Government Roles for Community Development in Korea

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The government and local autonomies have played very important roles for the effective implementation of community development programs in Korea. Government roles include the preparation of blueprints and essential guidelines of policy alternatives that can be agreed and undertaken by the people on a voluntary basis.

Saemaul Undong, Korea's representative community development program, was initiated by the government at the initial stage. Material projects awakened the community members who succeeded in broadening the categories of change-making activities with their growing can-do spirit. Most policy contents pertaining to rural areas could be successfully committed with interlinkages to the degree of villagers' participation in the movement. Public organizations across the country continued to ignite the maximized contribution by the people.

Efforts of government and community members have been gradually systematized as much as to make the movement go on beyond political situation. Strategies and various tools of the movement could be implicative and recommendable to other countries.
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GOVERNMENT ROLES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN KOREA

I. IMPLICATIONS OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A. Community

- Fields for human lives gathering to create and enjoy their individual/common prosperity
- Made of physical/mental resources and tangible/intangible aspects of human life
- Importer/exporter of produces and culture
- Composer and partaker of national/global competitiveness
- Producer/supervisor as well as clients of government policies

B. Community Development

- Aimed at the improved quality of life of community members
- Undertake physical/material projects and mental/cultural programs
- Participated and led by community members themselves
- Mobilizing local resources and culture
II. FEATURES OF KOREA'S COMMUNITIES

A. Rural Villages

- Comprising each cluster of households with a variety of sizes from less than 20 to above 1,000 families

- Retaining the roles and characteristics of bottom community in historic, socio-economic, cultural and security terms

- Becoming the origin of strong sense of hometown cherished and maintained in the people's whole life

- Depending much on local government offices and agricultural/ fishery/ livestock cooperatives in attaining public services and information

※ Villagers used to mainly exchange information, communications and commodities in local markets open every five days

B. Urban Residences

- Produce a family-based or job-based way of life pursuing the individual gains

- Show the mixture of historical/ traditional remains and new outcomes in most aspects of human life

- Provide better schooling conditions and more job opportunities than in rural areas

- Face with some urban problems including traffic jam, pollution, juvenile delinquencies, energy shortage, etc. particularly in metropolitan cities
C. Changes

- Rural and urban communities have changed a great deal since 1970's
- The Saemaul Undong(Movement) has remarkably contributed to the development and revitalization of rural communities.
- Migration of rural people to urban cities, especially to Seoul and its outskirts, has continued since 1960's
- Emerging of newly-built structures including skyscrapers and tall apartments has brought about visible changes in people's way of life.
- Nationwide demand for qualified higher education and cultural services among the people and the lack of effective government policies to meet it have brought about the imbalance between metropolises and local communities
- Promotion of social westernization and globalization has influenced much on majority of youths
- The restoration of local autonomies in 1990's has propelled the decentralization and the participatory democracy at local communities
- Mass-media and NGO programs have increased their influence upon communities
III. KOREA’S GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Central Gov't: ministries

- metropolitan municipalities (7)
  - ward (KU)
    - block (DONG)
      - sub-block (TONG)
      - village (RI)
        - hamlet
    - town (EUP)
      - township (MYUN)
- county (KUN)
  - city (SI)
    - block (DONG)
      - sub-block (TONG)
      - village (RI)
        - hamlet
- provinces (9)
  - county (KUN)
    - ward (KU)

- A metropolitan municipality should have more than one million people of populace
- A city has to have more than 50 thousand people and urban structure
- A town (EUP) is to be resided by more than 20 thousand habitants or a place with its county office located

: Executive and council members are elected by the people

: Executive and employees are appointed

: Representative selected by residents is designated as conveyor of government services. In case of this KU, director and employees are appointed by Mayor.
IV. EVOLUTIONARY LANDMARKS OF RURAL AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES IN KOREA

- The Japanese colonial government imposed Korean farmers to sell their produce of more than 40 kinds to those Japanese agencies licensed by their government.

- Since the proclamation of the amended Land Reform Act in March, 1950, landlords and rich farm households who owned much farmland were enforced to sell the poor farmers at low price their extra land beyond the respective acreage legally allowed. As the result, the number of landowners in the rural communities increased from 35% to more than 90% of total farmhouses.

- The special agreement on the provision of American farm surplus promulgated between Korea and the U.S.A. in 1955 helped lots of Korean rural residents survive against such severe poverty following the Korean War(1950-1953). Some agricultural products such as flour, cotton, etc. were brought free to Korean villagers by 1970.

- Saemaul Undong, Korea's unique new community movement, started across the country since 1971 when many rural people could not have three meals a day. Villagers were inspired to perform a comprehensive development project at community level. For instance a total length of 39,583 kilometers of community feeder roads were newly constructed through the voluntary works by rural community members.

- The government agencies and private expertise exerted their best efforts to create new species of rice to maximize the quantity of harvested grains. It is in 1971 that they succeeded in making a historical record of gaining more than 5,000 kilograms of rice at one hectare. The year of 1977 marked the first self sufficiency of rice in Korea.

- Many people, however, continued to leave their rural home communities in order to be engaged in industrialized areas. Old villagers and women remained in the countryside, lowering the productivity and enthusiasm in the agricultural sector.

- The Uruguay Round signed by 117 countries in 1994 became a really heavy obstacle for Korean farmers to overcome, because Korea came to
open its agricultural market to the globe without its preparedness enough to compete actively.

- Recently a variety of approaches have been taken to expand the market of environment-friendly organic farm produce, which appears to increase steadily beyond the existing 4% share of a nationwide whole market.

V. CONTENTS OF SAEMAUL UNDONG

| Environmental Improvement | → Spiritual Awakening/Mental Development | → Income Increasing/Productivity Management | → Cultural Enrichment |

A. Environmental Improvement
- Projects are selected by villagers in the village meeting. At the initial stage of the Movement, the Ministry of Home Affairs published a brochure introducing some model programs for villagers' reference.

- replacement of straw-thatch roofs into tile ones
- enlargement of community entry roads
- widening of village feeder roads and back lanes
- repair of community well
- rearrangement of laundry places
- improvement of walls and fences
- improvement and expansion of irrigation cannals
- construction of community center
- construction or improvement of community barnhouses
- construction or improvement of bridges
- improvement of sewages
- construction or improvements of common workplaces
- buildup of common stalls

- Materials such as cement and steel bars are provided by the government; land is donated by rich families in many villages; labor is contributed by other families.

- Details about this implementation of programs are decided in the village meeting. Programs to be undertaken for the welfare of women are discussed and resolved in the village female meeting.

B. Mental Development
- Mental awakening is pursued through the popular participation in change-making programs which are represented by physical environmental projects. The villagers get themselves awakened when they find the successful outcomes of new community development programs in which they take part.

- Three factors of mentality and behavioral patterns are especially emphasized: diligence; selfhelp; mutual cooperation.

- New curricula and new methods are introduced in training of various relevant people including community leaders as well as government officials. Most of those who play leading roles not only in public but non-governmental organizations are given chances to join the special training programs.

- Various contents about the Movement are introduced in curricula of regular schools.

C. Income Increasing
- Rural people who gained 'can-do spirit' through empirical participation in the Movement ask the public authorities to support their income programs, as they realize the need to increase their capital to implement larger programs.

- Some income projects are introduced by the central and local governments, which prepare informative programs for the villagers to understand and initiate new profitable ones. Cash crops, livestock, horticulture, cottage industries, etc. have been tried by the rural people in consideration of their situation and capability.

- Technical/engineering guidance and training activities are undertaken for income projects.

- Public loans are allocated with priority upon villages outstanding in the Movement. The loans are preferred by the people due to the lower interest rate and longer grace period.

- The Saemaul Community Bank, a small banking unit, is institutionalized in each locality and some public/nonpublic organizations. Its businesses are guaranteed by the law.
D. Spread and Derivatives

- The visible and tangible success in rural areas promoted the spread of the Movement over the country as a whole. Urban people have followed to bring 'Urban Saemaul Undong'. Residents of a block, employees of a company, etc. commit themselves to the successful achievement of such programs as community beautification, neighborhood charity, horizontal networking, and the like.

- Business employees make use of the Movement for increasing the productivity and quality management. The title of their performances is 'Business Saemaul' or 'Factory Saemaul'.

- Schools, primary and secondary, have their own programs for pupils or students to breed 'Saemaul Spirit' and practise the Movement at school and home. Colleges or universities are contributed to the Movement with research programs and extension activities.

- The Saemaul Undong(Movement) has been developed and put into practise by various networks of 'Saemaul Leaders' particularly responsible for leading and continuing the Movement on a voluntary basis. They have their own business activities or jobs, additionally serving or supporting those programs which ask them to join to continue the Movement. They are the members of such nationwide or local-level organizations as Saemaul Leaders Association/ Women Saemaul Leaders Federation/ Business Saemaul Leaders Commission/ Saemaul Library Society/ Saemaul Fund Federation.

- Since the second half of 1990s the Saemaul leaders have tried to expand and apply the information tools in their innovative approach to the Movement. They are enjoying the 'Internet Saemaul Undong'. Government organizations, central or local, help the rural communities learn and utilize the new Saemaul programs enriched with information technologies.

VI. GOVERNMENT ROLES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN CASE OF KOREA'S SAEMAUL UNDONG
A. Need of Government Roles

- To stimulate and ignite the people's willpower and desire for the development of their community on a voluntary basis

- To make up material/financial resources required for the effective development of rural villages

- To provide technical guidance activities in the course of people's implementation of community works

- To find and enrich the leadership expected to be contributive to the efficient development of communities

- To promote the affirmative environment for the villagers to perform and enjoy those developmental changes

B. Contents of Government Roles

- Awaken and inspire the people's self-help efforts in order that more people volunteer to take part in changing their own life and community

- Introduce and disseminate information and knowhows pertaining to the planning and operation of various kinds of community projects
  
  • Publish and distribute manuals and brochures on several standard/pilot projects
  
  • Cooperate with mass media in producing informative/educational programs

- Set up and innovatively manage some special institutes exclusively responsible for training new cadets of development programs

- Provide the villagers with necessary/supportive helps such as financial aids, grants in kind, engineering consulting, equipment leasing, etc.
  
  • Give some selected villages some amount of essential materials like cement/steel, etc.
• Guarantee the exemplary communities for being beneficiary of public loans with good terms

- Institutionalize and systematize government activities and policies

C. Principles of Government Roles

- Ignite and inspire the villagers' voluntary participation and problem-solving

- Provide priority supports for self-helping villages on an incentive basis

- Administer all kinds of government programs with a clear principle which aims at the development of grass-roots democracy

- Lay priorities upon the people's acceptance and practice of scientific/innovative/ reasonable way of living

- Reflect and involve the respective localities and characteristics of individual community in government support

- Conduct annual checkup and evaluation programs on community-unit achievements, according to which every village is coordinated in its grade: basic → self-help → self-reliant → self-managing → welfare

- Allow and acknowledge the inevitable changes in each community development plan in connection with government policies

- Sustain and maintain the consistency and continuity of government policies with political situation excluded

D. System of Government Roles

Central commission: coordination, preparation of guidelines

Economic Planning Board(Fiscal and Economy)/ Home Affairs/ Education/ Agriculture and Fisheries/ Trade and Industry/ Construction/ Health and Social Affairs/ Communications/ Publicity/ Finance/ Science and Technology/ Agricultural Extension/ Forestry/ Procurement
E. Some Special Measures

E-1. President and Central Government

- President himself presided over a monthly cabinet meeting held only for the report, discussion and relevant to the Movement

- Two to five community leaders together with directors of administrative agencies helping those leaders were invited to present their success-failure
stories in presence of President in a monthly economic situation report meeting attended by cabinet members and some leading peoples of economic programs.

- President, prime Minister and most ministers used to visit the rural communities or project sites without notice in advance, particularly on weekends or holidays.

- National or local rallies, attended by male and female community leaders and their supporters, have been held every year, and several success-makers were awarded with medals and prizes with some gift-money for community projects.

- "SAEMAUL MEDALs OF AWARD", newly instituted, have been given to outstanding community leaders and heroes of the Movement

- Many of major public works financed by the government sector have been allocated as incentives for villages going ahead in the commitment of the Movement.

E-2. Local Governments

- Various and diversified measures/approaches have been exploited and put into practice, following or considering the central polices

- Every local officials is responsible for guiding and helping some specific villages in their execution of Saemaul projects

- Local autonomies pay expenditures for training programs for their community leader and transport these trainees round their trips

- Community leaders' children attending the secondary schools are easily provide with scholarship

- Some excellent leaders who outstanding in most aspects of the Movement, when they are personally regarded eligible to be a regional leader, have been appointed as town/township administrative heads