poverty eradication efforts. Laos' government and policymakers should raise people's awareness of the importance of community development projects, as well as increase capacity in mindset skills for a better life and self-help mindsets. Using all available media to promote a better living through a successful village model or individual unit. The future research has to focus on how to apply SMU movement ideology combine with Sam Sang policy to engage and induce people especially poor to have better mindset in participation and mindset of being good living condition.

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