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Engineering Rural Development for Africa

The Need for a Success Story

In view of the nature of the task of Africa's development, the key word to be used is 'change'. This is because development itself implies change, while in Sub-Saharan Africa, so many things remain unchanged. In a fast-moving society like Korea, 'change' is almost synonymous with 'survival'. 'Change' could mean many things: improvement, adaptation, progress, achievement, innovation, etc. In Korea, the fervour for 'change' was evident during its rapid growth era, but even now it is regarded as a virtue and a necessity. I recall that even in around 2005, when Korea was already well underway in terms of innovations, there was a boom in demand for innovative leadership training sessions all over Korea. These sessions would stress that 'change' is innovation. Increased competition under globalization and technological innovations requires people to become more nimble.

But what is surprising is that in spite of this necessity, Sub-Saharan Africa has been so silent on 'change'. Basically, it is perceived that the political leaders and elites with vested rights want to maintain the status quo. But, in addition, the masses who should be outraged and yearning

for change have chosen the status quo by adhering to their subsistence way of life. Add to this the dependency syndrome or the welfare-oriented policies and mindset, and you get the picture of Africa that we see today. Breaking old habits is as important as having a rejuvenated and committed governmental leadership.

I have come across a number of foreign professionals, both Western and Asian, working in Africa who expressed that after having spent many years in Africa, they have become convinced that Africa's fundamental obstacle is 'cultural' in nature. Some believe that the 'yoke' of the 'traditional way of life' of the locals is far stronger than anything else and supersedes even their professed religion.

But we can understand this from a different angle. It is not necessarily the cultures impeding development, but rather that development efforts failing to have an impact so that the cultures remain intact. Transforming various aspects of life is the very aim of development. Experts can be burdened by the connotations of the word 'culture', but this should be approached in a practical manner. As I have mentioned, 'culture' can be broken down into two categories: (1) cultural heritage; and (2) behavioural modes. Needless to say, the former, in the form of arts, languages, food, lifestyles, traditions, etc., are to be cherished and upheld, but the latter, when necessary, can and should be modified or ameliorated. This is where education can be instrumental. An appropriate synthesis of civic values, education and development projects can yield positive outcomes in this respect. Since development is about changing, why shouldn't behaviour modes that impede the improvement of lives not be targeted for change? Once this necessity is recognized, then the next logical step would be to find and apply an 'antithesis' to the problem at hand.

Korea's *Saemaul Undong* campaign is a resounding success story of turning around the mindset of the people to realize transformative development. In every respect, the *Saemaul Undong*, which was based on the spirit of diligence, self-help and cooperation, is deemed an ideal model of development for Sub-Saharan African countries because it invokes voluntarism and hard work in the people.

While the *Saemaul Undong* was a national campaign carried out ambitiously in the 1970s and continued afterwards in Korea, as the

Korean economy and society became increasingly sophisticated, it began to be viewed as a 'relic' which had merits when Korea was poor but was not so relevant to the current situation. People became less communal, more urban life-oriented and individualistic, and the attention has shifted towards undertaking *Saemaul Undong* programmes overseas in view of its popularity among developing countries that continue to struggle with poverty and underdevelopment.

It is against such a backdrop that Korea's development agency KOICA launched Smart *Saemaul Undong* in September 2015, which coincided with the adoption of the SDGs. It refers to a holistic community development initiative capturing the partnering government's willingness for development and the people's voluntary participation. Its strategy is to implement an integrative programme utilizing appropriate technology, creating value chains and strengthening partnership, based on the foundation of governance and social capital. This includes embedding the *Saemaul Undong* into partner countries' community development policy, promoting the spirit of the *Saemaul Undong*, and establishing sound governance. Detailed components of this strategy involve: (1) a sector-integrative programme; (2) the appropriate technology; (3) a value chain; (4) competition and incentives; (5) village-level development; (6) *Saemaul Undong* education tailored to the needs of each community; and (7) partnership with the private sector.¹

Regarding sector-integrative programmes, it is argued that the *Saemaul Undong* has great potential to contribute to the achievement of SDGs as an integrative community development model that encompasses agricultural sectors such as livestock and fisheries, social sectors such as education, health, hygiene and gender, and technology sectors such as ICT, energy and the environment.

With respect to appropriate technology, the *Saemaul Undong* aims to drastically raise performance in improving the level of income within a short period of time by identifying and mobilizing technologies that are the most appropriate in specific settings of partner countries. As for improving value chains, including production (land, seeds, equipment, micro-financing and cultivation technology), harvesting, storage, processing, distribution, marketing and sales are important if income is to be

increased on a sustained basis. Thus, the value chain is taken into consideration in planning what activities to carry out in order to generate income.

‘Competition’ fuelled by incentives (and disincentives) constitutes another key aspect of the *Saemaul Undong*. Without the willingness and commitment of the beneficiaries, real and sustainable development cannot happen. Thus, places in which a *Saemaul Undong* project is to be undertaken are carefully examined to confirm whether the targeted community or entity has sufficient willingness to change. To measure the outcomes of projects, performance indicators are devised and reviewed on an annual basis to identify and reward high-performing communities.

The *Saemaul Undong* is undertaken at a village level. However, in Korea, this turned into a pan-national movement, so while villages were the main implementers of various projects, other networking bodies existed as well. The *Saemaul Undong* was an integrative work in itself and in the process of actively promoting this movement, an enhanced governance structure in the form of a newly integrated local administrative system emerged.

‘*Saemaul Undong* education tailored to the needs of each community’ means that the local community must provide training to its members, which can be done through the collaboration of village leaders learning from each other and coming up with *Saemaul Undong* textbooks developed following internal discussions. This is important because the learning process is internally driven, making the villagers self-serving with a true sense of ownership, in contrast to ‘outside experts’ seemingly dictating everything, as is the case in many development projects. Local problems should be solved through locals’ understanding and participation, and by mobilizing local resources.

The KOICA President expressed that ‘KOICA is currently receiving requests from 50 developing countries to share knowledge in *Saemaul Undong* or community development. In addition, international organizations such as [the] World Food Program (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), and world-renowned scholars, including Professor Jeffrey Sachs, have lauded *Saemaul Undong* as an excellent development model’.²

The Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre was created in 1980 with sub-regional organizations at the national level, along with five member associations, including the Central Council of *Saemaul* Leaders, the Central Council of *Saemaul* Women's Club, the Central Council of Corporation and Factory *Saemaul Undong*, the Federation of *Saemaul* Mini-libraries and the Federation of *Saemaul* Credit Unions. These organizations, like the *Saemaul Undong* Centre, all have vertical sub-regional networks. While this centre has been in existence for a long time, it is only recently that it has started to embark on the Global *Saemaul Undong* programme in around 2009.

In order for the *Saemaul Undong* to have any real impact on African countries, a pragmatic scenario would be having success stories of the *Saemaul Undong* emerge in Africa so that they can be replicated and expanded over the region. The *Saemaul Undong* will not be met with the same degree of enthusiasm in all countries, so the programme needs to be strategically focused.

***Saemaul Undong* in Uganda**

Although the Ugandan example may not be the representative case for the whole Sub-Saharan African region, it should provide an informative case in understanding what can be possible in this region. The *Saemaul Undong* in Uganda is in a burgeoning stage, making it an interesting and valuable testing ground for its African and international programme. The *Saemaul Undong* was formally introduced in 2009 when the Korea *Saemaul* Undong Centre collaborated with Korea Africa Investment and Development (KAID) that was established by a Korean missionary body to conduct model *Saemaul Undong* village projects in Kitemu and Katereke in Nsangi sub-county, Wakiso District.

Around this time, or actually a little earlier, the Canaan Farmers School also began its activity in Uganda. Government leaders in Uganda had shown a keen interest in many aspects of Korea's development, and in 2009, some 20 Ugandan governmental leaders and officials, including the Vice President, visited Korea to attend the Canaan Farmers School's training course. The idea to train these government

officials in the school came from President Museveni, and the Ugandan government paid for their travel costs.

Until a few years ago, the *Saemaul Undong* village pilot project in Uganda, which was sponsored by the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre, was largely unknown in Uganda due to the low-profile approach that the Centre followed. On the other hand, the Canaan Farmers School was quite popular, as President Museveni himself was fond of this institution.

It was on 31 May 2013, when President Museveni visited the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre in Sunnam, that he understood the difference between the Canaan Farmers School training and the *Saemaul Undong*. He learned that the school focused on mindset change training by emphasizing hard work, frugality, a disciplined life, etc., along with farming skills, whereas the *Saemaul Undong* was a more extensive and systematic community development movement based on the spirit of diligence, self-help and cooperation. The latter was a national movement involving the government, while the former was a private organization for training.

There are three main entities carrying out *Saemaul Undong* programmes in Uganda: KOICA, the UNDP and the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre. The earliest to arrive in Uganda was the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre's programme mentioned above. KOICA followed suit with the launch of the Mpigi Saemaul model village project in December 2015. Also, KOICA's National Farmers Leadership Centre (NFLC) in Kampiringisa, Mpigi, was officially launched in May 2016. The third entity is the UNDP, which launched the 'inclusive and sustainable new communities (ISNC) in Uganda' project adopting the *Saemaul Undong* model in July 2015. This project was an outcome of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between KOICA and the UNDP on the *Saemaul Undong* in 2013. Meanwhile, the Canaan Farmers School continues to train Ugandans in Korea. The school's programme may not be considered as *Saemaul Undong* per se, but is seen as complementing the *Saemaul Undong* through its mindset change training.

As already mentioned, Korea has announced the four key areas it will engage in to implement the SDGs, and the Project to Establish *Saemaul* Model Villages (ESMV) in Uganda, which was launched in December

2015 in Mpigi District by KOICA, falls into the first category of Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Development.³

Mpigi was chosen as the project site because KOICA wanted the NFLC, which was being located nearby, to have a synergistic effect with this project. The objective was to apply the new paradigm of the *Saemaul Undong* to achieve sustainable and integrated rural development. The activities involves the following: enhancing villages' agricultural productivity and income, improving the living environment and the rural community infrastructure; strengthening social capital by instilling a spirit of diligence, self-help and cooperation; strengthening the capacity of farmers' cooperatives and local central government. This was a three-year project (2015–2018) worth a total of USD 3 million.

As the beneficiaries of this project, seven villages were chosen by based on a baseline survey: Tiribogo village (Muduuma sub-county, 224 families, population 856), Kololo village (Kiringente sub-county, 249 families, population 1023), Nsamu village (Mpigi Town Council, 171 families, population 682), Kiwumu(A) village (Kammengo sub-county, 97 families, population 441), Kumbya village (Buwama sub-county, 131 families, population 671), Lwaweeba village (Kituntu sub-county, 129 families, population 666) and Lukonge village (Nkozi sub-county, 1078 families, population 4765). An important point to note is that these villages are not just beneficiaries, but are in competition with one another. Competition and motivation through incentives are central elements of the *Saemaul Undong*. The level of assistance they receive will depend on the results (KOICA Office Uganda).

The expected outcomes of the project are: (1) strengthening social capital—earning higher credibility, nurturing a sense of community and an increase in the frequency of town hall meetings; (2) increasing agricultural productivity and rural income—an increase in both agricultural and non-agricultural income and improvement in product of crops and livestock; (3) improving infrastructure and the living environment—the supply of clean water, better access to medical services, improving living quarters, better access to markets and improvement of the students-per-class ratio; and (4) improving governance in model

villages—an increase in the number of projects carried out, enhancing the quality of project planning and reducing the time taken to resolve village issues.

The history of this project can be traced back to May 2013, when President Museveni visited the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre and appreciated the *Saemaul Undong* programmes. He said that Ugandans have gotten used to welfare policies and foreign aid since independence, and in the process Uganda's communal tradition like *Bulungi bwansi* had been lost, and thanked the Centre for refocusing on the lost traditions of Uganda.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock of Uganda submitted a formal request for the project on September 2013, which led to the dispatch of a KOICA site survey team the following year. Consultations and the signing of a MOU took place in April 2015. Then in November 2015, the project office was set up and the steering committee leaders were trained in Korea, and seven model project villages were selected. The official launching ceremony took place in December 2015. In March 2016, members of the committees and sub-committees of these model villages were appointed, and rules on competition and incentives were finalized. It was decided that project funds would be allotted to each village, taking into account their performance. In April 2016, training in *Saemaul* leadership and general development issues for the committee members was conducted. A baseline survey on the villagers' feedback and the progress of projects as well as the formulation of a *Saemaul* action plan was completed in May 2016.

From the perspective of KOICA project management (PM), the four main tasks are: dispatch of experts; supply of logistics/materials; performance management; and public relations. KOICA sent two Korean experts to oversee the project on the ground, while setting up a project team with local employees, as well as drawing up the project scheme. The KOICA Office supplied the necessary logistics, like an office facility, official vehicles and various kinds of materials. Performance management entails using baseline surveys, mid-term appraisal and final assessment to measure performance and draw lessons from the standpoint of the *Saemaul Undong*. Public relations activities include regular press briefings, distribution of brochures, etc.

The flagship of the Korean development project in Uganda is the NFLC, which was built in Kampirignisa, Mpigi District, to showcase a comprehensive Korean model of rural-agricultural development. As the then Korean President pointed out in her speech during the opening ceremony of the centre, this is the first of its kind in Africa. President Museveni had expressed his desire to the Korean side in March 2010 to have such an institution (modelled on the Canaan Farmers School) built in Uganda so that Ugandans could be trained in Korean-style mindset change programmes.

This project to establish the NFLC was carried out from April 2011 to May 2016 with a budget of USD 4.4 million. While the centre was formally opened in 30 May 2016, the project was extended for a year in order to place it on a stronger footing in terms of operational capacity and financial sustainability before its handover to the Ugandan side, which took place in May 2017. The NFLC project's vision is the establishment of a 'top-notch' leadership centre in Uganda and East Africa that will lead to the development of the rural community and the country. Its mission is: (1) to transform mindset and empower farm leaders, civic and political leadership at all levels of government; (2) to train leaders who will be a role model to others by working, serving and sacrificing first; and (3) to impart agricultural technologies to transform from subsistence to commercial farming for wealth.

This NFLC's basic approach is combining the *Saemaul Undong* spirit and agro-technologies. The expectations of the NFLC were very high indeed in Uganda, and hence there was considerable pressure on the key stakeholders to deliver the expected outcomes. The project has three facets: physical infrastructure, a 'delivery system' or operation and the contents or substance. But making these three things happen or work is no easy task and poses big challenges. The physical construction of the NFLC entailed a prolonged and laborious process due to the various obstacles that face construction projects in Africa. Here, the 'contents' are the Korean model of rural-agricultural development, including the *Saemaul Undong*. No matter how good the infrastructure and the contents, these will be worthless if the delivery—the project operation—does not match up.

Hence, KOICA focused on making the NFLC operation efficient and sustainable before it handed over this project to the Ugandan side. The devil is in the detail and the technical aspect of the project—the question of how to make it sustainable—is a major challenge, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. KOICA's work plan for the operation of the NFLC had the goal of setting up a sustainable operation system of the NFLC through capacity-building.⁴

Before the NFLC was officiated in May 2016, it conducted test operations for more than a year, and over 400 people were trained in *Saemaul Undong* and agricultural skills. Since the official opening, the NFLC has collaborated with the *Saemaul* model village project (ESMV) in Mpigi District, providing training for the latter.

The NFLC had an operational structure of cooperative links between the KOICA Uganda Office and the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF). They signed a MOU on co-management of the NFLC on 25 May 2016. The project management consultant (PMC) led by the Chonbuk National University consortium worked under the KOICA Office. Within this PMC, there was a project manager (PM) who worked as the Cooperation Head of the NFLC to conduct operation of the NFLC, develop modules and a master plan, and run training programmes and farms with his team of Korean experts. On the Ugandan side, a steering committee composed of various officials concerned was placed under the Ministry, while the principal was tasked with contacting the Ministry, securing a governmental budget, legalizing the status of the NFLC, organizing a steering committee and recruiting staff.

The UNDP *Saemaul Undong* project, the Inclusive and Sustainable New Communities (ISNC) Project in Uganda, is the first *Saemaul Undong* programme that the UNDP has launched in Sub-Saharan Africa. In September 2014, Uganda's Ministry of Local Government officials met UNDP officials in New York and learned from them that the UNDP was planning to pilot the *Saemaul Undong* model in some developing countries, particularly in Africa. The Uganda officials persuaded the UNDP officials to include Uganda in this programme. Then, in October 2014, a team from the UNDP headquarters visited

Uganda to work with the Ministry to start putting together the project document for the ISNC programme.

The Ugandan Ministry of Local Government appreciated the follow-up actions of the UNDP as appropriate and timely, as Uganda was re-examining its development agenda through the National Development Plan II with a vision to becoming a middle-income country by the year 2030. It recognized that the project, which would activate the *Saemaul Undong* principles of diligence, self-help and cooperation, would provide the much-needed result-oriented development impetus that is poised to pull the country out of poverty.

This ISNC project is based on the rural development model of the *Saemaul Undong* with the goal of transforming communities with a long-term shared vision of a better life for all, and an infectious enthusiasm for local development, sustained by volunteerism at the community level. The project ran for two and half years (July 2015–December 2017) with funding of USD 1 million provided by Korea. It was implemented in the three districts of Kabarole, Maracha and Luuka, targeting a total of 15 communities. The envisioned results were: (1) a strengthened institutional system of local development; (2) enhanced cohesiveness and inclusiveness in community development; (3) improved and increased local resources and financing mechanisms; (4) scaled up of proven sustainability innovations; and (5) the documentation and dissemination of generated knowledge.

The Minister of Local Government of Uganda spoke about the *Saemaul Undong* model on the occasion of the launching of the ISNC in July 2015:

During my visit to South Korea in October 2014, I witnessed the transformation that the country underwent over the years and was mesmerized by the impact that was caused by the model. I was particularly intrigued to learn that the model was premised on the platform of spirit of diligence, self-help and cooperation among the rural communities. In Korea, this led to improved livelihoods, but more significantly, transformed communities to develop a long term shared vision of a better life for all, and an infectious enthusiasm for local development, sustained by volunteerism at community level.⁵

The Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre started its project in Uganda in 2009 with the two model villages of Kitemu (500 households, population 2500) and Katereke (250 households, population 1500) of Nsagni sub-county, Wakiso District, over a five-year period. Then in 2015, it newly designated six model villages in Mityana District: Bbanda (110 households, population 480); Nabaale (105 households, population 450); Kyabombo (110 households, population 390); Mawanga (100 households, population 490); Ndirabweru (96 households, population 470); and Buwala (98 households, population 440). Besides these model villages that are officially supported by the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre, 'autonomous' *Saemaul* villages (estimated to be more than 40 as of July 2016) that have adopted the *Saemaul Undong* voluntarily are growing at a fast pace in Uganda.⁶

The typical *Saemaul Undong* programmes for these villages fall into three categories: improvement of the living environment, increase in agricultural production and household incomes, and education. All the work is done by the village residents collectively. Improving the living environment includes constructing *Saemaul Undong* halls, public toilets, public wells, *boda-boda* (motorcycle taxis) shelters, improving kitchens, and cleaning up villages and flattening out dirt roads. Examples of activities to increase agricultural production and incomes are operating cooperative farms (to produce mushrooms, vegetables, maize, bananas, ground-nuts, etc.), factories (to produce feed, blocks, candles, soaps, slippers, furniture, etc.), fish-ponds, piggeries, goat banks, pig banks, sewing schools, beauty parlour schools, *Saemaul* banks, etc. Lastly, the education programme involves training Ugandans in the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre and operating a 'mobile *Saemaul* School' in Uganda. Around 170 Ugandans were trained in Korea from 2009 to 2015, and the mobile school has been in operation since 2014.

The Uganda *Saemaul Undong* Centre was formed to undertake *Saemaul Undong* programmes in Uganda supported by Korea's *Saemaul Undong* Centre. Its activities have been steady and engaging, but there is a room for greater expansion. The irony is that the first-term model village assistance for five years by the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre showed a rather mediocre performance, while the voluntary *Saemaul* villages like Busanza and Kiboba, which received no direct support

from Korea, did markedly better and their mode more closely resembled the typical model practised by Korean villages. It could be that Kitemu and Katereke villages are located near the Capitol Kampala and have semi-urban features. Also, because many leaders and members of this sub-county have had the chance to visit Korea to be trained there, and received some sort of support on a continuous basis, this probably made them 'dependent' without being really motivated. Of course, the assistance provided by the Korean centre was modest in amount, and in many cases it came in the form of matching funds. But, overall, the two villages did not meet the expectations of being pioneering *Saemaul Undong* villages in Uganda. The leaders and officials became familiar with the *Saemaul Undong* skills and approach, and did well in presentations, but fell short in terms of energizing, expanding and promoting this movement in their region. This turned out to be a very important lesson in itself.

The strength of the Uganda *Saemaul Undong* Centre lies in its local presence and local networking. While Korean experts, volunteers or officials come and go, the Uganda *Saemaul Undong* Centre run by Ugandans has accumulated expertise on the ground and through its contacts with Korean side. Its activities have been widened as it started to provide mobile *Saemaul Undong* clinic services and collaborate with the NFLC, ESMV and ISNC projects. The Korean Embassy in Kampala, working closely with the KOICA Office, has provided oversight for *Saemaul Undong*-related programmes and activities for Uganda. Communications with the host government and relevant entities, and public diplomacy, among other activities, comprise the embassy's regular work.

To help promote the *Saemaul Undong* in Uganda, the embassy itself has held related events. First, it held a *Saemaul Undong* demonstration day event on four occasions between December 2013 and December 2014 in Kampala and Wakiso District. This was a simple cleaning-up exercise designed to draw public attention to the *Saemaul Undong* and to enhance awareness of and support for this movement. Later on, it organized annual the Uganda National *Saemaul Undong* Competition, which started in 2015. The competition plan was announced to interested village leaders, religious leaders, civil society

representatives and journalists who gathered at the embassy. The next step was communicating with competition participants. The embassy responded to inquiries and applications, explaining the guidelines of the competition. Then, an evaluation process was carried out on the work schemes submitted by each village. Participants were also required to present implementation reports with photos of the proposed project sites before and after the execution of the work. Subsequently, an on-site evaluation was conducted, and after going through each committee assessment, the winners were chosen and awards were presented at the end of the year. A total of 190 villages applied for the competition in 2015.

The evaluation criteria basically comprised four elements: (1) the creation or amelioration of the village's common properties (wells, expansion of village roads, etc.); (2) the enhancement of the village environment and living conditions (how much cleaner the village became after entering the competition); (3) organizational capacity (how efficiently structured the village leadership and organization had become for the implementation of *Saemaul Undong* activities); and (4) voluntariness (how much did the people contribute in terms of labour and funds, how regularly did the villagers gather to conduct joint projects, etc.)

The awards, comprising certificates of recognition and a prize, were given to the top seven villages. The awards ceremony, the finale of this competition, was filled with the joy and excitement of the participants, and attracted media attention. The prizes given were not cash, but in-kind materials that the villages were in need of and had asked for. The purpose of the awards was to instil a sense of accomplishment and honour in the practitioners and to encourage them further, in line with the 'incentives and punishment' principle. The embassy also held stakeholder meetings to inform Ugandan and international partners about *Saemaul Undong* projects and to seek their collaboration. On 30 June 2015, it hosted the High Level Seminar on the *Saemaul Undong*, with participants including the Minister of Local Government, the Chairman of the National Planning Authority, the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Local Government, the Vice President's senior assistant, the UNDP Resident Coordinator, the KOICA Office and the KOPIA Centre heads.

On 15 December 2015, the embassy organized with the UNDP a seminar on implementing SDGs in Uganda. The Senior Advisor to the President on Economic Planning and representatives of various organizations like the UNDP, USAID, the EU, the World Bank, KOICA, KOPIA and civil society attended this meeting. An important subject on the agenda was sustainable rural development, and naturally the *Saemaul Undong* model was discussed.

One of the most memorable moments was when I participated, together with the visiting Secretary General of the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre, in the third National *Saemaul Undong* Convention organized by the Uganda *Saemaul Undong* Centre on 23 October 2015 in Kampala. Vice President Edward Ssekandi, other high-level government officials, UNDP representatives and over 1000 *Saemaul Undong* practitioners representing various districts gathered together. The Secretary General was in awe at seeing with his own eyes the fervour of the participants. The Vice President stressed that the dependency syndrome was seriously impairing Uganda's development and that the *Saemaul Undong* emphasizing diligence, self-help and cooperation was the 'best approach' to overcoming Uganda's problems.

The Proposed Scheme for Africa

I have cited Uganda's example of the *Saemaul Undong* to highlight its possibilities, challenges and applicability in Sub-Saharan Africa. Uganda is considered to be a notable case of the *Saemaul Undong* taking root in Africa. There are other candidates like Rwanda and Ethiopia, but Uganda could be the best testing ground for the *Saemaul Undong* in terms of its application to the region as a whole.

Many Sub-Saharan African countries have a tradition of communal self-help similar to the *Saemaul Undong*. As far as I know, these include Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia and Tanzania, but there must be many more. Also in South Africa, a similar tradition exists, the *Ubuntu*, an obscured legacy that needs to be revived. *Ubuntu* spirits are *enhlonipho* (respect), *abantu* (fellowship), *illima-letsema* (working together), *stokvel* and *lekgotla* (community dialogue). But a very

meaningful development is unfolding: the *Saemaul Undong* programme entitled the ‘*Saemaul* Mindset DEEP (Development Experience Exchange Partnership) programme’, a joint project between KOICA and the Ministry of Rural Development and Land Reform of South Africa, was launched on 16 July 2018 in Pretoria.

Over the years, various Korean organizations have been actively collaborating with Uganda, Ethiopia and Rwanda in the *Saemaul Undong*. There are also other countries in western and southern Africa that are interested in the *Saemaul Undong*, but East Africa is deemed to be the most active and successful thus far in this endeavour. South Africa is the latest addition. Overall, *Saemaul Undong* programmes are in a fledgling stage in Africa.

Rwanda tops the region when it comes to the level of governance and its *Saemaul Undong* project seems to be undertaken in a most organized manner in Africa. But the general features of Rwanda make it somewhat ‘atypical’ in the region. The nation has a very small territory, while having one of the lowest levels of ethnic diversity in Sub-Saharan Africa. In contrast, Uganda is considered to be ethnically the most diverse nation in the world, with a territory nearly ten times larger than that of Rwanda. Ethiopia is also a much bigger country facing greater challenges for expanding and managing development projects like the *Saemaul Undong*.

All in all, Uganda provides an interesting case study to test the viability of the *Saemaul Undong* in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are several major players involved in Uganda: KOICA, the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre, the UNDP and the Canaan Farmers School, as well as other various institutions on rural-agriculture development. Hopefully, in due course, when enough information and records have been accumulated on the progress of *Saemaul Undong* projects in the African region, a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the impact of the *Saemaul Undong* on the region will be possible. But for the time being, strenuous efforts need to be made both in terms of the application and in the studies of the *Saemaul Undong* to keep the momentum going.

In light of what has transpired in Sub-Saharan Africa over many decades, we might as well try things differently and more aggressively in relation to development projects for the region. Most of the

development projects that have been carried out in Africa were repetitions of what was done in the past. It is true that capacity-building or educational programmes, and rights-oriented programmes to promote social justice or peace, to protect and empower people, etc. also share a common goal of trying to change people's attitudes and behaviour. But there is a major difference between these approaches and the *Saemaul Undong*. In terms of substance, the established programmes are either theoretical or technical in nature but the *Saemaul Undong* is all about practicality, directly and firmly anchored in the mindset change scheme.

A textbook form of generalized education as well as overly specialized programmes might not yield the desired results. Rather, vocational, technical training is far more desirable for Africa, but this needs to be supplemented by mindset change or 'resocialization' programmes underscoring work ethics to have the necessary actual ripple effects. The advantage of the *Saemaul Undong* is that it encompasses and inter-links players at different levels—individual, village or community, regional and society at large—to produce immediate and palpable benefits to those who practise it. It is a pragmatic approach that goes 'with the grain' of local traditions in African countries. And the practice of 'doing things' with a 'can-do spirit' that the *Saemaul Undong* promotes is what African countries desperately need.

There are elements conducive to the *Saemaul Undong* as well as many challenges in Uganda. What is definitely positive is that there is wide support among Uganda's leaders and people for the *Saemaul Undong*. The level of enthusiasm may vary depending on people's background, but they seem to all see the necessity to pursue such an action-oriented initiative as a rational alternative to the existing modes.

For those who are more insightful and practical-minded, the *Saemaul Undong* is even more appealing. Many Ugandan politicians, officials, civil society and religious leaders have expressed a strong desire to have the *Saemaul Undong* introduced to their districts. Because African rural areas are largely in a state of destitution, they welcome any support programmes they can get, and it is understandable for Uganda's interest in the *Saemaul Undong*. But there are also many who genuinely like the

movement, knowing it is something very different and that can have more substantive impact on them.

Another merit of the *Saemaul Undong* is that it has a strong appeal from the perspective of national development policy and the availability of state resources. Sub-Saharan Africa's number one priority is arguably rural-agricultural development, as the majority of population reside in rural areas. How to effectively achieve rural-agricultural development on a national scale should be the ultimate task of the leaders. In Africa, successful industrialization is likely to emerge from the agricultural sector, making such an approach all the more worthwhile. It is argued that in Korea, the *Saemaul Undong* served as 'the second economic movement' supporting the government-led economic growth policy.⁷

Political stability and security are also important factors for the success of the *Saemaul Undong*. In this respect, Uganda enjoys a rather favourable politico-security environment compared to other Sub-Saharan countries, making it a good testing ground. Also, the fact that Uganda is blessed in terms of rich natural endowments and favourable agricultural conditions, but is experiencing persistent poverty can prompt people to rethink their existing methods and espouse a new approach such as the *Saemaul Undong*.

Thus, there are good reasons for countries to embrace the *Saemaul Undong* if they know what it is about. But then again, even with all the good intentions and enthusiastic support of stakeholders, various barriers remain. These challenges are what the proponents of the *Saemaul Undong* must continuously fight against and which also demand a different mindset on the part of the Korean development partners. The reason why most development projects do not live up to expectations and wither shortly after donors have completed their mission and hand them over is because the recipients have inherently little zeal to take ownership of and responsibility for them. Hence, it is important for donors to conduct post-management of projects in whatever fashion possible and not to totally terminate engagement for a certain period.

Foreign development partners in the field are faced with double jeopardy. Not only do they have to follow very tough guidelines and regulations of their home country, but they also have to deal with everyday hardships on the ground and worry about the possibility of

the failure of their projects due to problems beyond their control. But knowing all too well how things will likely to unfold given the practices and conditions of the country they are assigned to, it would almost seem irresponsible for foreign aid workers to ignore reality altogether. Hence, regardless of how difficult it may be, development partners should be more demanding, proactive and straightforward in 'pushing' locals to comply and carry out their necessary part in the process. What is required is much more intrusive enforcement of disciplined work standards, supervision and the rule of 'incentives and punishment'.

This vindicates the adoption of a stringent mindset change approach like the *Saemaul Undong* in the Sub-Saharan African region. What came to me as an important reckoning was that serious self-reflection must come from within Africans themselves, and it should not be the job of the development partners to spell out the problems of which the African people should be all too aware. A first meaningful step forward would be to recognize that 'something is wrong' and that it needs to be dealt with. I have seen people blaming others, so often but rarely do they put blame on themselves.

There is a delicate balance between the need for the *Saemaul Undong* to be welcomed and voluntarily espoused by the locals on the one hand, and the need to be strict and really be 'pushy' so that it can produce the desired outcome on the other. For foreign workers, making the locals change their attitude and behaviour is a very difficult as well as a sensitive task. Therefore, *Saemaul Undong* programme managers or instructors need to have extra passion, perseverance and devotion to their duties. They themselves should have strong communication and leadership skills.

In the case of poor countries, there is no choice for them other than to rely on a labour-intensive sector to build and grow the economy. But the socio-economic dynamics of the world have changed and people's work ethic in general is deemed to have deteriorated. Even in the poorest countries, it cannot be taken for granted that ordinary people would be willing to undergo toil and hardships in order to make it in life. A virtue like the Protestant work ethic, which, by the way, has similar features to the teachings of the Canaan Farmers School, may be dissipating fast. There are signs that even the poor and jobless in Africa

are increasingly shunning laborious work and are instead aspiring for easy-going, high-paid jobs that are out of their reach. But there is not much to hope for when the population continues to be neither productive nor diligent.

Other unwholesome trait that I have discovered to be prevalent even among African elites is a lack of confidence which can turn into a more serious form of defeatism. Lack of confidence and motivation breeds inaction, dependence and loss of self-esteem, which in turn can lead to expediency, deviation, irregularities and abandonment of one's responsibilities. Lack of confidence and commitment is reflected in the tendency to 'regress' or 'give up early and have other thoughts'.

The lessons learned from the operation of the *Saemaul Undong* in Uganda over the past six years or so can be summed up as follows: (1) poverty is opportunity; (2) competence and drive in grassroots leaders makes all the difference; (3) flexibility and incremental scaling up of governance is required; (4) apply Goldilocks principle in assistance; and (5) an 'organically' interlinked system of support should be developed.

In Korea, the *Saemaul Undong* was successfully implemented because so many people took an active part in it, and the ultimate factor behind this was poverty: people were united in terms of wanting to get out of poverty and improve their livelihood. And the confidence that was bred into them only made them more passionate. It is believed that the Korean rural population complied actively with this movement because they were hopeful in light of the success of the government's export promotion in the 1960s.

In Uganda, as in other Sub-Saharan African countries in general, rural regions remain poor without much, if any, change taking place, despite the evolution of the times and technological advances. For those people who are conscious of their situation, who know very well their limitations in the means (and the limited support they can get from their government or donors), but who desire a better life, the *Saemaul Undong* can be appealing. But there is variation in the responsiveness to this according to the type of communities: (1) communities near urban or commercial centres, having easily access to business, economic activities; (2) 'communal' villages in provincial districts; and (3) hard-to-access, very remote and isolated 'troubled regions' (with a weak social fabric and dire poverty). The

type that is most likely to have the best chance for the *Saemaul Undong* is communal villages. In sum, poor 'communal' villages having a certain level of yearning for a better life and hope have been found to be most suitable for the *Saemaul Undong*.

Since the *Saemaul Undong* is undertaken at the grassroots community level, no matter how organized and buffed up the external support system may be, if there is no interest, commitment and implementation on the part of the villagers themselves, then there is no point in pursuing the programme. Villages with certain people or a group of people with exceptional vigour in this regard can make a big difference. Thus, it is crucial to identify and assign such leaders during the early stages of planning and launching of the *Saemaul Undong*. A good example is the 'Greater Masaka Mindset Change Agents Club' of Uganda. This youth group that underwent training in the NFLC in April 2017, formed this club during the training and returned to their villages to implement the *Saemaul Undong* in an energetic manner.⁸

For the *Saemaul Undong* to take root and expand successfully in African countries, and not end up as merely a banal project, the government, both at the local and the central levels, must be engaged in a meaningful fashion. Hence, there is a need for a matching administrative system or governance to be put in place. Regarding the governance of the *Saemaul Undong*, it would be unrealistic to expect the African countries to form a strong system of the *Saemaul Undong* governance, even if it is espoused at the state level, because the state of governance in African countries itself is weak in the first place. Endorsement by the head of state and the support of the relevant ministry are definitely encouraging and helpful, but these are not enough. Rather than making this a task in itself, it would be practical to start with a flexible approach of focusing on a grassroots movement to prove the usefulness of the *Saemaul Undong* with concrete outcomes. This will bring about the government's involvement in a natural way.

The fourth lesson is about applying the Goldilocks principle ('just right') in terms of providing assistance for *Saemaul Undong*. Neither indifference nor 'full support' is desirable. The 'just right' thing is to be moderate and deliberate in *Saemaul Undong* projects: provide intensive training at the initiative stage, but allow the local leaders and residents

to take up on their own in the spirit of diligence, self-help and cooperation. Encouragement and appreciation of their efforts are important, but direct material support should be very limited and measured, only being provided as an incentive in consideration of their actual performance. It is much better and more effective to enhance people's pride and inspire them further through face-to-face communications and 'symbolic' rewards rather than assisting them with material means, otherwise they will simply remain dependent.

What is also important is to nurture an environment of openness and possibilities of collaboration. Motivation, passion and optimism are what drive the *Saemaul Undong*. These can only be sustained when people see the benefits of the *Saemaul Undong* and the positive links it has for their income generation in the longer run. And as a matter of course, this is the area where African governments should play their necessary part. But the *Saemaul Undong* can collaborate with other relevant Korean projects, the host country's projects and other foreign development partners as well. The purpose here is to provide synergistic effects and prevent duplication of efforts through coordination. For example, a network comprising the NFLC, the KOPIA Centre, various *Saemaul Undong* activities and UNDP programmes is being fostered in Uganda. Also, the relevant *Saemaul Undong* bodies can team up with the Ugandan government's Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) that is being implemented to support rural households' agricultural production. I realized that in order for all this arrangement to succeed, a central oversight authority was still very much necessary.

Then how should we engineer the *Saemaul Undong* for Sub-Saharan Africa? Coming up with a blueprint that is applicable for the whole region in a detailed fashion will be almost impossible because not only does the situation vary from country to country, but each provincial region within a given country would have its own unique features. The practical thing to do would be to set some kind of general criteria or benchmarks to start with.

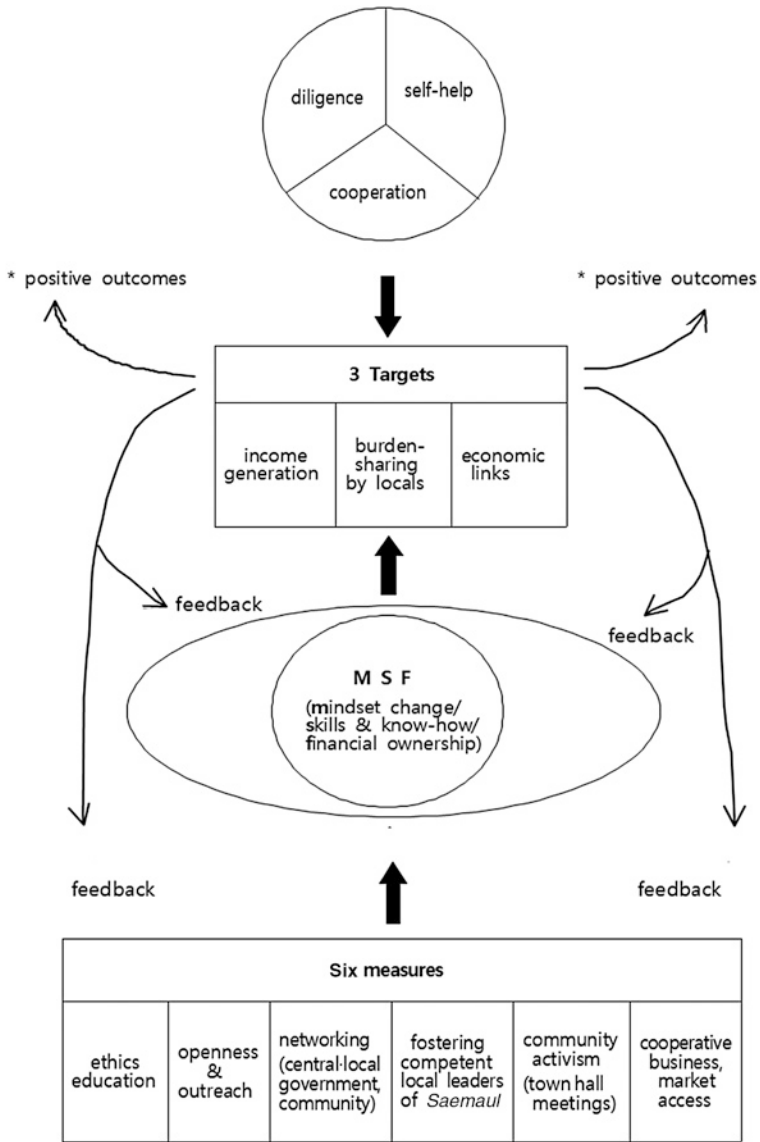
Under the principles or core values of the *Saemaul Undong*—diligence, self-help and cooperation—we can deduce 'three targets' and 'six measures' that are deemed pertinent to Africa. The three targets are: (1) income generation; (2) contribution or burden-sharing by the

locals; and (3) formation of economic links for value chains and market access. The six measures required to achieve them are: (1) maintaining openness and outreach to other initiatives/programmes; (2) adopting and teaching national, social and work ethics at schools, in government circles and in local communities; (3) forming an interactive network among central government, local government and communities; (4) fostering competent and dedicated *Saemaul Undong* leaders; (5) promoting a strong community-centred mechanism like town hall meetings; and (6) developing cooperative business arrangements for increased value addition and access to markets.

Moreover, agents serving as a medium between these targets on the one hand and the relevant measures on the other are mindset change, skills/know-how and financial ownership, which I will refer to as 'MSF' ('M' standing for mindset change, 'S' for skills/know-how and 'F' for financial ownership of the locals). An important thing to note is that these three agents or components need to occur simultaneously and to be synchronized. Figure 11.1 below illustrates this. At the very top you can see the guiding principles of the *Saemaul Undong*: diligence, self-help and cooperation. The three targets that are placed under these principles are income generation, burden-sharing by the locals, and forming value-chains and economic linkage.

To simplify things, the basic goals of Korea's *Saemaul Undong* were twofold: first, improving living quarters and community infrastructure; and, second, increasing household and community incomes through various agricultural and manufacturing activities. In order for economic development to be felt by the ordinary people, it should take place where the majority of the population live—in the rural regions. Thus, improving the basic living environment for rural residents is an important step in realizing national wellbeing.

This is important not only in terms of cleanliness, sanitation and order of rural communities, but also for people's healthiness of mind, which is conducive to socio-economic development. It also helps strengthen the social capital. Not only does one feel much better living in a clean and orderly neighbourhood, but it also makes one more motivated and responsible to maintain that level of living. The work went beyond cleaning up, fixing and building living quarters, like upgrading



* Positive Outcomes : spillover (expansion), governance, social capital, sustainability

Fig. 11.1 The Saemaul Undong scheme for Sub-Saharan Africa

and expanding various forms of physical infrastructure in the community: improving and enlarging roads, constructing bridges, flood-prevention structures, etc. This not only made living in rural areas much more convenient, but also created a beneficial environment for commercial activities and opportunities for locals. The appearance of orderliness reflects the state of mind of the people and says a lot of about the possibility of development.

The second category I mentioned is the enhancement of rural income through improved agricultural production and other income-generating activities. Income generation for rural areas is the ultimate goal as well as the benchmark of success of the *Saemaul Undong* in Africa. So, in order for the *Saemaul Undong* to prove its worth and hence be able to flourish as a relevant development model in the region, there must be a marked positive outcome—income generation—derived from it.

Another target is people's contribution or burden-sharing. This cannot be over-emphasized, as the *Saemaul Undong* is about empowering the people by instilling a 'can-do' spirit and a sense of ownership in them. People will feel true ownership if they invest and have a stake in the work they undertake. Many existing development projects involve only the one-way provision of assistance or delivery of facilities or equipment to beneficiaries. In other words, they do not directly invoke positive change in recipients by making people act or contribute immediately. The important thing is to strictly uphold the rule that 'nothing is free' and that the locals should play their due part in return for the benefits they receive.

The third target is the formation of economic links in terms of value chains and market access. For *Saemaul Undong* villages, being connected to markets and business or industrial centres is crucial to their viability and welfare as communities. Without such economic connectivity, communities will not be able to achieve autonomous and sustainable development. In Sub-Saharan Africa, most villages in rural areas are remote from economic centres, main roads and markets, and these largely 'isolated' areas are cut off from even what little commercial opportunities are available in provincial regions. A severe shortage of road networks, poor condition of roads and poor means of transportation limit economic and social spill-over effects and exacerbate the

divide that exists between the capital city and the rest of the country. When left unchecked, a vicious cycle in the form of double dipping—the growth of slums and over-population in cities, and the marginalization and deprivation of rural areas—will continue. So, the pursuit of regional economic links should be especially underscored in Sub-Saharan Africa.

As a means of reaching these three targets, I have laid out six measures, which, in turn, have to be driven by the three elements of MSF in a concurrent fashion: mindset change, skills and know-how, and financial ownership. First, if people go about doing business with the same frame of mind, this will not make a difference in terms of speed and quality of work. Second, having a strong and positive mindset is critical for individuals to be self-serving and become more adept in their work and training. In African urban areas and rural regions, there is a great gap in education and knowledge. Hence, conscientious efforts must be made to enlighten, train and educate the rural population, but the desire to learn must come from the residents themselves. And the embodiment and application of mindset change and skills will not be sufficient if this is not accompanied by ‘financial ownership’. Having financial ownership means that people have to put their own resources in the project from which they wish to benefit. This makes everybody a worthy member of the community, each contributing to, and having a stake in, the success of the work carried out in their community. It is also good for nurturing civic values.

Learning that ‘nothing is free’ is a big part of the *Saemaul Undong*, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. A government official and politician from northern Uganda told me that no matter how much he helps his constituents, ‘no one is willing to even contribute one dollar’ to the community projects that they will be benefiting from. Practising financial ownership can also bring dividends in terms of encouraging badly needed savings in Africa.

With MSF as the driver of the *Saemaul Undong* in Africa, six measures should be taken to ensure the overall success and expansion of this rural development model: ethics/civil education; openness and outreach; networking; fostering local leaders; community decision-making and a consensus-building mechanism; and cooperatives. Of these, the first two

seem particularly pertinent for Africa, while the others are more obvious and generally applicable to other regions of the developing world.

First on the list of measures to be taken is embarking on a programme of national education in ethics. The need for a major overhaul in national educational contents in Sub-Saharan Africa cannot be over-emphasized. African countries must adopt more vocational, technical courses in schools as opposed to the current theoretical, academic subjects. But more importantly, they need to introduce and vigorously launch public education in ethics—social ethics, work ethics, national ethics, etc.—for all levels of students and also for adults.

The matter of ethics seems to be taken either too lightly or too seriously. First of all, the issue of ethics has many dimensions. We can break down ethics in three categories: (1) moral ethics; (2) collective ethics; and (3) functional ethics. The first of these is usually referred to as ‘morals’ or personal character. The word ‘ethics’, in comparison to ‘morals’, connotes a social context. And I think what is ignored in many developing countries is collective and functional ethics. While moral ethics or morality is innately personal and spiritual, collective ethics is more about one’s attitude, beliefs and behaviour *in relation to* one’s community, society and nation. While the former is ‘inwardly oriented’, the latter is ‘outwardly oriented’. The former asks whether we are decent and rightful, while the latter asks what inclination we have towards various units of the society. Lastly, functional ethics is about how we ‘do’ things, or the tendency that we have in our actions and work.

It is crucial that we bring elements of behavioural science into the discourse of development in order for it to be more relevant in our search for answers or solutions. The problems in the first category—corruption, irregularity, bad governance, crimes, etc.—are tied to social and structural problems like poverty and underdevelopment, and they will not go away easily. The second category is more concerned with how to perceive things, to go about doing work, living one’s daily life and contemplating one’s situation and role in the society. We need to differentiate between these two and pursue them simultaneously, but on different tracks.

When I say that ethics is taken too lightly, it means that we are not realizing how much difference people’s mindset and ethics can make in

relation to development. On the contrary, taking the subject too seriously means that people become so fixated on the notion that nothing could be done about it. Neither of these two views is helpful and we need to find a happy medium where we clearly understand the gravity of the problem and act forcibly and continuously to root out the negative socio-psychological syndromes.

In Africa, there is no shortage of general teachings on personal morality. These come in the form of expressions of universal values, civil education and religious-moral teachings, etc. from various entities, including developing partners, government leaders, NGOs and rights groups, social and religious leaders, etc. But what is very much lacking in the discourse of development is the collective and functional ethics.

As for functional ethics, the word 'functional' may not seem very fitting to the realm of ethics as it implies the 'capacity' of people and how people work. But when this becomes problematic, it entails unnecessary cost—human toil, both in relation to time and financial—and the issue of responsibility. Keeping time for appointments and delivery of work, making things in a 'standardized' and acceptable manner, being focused on the job in hand so that things are done properly first time and do not have to be done all over again, etc. are standards are often not kept to the satisfaction in the region.

In this sense, the term 'functional ethics' is similar to 'work ethics'. But the term 'works ethics' implies a generalized meaning of desirable attitudes for work and fails to capture the innate characteristics and issues typical in Sub-Saharan African. That is why I have rephrased it as 'functional ethics' to signify a wide range of attitudinal tendencies—micro-, organizational and social—to explain the case in the region.

Particular emphasis should be placed on education on the collective ethics and functional ethics for Africa; a comprehensive education plan should be implemented to 'inculcate' students and the general populace on civil (or social or national) ethics, how to be rational, effective and successful in their daily work and jobs, and organizations or business. Functional ethics should also include technical and detailed ways of handling basic work.

'Morality' is synonymous with 'rightness' or 'goodness', but the term is subjective, being influenced by religious beliefs, a traditional social

code of conduct or norms, cultures, philosophical orientations, etc. Enumerating what are evidently universally accepted *immoral* acts is much easier: stealing, cheating, lying, adultery, raping, murdering, etc. Then there are civility and virtues like being polite, responsible, honest, generous, diligent, indulgent, patient, helpful, selfless, etc. More lofty and abstract attributes include 'integrity', 'inspirational', 'visionary', 'saintly', etc. And there is a whole array of 'misdemeanours' or 'misconducts' construed as offences or improper and unlawful acts. And of course, acts of 'deviation' and crimes, whether simple, white-collar, organizational or collective, are committed everywhere all the time.

But such common forms of practice that people take for granted in the region, like failing to keep time for service deliveries, failing to be punctual for appointments, not keeping promises or following up, etc., should be also treated seriously. Such a matter lies somewhere in between moral norms and cultural practices or customs, but its accumulative effect leads to a fundamental curtailment of development.

Most of all, what appears to be the unending and unabating widespread practices of irregularities or corruption taking place every day at all levels of society needs to be addressed. The problem derives from a weak social fabric and a genuine lack of a 'culture of shame'. How to rectify this is really in the hands of Africans and something must be done about it.

Collective ethics is a different category. It is routine business for development partners, Africa's civil society and NGOs to raise human rights abuses and governance issues. But they will likely find collective ethics and, to a greater extent, functional ethics a bit odd. By collective ethics, I mean a sense of nation, patriotism and community; people recognizing the necessity and inevitability of their connection with the larger units of life outside their own. Western ideas of liberal democracy stress human rights and individual freedom, but this is premised on the existence of a potentially powerful state ('leviathan') that can infringe upon the rights of citizens.

What the people need is a stable but evolving environment in which to lead decent and better lives and build their society and economy. And it is basically through state-building and making the state to function properly that nations can prosper. Without having a

well-functioning state mechanism in place and without a certain level of social capital being nurtured, development endeavours will be seriously jeopardized. The state or society needs to empower the people so that the people, in turn, will be able to develop their nation. This is a mutually reinforcing process. There needs to be a kind of binding social fabric conducive to the formation of a wholesome nationhood for long-term or sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Countries lacking this essential foundation will continue to struggle with the challenges they face today. It will not be easy to engender a renewed national ethos or a sense of nation in the people, but it is certainly achievable, as many others have already done so. But of course, a special level of commitment is necessary.

The first step will be to embark on a national campaign of enlightenment or mindset renewal. Adversities can be turned into opportunities. There can be more harm than meets the eye in nations believing that all they need to do is to follow the trend of globalism and open up their economy, while adopting and emulating developed countries' institutions and values in a literal sense without understanding the prerequisites and underlying issues. Perhaps the greatest barrier to any attempt to overcome such limitations is African politics and populism. The leaders and elites seem to shun what is difficult but what is the right thing to do, and instead opt for what is unwholesome but is politically expedient or the easy thing to do.

Development partners should also pay attention to the issue of collective ethics. And while the initiative must come from within—from African people—it would do no harm if development partners also engage themselves in this endeavour to assist African nations in this process. This can be a new and challenging task for the development community, and would require extra sensitivity, patience and time, but it may pay off in the end.

What is hindering the formation of a healthy 'nationalism', patriotism or national identity in many African countries is party politics. Because of the divisive nature of politics and people's suspicion that there is a political agenda behind public campaigns led by government, it is become more difficult to win people's approval and support and

mobilize them to get things moving. This is the irony of a contemporary electoral democracy that appears robust in Africa, but in reality in many instances is hindering much-needed real changes needed for national development.

An independent body along with civil society, joined by the government and even development partners, can drive the process forward. But politics should be avoided at all costs, otherwise it will be doomed from the start. It has to be collaborative work among various stakeholders, with the general public at the centre. It should be conducted through gathering public opinions, advice from social and religious leaders, education experts, intellectuals, etc., as well as benchmarking relevant cases in foreign countries. The process can be contentious and noisy, but this is how difficult things are done.

There is always the possibility that such an initiative, even if it were to be launched, will lose steam and wither quickly like so many others have done. But my response to this is that if you want transformative development, it has to be done because inherently, there is no quick fix and easy way out in relation to developmental challenges. Being intrinsically action-averse is the reason why Africa is struggling in this regard.

Functional ethics is another important area and it is all about going back to basics. 'Orderliness' is the key word. Among many things, a factor hindering development is the lack of a basic work ethic for observing 'orderliness'. There has been much talk about 'skilling' youth or the workforce, but the terms like 'skilling', 'capacity-building' and 'technical training' disguise what is the real underlying challenge—it is not so much the lack of 'knowledge' and information, but the attitude and pattern of behaviour that counts. There is much ado about 'creativity', 'innovation' and 'entrepreneurship' these days, but what is overlooked is the importance of being organized and conforming to 'standardization'. African products and services are less competitive and African workers are less frequently employed by foreign companies than they should be because of this.

Development can be achieved when individuals do their best with the tasks and the means given, and do not wait for everything to be right. In most parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, where so many basic needs

are left uncared for and so much work needs to be done to get people out of a state of destitution, a sense of urgency to do something about the situation is largely absent. It appears that there is little, if any, appetite on the part of leaders and elites to really sound the alarm and spearhead campaigns to turn things around.

Orderliness and geometrical correctness are part and parcel of all the goodness and signs of advancement. They need to be observed and internalized by workers, businesses and society to make them competitive, viable or generically wholesome. Whether it is about simple manual work, the fabrication of goods, engineering or sophisticated tasks, the most basic rules or standards of work must be followed. While African people in general recognize and value manual dexterity, they sometimes fail to understand that the most basic element to observe at all times in work is geometrical correctness. In a larger context, this is the matter of 'standards' directly connected to economic competitiveness.

Cursory work done with a lack of focus and attention to detail, along with a lack of skills has many negative impacts on society and the economy. First, the direct outcome of the labour is poor-quality work. And costs—time and extra labour demands (including extra supervisory work)—go up, seriously curtailing the competitiveness and credibility of those workers. The typical work pattern of labourers is that they simply come in and do things without setting a proper work scheme and carefully conducting measurements.

Standardization, which is an essential prerequisite for manufacturing, engineering and industrialization, is also critical for social orderliness and quality of life. It is impossible to imagine achieving skills, technology and science while neglecting geometry. One of the reasons why many businesses in the region struggle to be competitive is because of shortcomings in their packaging skills as well as the quality for their products. Many decry the state of African trade that is driven by exporting raw commodities with low value addition, and they call for local processing and value addition of the products and the building of manufacturing industries. But again, it is only through a fundamental 'reorientation' of people's attitudes and behaviour that such progress can come about.

The second measure is 'openness and outreach'. What makes this necessary is because of the unique opportunity as well as the limitations existing in the region. There are community-oriented traditions or customs in Africa that the *Saemaul Undong* can utilize or collaborate with so that it is actually 'going with the grain' in relation to local practices. As I have mentioned, Sub-Saharan African people in general are very open-minded towards outsiders and in many cases there is a natural 'affinity' for movement such as the *Saemaul Undong* in Africa. Furthermore, rural-agricultural development is very high on the agenda in the minds of African leaders and the public.

Many leaders in Africa do appreciate and welcome the *Saemaul Undong*, and if African governments take this model seriously and follow it up with care, then there will be a much better chance for its success. But as we all know, in most cases Sub-Saharan African countries are not known for the efficient delivery of public services. In any case, the strong backing of central government is no doubt conducive to the success of the *Saemaul Undong*.

For the development partner overseeing the programme, in this case Korean agencies, executing *Saemaul Undong* projects in a well-coordinated, systematic manner will be quite a challenge. Therefore, the *Saemaul Undong* needs to be pragmatic and flexible in its approach and be open to collaboration with other similar initiatives. This means not only accommodating 'local variance' to the Korean prototype by taking local practices and conditions into account, but also working in conjunction with other ongoing programmes. There can be a trade-off between 'outreaching' and 'fine-tuning' of the *Saemaul Undong*, and which is more important is debatable. But considering the circumstances, a certain degree of flexibility and localization is both inevitable and practical to facilitate the 'replication' and expansion of the *Saemaul Undong* in the region. The important thing is to adhere to the core principles and modes of the *Saemaul Undong*; the rest can take different forms in varying situations.

Third on the list is networking. According to So, Jin Kwang, the former President of the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre and Professor of Gachon University, the benefits of the *Saemaul Undong* as a national

movement can be summed up as follows: (1) governance; (2) social capital; and (3) sustainability.⁹ Through the *Saemaul Undong*, a new 'governance' system linking central government, the provinces and grassroots communities emerged in Korea in the 1970s. This greatly enhanced central government's administrative capacity and efficiency vis-à-vis provinces. Previously, different ministries and agencies were dealing with provincial issues, but the *Saemaul Undong* streamlined and integrated communication and policy implementation channels between the government and local entities.

The essence of the *Saemaul Undong* is a bottom-up, voluntary movement by the local population. But the role of government was also critical in designing the *Saemaul Undong* as a national campaign, encouraging and stimulating the movement by offering incentives and awards. What makes the *Saemaul Undong* different from other programmes is that the government did not provide direct assistance to local communities. The Korean government had a grand vision for the *Saemaul Undong*, but it was the local population themselves that undertook the village projects.

The goal of *Saemaul Undong* projects for Sub-Saharan Africa is to churn up exemplary villages so that they can be emulated by other villages, with the expectation that this will lead to the expansion of the *Saemaul Undong* on a national scale. Undoubtedly, if this model underscoring diligence, self-help and cooperation can take root and expand in Africa, it will have many unexpected positive repercussions on the development of the region.

The viability of the *Saemaul Undong* will hinge on, among other things, the central government's continued engagement with and 'ownership' of this campaign. At least in the villages where the *Saemaul Undong* pilot projects are being conducted, there needs to be a close working relationship between the central government, local government and the villages. An ideal scenario would be that the central government officially endorses and incorporates *Saemaul Undong* programmes in its rural-agricultural development policies. This will ensure a favourable and stable environment in which *Saemaul Undong* proponents can pursue their activities.

Another essential measure is fostering competent local leaders who can inspire and lead people in the *Saemaul Undong*. Korea's success with the

Saemaul Undong came about because of passionate people who were led by passionate leaders. No matter how many resources the Korean government can provide for Africa's *Saemaul Undong* programmes, if the Africans themselves are not enthusiastic, it will be pointless pursuing them.

That is why it is critical that 'true believers' of the *Saemaul Undong* emerge continuously. Conventional development assistance methods are mostly about imparting knowledge and skills, and they are carried out in a matter-of-fact fashion. I have not seen a development programme in any other country that emphasizes such a level of passion, devotion, collective efforts and sacrifice of the people being targeted. But we have reached a point where the international development community should give serious thought to employing a value-oriented approach as a supplementary means to existing development endeavours for change. Outside the realm of religious or spiritual teachings, there clearly exists a domain of ethics that can be widely accepted and applied internationally. This should not be a job for religious and spiritual leaders, and moral activists only—it should be taken up by the mainstream players of development, including government circles and civil society in general.

In 2013, the *Saemaul Undong* archives were recorded in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Memory of the World Register. At the time, the UNESCO International Advisory Committee stated that 'the movement became the cornerstone of Korea's rapid growth from a poor country to one of the world's top ten economic powers and a precious asset to the history of mankind'. It added that 'since it gives the whole picture of how successfully the movement was carried out to modernize 34,000 selected rural villages across the nation, the archives are valuable resources to developing countries and international development agencies who seek to eliminate poverty and modernize rural areas'.¹⁰

The established international community does not hold back when speaking out against political, human and humanitarian rights abuses. But why is the community silent when it comes to the 'economic developmental rights' of poor nations? It is evident that negative practices, mindsets and syndromes that hinder development are preponderant in the region. So, if development partners care about the livelihood of African peoples, why are they not speaking out on the issue? Which is

more evil: being diplomatically and politically correct or being honest and straightforward? The former is a case of being nice but hypocritical, while the latter is about being blunt but genuine. On development matters, our purpose should be to try to make a difference, even if we have to sometimes stray from our 'comfort zone' and that of others. I think it is actually immoral to keep silent or not speak out on fundamental matters that fundamentally impact the lives of people simply for the sake of avoiding discomfort (and likely criticism). Civility and sincerity must go hand in hand.

The word 'transformation' is popularly used in Africa to accentuate the goal of development. But transformation does not come about easily and is the outcome of an arduous and painful process. National transformation cannot take place with some instances of excellence displayed by a few, but through the mobilization and efforts of the masses. The people must come on board and this requires a substantial and growing number of 'agents of change', the leaders who will urge others to join the path towards development. Since the *Saemaul Undong* is basically a communal campaign (although it can be practised in factories, companies, schools, etc.), its success derives from the vitality of 'community activism', which in turn is dependent on the unity and enthusiasm shown by individual members in their communal work.

There are already similar rural development projects that have been undertaken by various international organizations and bilateral development partners, which all put forward 'sustainable rural development' as their goal. But they are overwhelmingly assistance-oriented programmes trying to help the locals in various fashions (skills training, provision of equipment and facilities, micro-financing, creating marketing opportunities, etc.) to engage in agricultural production or agribusiness. And they may have yielded some positive results, mostly modest and limited, but not to an extent that is 'transformative'.

So, there is an innate risk that *Saemaul Undong* programmes, if not properly understood and pursued, will follow the same fate as other aid programmes. This is particularly so if donor agencies as well as the locals carry out *Saemaul Undong* programmes without sufficient inputs by *Saemaul Undong* experts. But there is a major difference between the *Saemaul Undong* and other aid initiatives in that the former is essentially

a self-reliant community movement that includes self-planning, self-decision-making, and the self-execution of work projects.

Community activism is a positive thing as it has many benefits: promotion of grassroots democracy, information-sharing, building and strengthening the 'social fabric', collective problem solving and education, etc. And economic spill-over effects in the rural regions can be far greater than expected when communities come together. It is so much easier to deal with community units, if they conform to a common cause, than belabouring to somehow win over all the people on an individual basis.

Another important measure to take for the success of the *Saemaul Undong* is taking advantage of cooperatives, which has many parallels with the *Saemaul Undong* and which has proven to be a very good tool to supplement the *Saemaul Undong* in the case of Korea. A cooperative is an autonomous association of people joined to own or operate enterprise for their mutual benefit. The association's characteristics are that it is formed voluntarily, operated democratically by those working for their own benefit (self-help), and managed autonomously. It has a long history and the current, modern form of cooperatives is said to have originated in Europe, but Korea also has a very old tradition that is similar to cooperatives.

While the *Saemaul Undong* was a national spiritual 'reform' movement as well as a driving force for economic growth, Korea's agricultural cooperatives greatly contributed to rural-agricultural development since its inception in 1961. Korea's agricultural cooperatives collaborated with the government in Korea's Green Revolution (involving the development of new rice varieties) and the *Saemaul Undong* in the 1970s. The major projects of Korean agricultural cooperatives include financial services like trust guarantees for farmers, agricultural technical training, protection of farmers' rights, improvement of rural livelihood, supporting agribusiness (the sale of products, the purchase and supply of agricultural equipment and basic necessities for farmers), etc. In Korea, the successful combination of the *Saemaul Undong* along with the dissemination and application of agricultural technology and cooperatives were instrumental in bringing about rapid development in the rural region. Cooperatives had significance as the final-stage guarantor of the

agribusiness value chain. Many farmers found confidence, stability and security in their production activities because of the efficient cooperative system.¹¹

Normally, cooperatives are economic associations formed by economically and socially underprivileged people who want to improve their situation and meet their needs. Therefore, if the cooperatives are operated properly, this can greatly benefit the vast majority of African villagers and farmers. In Uganda, cooperatives have failed in the past due to improper management or (political) abuses, but now the government is trying to revive the system, recognizing its merits.

Along with the introduction of cooperatives, enhancing market access for rural regions is considered crucial for the success of the *Saemaul Undong*. Naturally, in order to invigorate cooperatives, the market accessibility of rural regions needs to be continuously upscaled. Market access, in addition to the value-addition of farm products, is a fundamental challenge for Africa's rural regions, where the vast majority of the population resides.

To sum up, as was shown in Fig. 11.1, *Saemaul Undong* projects should be implemented with MSF as the driving force to achieve the three targets (income generation, burden-sharing and the formation of economic links) based on the six measures outlined above. Once this is achieved, it would have positive outcomes (spill-over, governance, social capital and sustainability) and feedbacks.

Notes

1. 'Smart Saemaul Undong Story', an information pamphlet published by KOICA in the autumn of 2015.
2. Ibid.
3. The four areas are: (1) Inclusive and Sustainable Rural Development; (2) Better Life for Girls; (3) Safe Life for All; and (4) Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Better Life.
4. JEE Hyeong-jin, the Co-Head of the NFLC, presented this plan on 20 July 2016 during the project launching workshop at the NFLC.

5. Speech by Adolf Mwesige, Uganda's Minister of Local Government, during the ISNC launching ceremony on 10 July 2015, in Kibiito Town Council, Kabarole District, Uganda.
6. SMU Uganda.
7. Choi Hae-suk, *Study of Canaan Farmers School from the Perspective of Life Time Education* (Seoul: Ajou University, 2006) (BA Thesis) (Korean), p. 25.
8. During the 'Program for the Launch of Greater Masaka Model Villages' on 3 August 2017, held at Kkindu Parish Community, Masaka District, the SMU Change Agents divulged that their biggest challenge was confronting the negative mindsets of the villagers.
9. Jin Kwang So, President of the Korea *Saemaul Undong* Centre, gave a lecture on the *Saemaul Undong* to Baanda village (*Saemaul* model village) in Mityana District on 18 August 2016 during his visit to Uganda.
10. UNESCO Memory of the World, 'Archives of Saemaul Undong New Community Movement', <http://www.unesco.org>.
11. National Agricultural Cooperatives Federation (www.nonghyup.com), Choi Byung-ik and others, *Saemaul Undong and ODA* (Chungyang: Kukjemunwha University, 2014), pp. 46–48.

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