

# A Review of Trends and Tasks of Korea's Rural Life Improvement Programs\*

- Lessons for Ethiopia -

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## 한국의 농촌생활개선사업의 특징과 동향

- 에티오피아를 위한 제언 -

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### Abstract

Rural life improvement has remained a key policy concern for the governments of most developing countries. However, developing countries mostly focused on agricultural productivity and technology development while implementing rural development policies. This paper was aimed at constructing the trends and identify the major tasks implemented through the rural life improvement programs in Korea and describing rural development efforts in Ethiopia after the Second World War. The data was generated through an intensive review of literature and focus group interview in Korea. The two countries in general and their rural areas in particular, were poor and almost similar initially. While the condition of rural Korea rapidly transformed since 1960s, rural Ethiopia has not yet experienced major improvement. Although different rural development efforts have been made in Ethiopia, erratic policies implemented by the different political regimes across time emerge to be one of the main factors behind the poor performance of the of the rural sector. Further, while the Korean government's rural development policy gave equal emphasis to improvement of agricultural production base as well as rural life improvement right from its inception, the Ethiopian rural development policy has rather neglected the rural life improvement aspect. Diversification of rural economy was also another priority area in Korea's rural development policy through agro-processing, rural tourism, and non-farm employment opportunities whereas this has not been the case in Ethiopia's rural development policy. We suggest some lessons that Ethiopia might adapt for its rural life improvement endeavors.

**Key words:** community development, rural life improvement, rural development policy, Saemaul Undong

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## 요약

농촌 생활 개선은 대부분의 개발도상국 정부의 주요 정책 관심사로 남아 있다. 그러나 개발도상국들은 농촌개발정책을 시행하면서 농업생산성과 기술개발에 중점을 두었다. 본 논문은 한국의 농촌생활 개선 프로그램을 통해 구현되는 주요 과제를 파악하고, 제2차 세계대전 이후 에티오피아의 농촌개발 노력에 대해 설명하는 것을 목적으로 하였다. 이 자료는 한국에서의 집중적인 문헌 검토와 포커스 그룹 인터뷰를 통해 생성되었다. 일반적으로 두 나라와 특히 그들의 시골 지역은 가난했고 처음에는 거의 비슷했다. 1960년대 이후 한국 농촌의 상황이 급변한 반면 에티오피아 농촌은 아직 큰 개선을 경험하지 못했다. 에티오피아에서 다양한 농촌 개발 노력이 이루어졌지만, 시간이 지남에 따라 서로 다른 정치 정권이 시행한 변덕스러운 정책들이 농촌 부문의 저조한 실적을 뒷받침하는 주요 요인 중 하나로 나타난다. 또한 우리 정부의 농촌개발정책은 처음부터 농촌생활 개선권뿐만 아니라 농업생산기반 개선에도 동등한 비중을 두고 있었지만, 에티오피아 농촌개발정책은 오히려 농촌생활 개선의 측면을 소홀히 하였다. 농업가공, 농촌관광, 비농업 고용기회를 통한 농촌경제 다변화는 우리나라의 농촌개발정책에서도 또 다른 우선분야였지만 에티오피아의 농촌개발정책에서는 그렇지 않았다. 우리는 에티오피아가 농촌 생활 개선 노력에 적용할 수 있는 몇 가지 교훈을 제안한다.

**주요어:** 지역사회개발, 농촌생활개선, 농촌개발정책, 새마을운동

## 1. Introduction

The issue of rural life improvement has remained a main policy concern for the governments of most developing countries because it is a fundamental determinant of overall national development (De Janvry, Sadoulet, & Murgai, 2002; Rauch et al., 2016). Rural development has thus, been emphasized as a strategy to change the life of rural agricultural population and has been a priority agendum in the national development policy (IFAD, 2016; Shahbaz, Luqman, & Cho, 2014). While rural poverty has been a persistent problem, rural policies designed to solve it have changed markedly over time as the context and components of development transformed (De Janvry et al., 2002). Accordingly, different countries have adopted varied rural development policies in line with their conditions of rural poverty in the last several decades.

Different components of rural development have been elucidated by the academia and development organizations as well as practitioners. Some of the components include increase in agricultural production and household income (Ellis, & Freeman, 2004; Engel et al., 2017), food security (Devereux, & Maxwell, 2001; Ellis, 2000), physical and social infrastructure (Ali, & Pernia, 2003; Hemeson, Meyer, & Maphunye, 2004), rural employment opportunities (World Bank, 2007), technological improvement (Engel et al., 2017),

residents' wellbeing (IFAD, 2016; Kim, 2006), good governance and gender equality (OECD, 2016), and others. Rural development perspectives can either focus on agricultural production boosting or improving the living conditions of the rural residents (Park, 2019). Those that argue agriculture as a main driver of rural development see rural development as improvement in the agricultural sector (International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), 2021; Hayami, & Ruttan, 1971; Lipton, 1977) whereas those who accord priority on rural residents over agriculture argue that agricultural development is part of rural development (Keane, 2000; Park Jin-do, 2005; Park Si-hyun, 2019).

Korea was in ruins and started from zero base after the devastating war in the early 1950s that immediately followed foundation of a government following Korea's independence from Japanese colonial rule in 1945. The war destroyed almost all the infrastructures exacerbating the misery of rural areas (Choi, 2011). Agriculture was traditional and dominated by the landlords, rural poverty was rampant and farm households were also immersed in debts due to loan from Agricultural Bank to fill their food shortage gap (Korea Rural Economic Institute (KREI), 2010). The national economic growth since early 1960s which attributed to manufacturing industries in the urban centers was accompanied by decline in income of farming households and increasing gap in income and living conditions between rural and urban population (Park, 2019).

The gap was more evident in the traditional living environment of the rural areas than in the monetary discrepancies per se where about 80% of the rural houses had rice straw thatch roofs (Park, 1998). In the meantime, Ethiopia was ruled by a feudal monarch where the majority of rural farmers especially in the central and southern part were tenants under few landlords. The traditional and backward agricultural practice could yield in limited production for the population only for subsistence standard of living. The rural population dominated by the tenants wallowed in abject poverty with prevalent diseases and widespread illiteracy further exacerbating the situation (Berisso, 1995; Ofcansky, & Berry, 1991).

Korea is one of the countries that developed rapidly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The country's consecutive five year plans for export-driven industrialization yielded in a drastic increase in the per capita income and improvement in overall living conditions of its people (Lee, 2021). Korea's rural life improvement projects commenced implementation since late 1950s and rural Korea has now become more advanced with rural quality of life much improved (OECD, 2021; RDA, 1990). On the other hand, although Ethiopian monarchy started designing development plans since late 1940s with the support from the technical mission from the United States and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), no meaningful results were achieved mainly due to low administrative and technical capacity of the government (Ofcansky, & Berry, 1991). Hitherto, Ethiopia could not eradicate rural poverty and improve the living conditions of rural residents despite its relentless rural development efforts across the decades. In spite of the fact that the two countries started rural development endeavors in a relatively similar period of time and were also not markedly different in their level of development at the time, Korea performed tremendously well since then and transformed its rural areas while Ethiopia failed to do so and remained struggling with rural poverty.

The objective of this paper was, thus, to construct the trends and identify the major tasks implemented through the rural life improvement programs in Korea during the last several decades and describe rural development efforts in

Ethiopia during the same period. To this end, we conducted an intensive review of the major rural life improvement programs that have been implemented in Korea since 1950s and their main tasks in section two. We also had a focus group discussion with experts who worked in Korea's rural life improvement programs for several years and professors and included their opinion where it was relevant. In section three, we comprehend a brief summary of Ethiopia's rural development attempts after the 1950s. We discuss the issues of rural life improvement in the two countries across time in section four. Finally, in the last section we conclude and indicate some lessons that can be drawn from the Korean experience and can be taken into account by the Ethiopian policy makers.

## 2. Korea's Rural Life Improvement Programs

While in the early stages of Korea's development the policy focus was industrialization, rural development was also a policy concern in the form of a rural modernization movement. Although rural development policy was taken as agricultural policy and the focus was on raising agricultural productivity, income increment as well as rural life improvement were implemented alongside (OECD, 2021). The foundation of rural development was laid with the land reform in the 1950s, which instantly leveled rural income inequalities and the construction and maintenance of irrigation infrastructure together with the agricultural extension service further facilitated the effort (KREI, 2010). However, most of Korea's rural residents lived in worse condition in early 1960s, with over 60% of rural population living absolute poverty (Park Jin-hwan, 1998). Moreover, the development gap between urban and rural areas widened and rural population rapidly decreased due to outflow of notably the young group to urban centers in search of better life as a result of which the rural areas became depopulated (OECD, 2021). These called for intervention by the Korean government to alleviate absolute poverty and improve rural living conditions.

## 2.1. Rural life improvement programs before 1970s

Korea's rural life improvement attempts started in an organized manner with the promulgation of the Agricultural Act in 1957 having the purpose of increasing agricultural production and improving living conditions of the rural residents. Following this, living improvement clubs and voluntary learning organizations of rural women were also established in rural communities to help implement the life improvement activities (Kim, 2006). The main tasks of these voluntary clubs at their initial stage were: making simple work clothes through demonstrations, promotion of nutritionally balanced food, and improvement of water wells, toilet and kitchen.

In 1958, the Korean government implemented community development program that was introduced by the United Nations and the United States of America for the developing countries after the Second World War as a pilot project in 12 villages. A central committee was given the mandate to supervise the implementation of various projects by the local committees (Park, 2013). The projects of this period included agricultural extension, construction of roads and bridges, and water supply system (Eor, & Kim, 1994). In 1961, a field demonstration was held for the first time in Korea to exhibit the good achievements of rural life improvement activities of the local people to the nearby villages in Siheung-gun of Gyeonggi-do, which motivated the nearby residents for its implementation (RDA, 1990).

The issue of rural development occupied central place in the policy goals of the first five-year development plan of Korea (1962-1967) mentioned as increasing agricultural production and rural modernization, which also implies emphasis for rural life improvement (Wang, 1984). Noticeable policies and programs that proved to be catalysts for rural modernization in the next decades were also introduced in the 1960s, the establishment of Rural Development Administration (RDA) in 1962 with the mission of research, extension and development being one of these policies (Shahbaz et al., 2014). Again, in 1961, the Agricultural Bank and agricultural cooperatives

were merged with the intention of enhancing financial services for farmers (Park, 2019). In the meantime, the six-year rural development plan was presented by the Korean government in 1966 (Lee, 2021).

The Korean rural development program in the 1960s consisted of two major components: agricultural production development and rural social development. Further, it had six pillars: agricultural technology improvement, rural home life improvement, rural youth development, agricultural information and communication, training of extension personnel and community leaders, and income boosting activities (Wang, 1984). Rural house improvement projects were already in place in the mid-1960s with earthen brick being the dominant material of construction. In the late 1960s, the focus was on improvement of house heating fuel efficiency and kitchen facilities that led to high reliance on methane gas, which in turn helped reforestation, encouraged livestock keeping, and clean vegetable growth (RDA, 1990).

The rural nutrition improvement project was another major intervention in the late 1960s that was implemented with the support from United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The main purpose of the project was to enhance production of nutritious foods and improvement of processing, cooking, and storage methods to prevent loss of nutritional value (RDA, 1990; Song, 2003). The achievement of rural life improvement programs in the 1960s was, however, negligible that only limited expansion of local roads and little improvements in the roofs, toilets, and kitchens of rural houses were achieved. Top-down approaches to rural life improvement were also the characteristics of this decade (Eor, & Kim, 1994).

## 2.2. Rural life improvement programs in 1970s

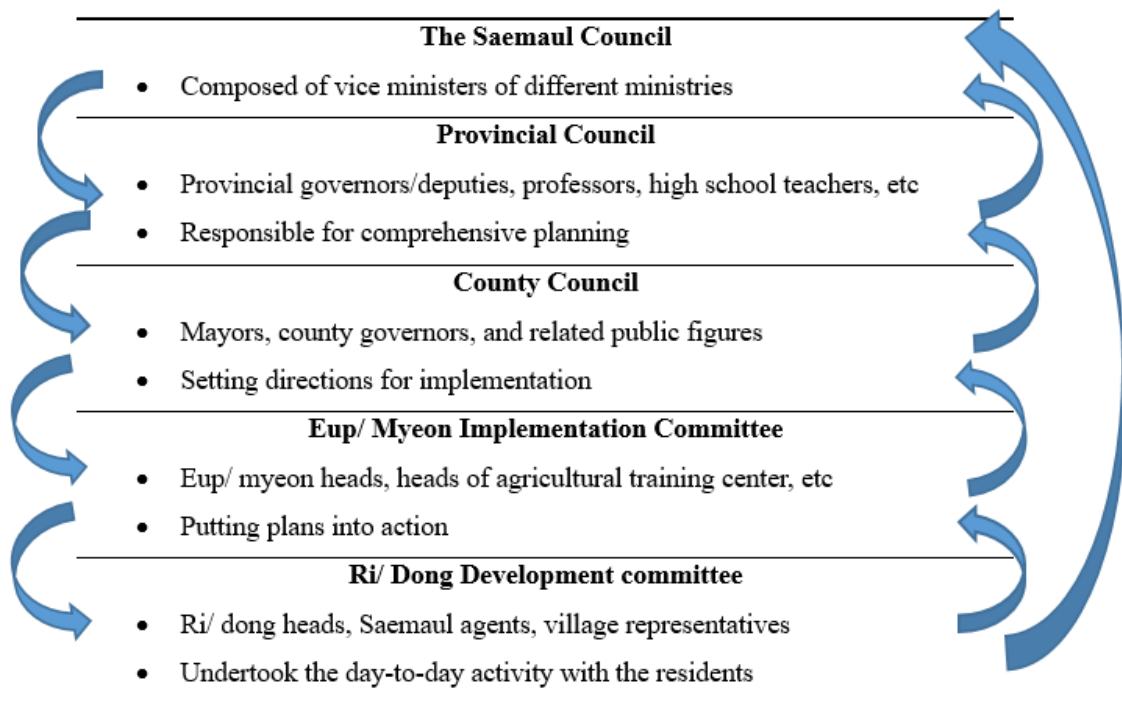
The decade 1970s has been recalled for Saemaul Undong, 'the new village movement', that changed rural Korea's history. Saemaul Undong was launched as a Korean version of integrated rural development at a village level in the early 1970s (Wang, 1984). It was initiated as a rural self-help

movement to improve the living conditions of rural residents. It commenced in 1970 with ten projects for constructing villages as a pilot program and in October 1970 with government's provision of 335 bags of cement and steel bars to each rural village (33,000 communities) and a total of US\$ 8.5 million to build village-piped water supply facilities, community laundry areas, bridges, common compost plots, etc. Saemaul Undong promoted diligence, self-help, and mutual cooperation as prerequisites to the realization of spiritual revolution (residents' attitude change), social reform, and economic development of the rural residents as its major goals (Choe, 2003; Kang, 1975; Park, 2019). For the sake of implementing Saemaul Undong projects, an organizational structure with the Saemaul council at its peak was established (Figure 1).

The rural life improvement programs during the initial period of Saemaul Undong were implemented as policy goals of the Third-Five Year Development Plan (1972-1976) that targeted at increasing farmer income and improving the living environment in rural areas (Lee, 2021). During its initial stage

(1971-1973), Saemaul Undong focused on improving rural residential environment, expansion of production infrastructure, inducement to develop will and motivation, and reforestation of mountains. This was the foundation stage and dealt mainly with expanding village roads, improving rural houses, and changing attitude of the community residents towards diligence, self-help and cooperation (Lee, 2021; Wang, 1984). Environmental improvement projects including roof changing, standard housing construction, community well installation, and community laundry were carried out in the initial years. Community water supply, communal bathroom and rural electrification were also put in place in the next stage of the Saemaul Undong to further improve rural residential environment (RDA, 1990). Increasing household income through mechanization of agricultural production, agribusinesses, and non-farm income sources was the goal in its second stage (1974-1976) (Lee, 2021).

Despite its initiation by the government, the bottom-up approach during the Saemaul Undong had led to increasing voluntary participation of the residents and formulation of



Source: Adapted from Park, 2019

〈Figure 1〉 Structure of Saemaul Undong

location specific projects was compatibly designed with local needs. The community members could freely select a project of their community's need and also democratically elected community Saemaul leaders at community general meetings (Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2012). Strong participation of the residents in the program was also demonstrated through their contribution of 51% of the total 5.2583 trillion won invested in Saemaul Undong for the period 1971-1982 (Park, 2019). After closing the gap in its initial years, the average income of rural households exceeded that of their urban counterparts between 1974-1977 and decreased afterwards up to 1982 when it exceeded once again. During Saemaul Undong's third stage (1977-1979) increasing income of rural residents and improving their living standard were the prime concerns (OECD, 2021). Saemaul Undong went through five stages (1971-1998) with different goals, guiding spirits, projects, and activities and hugely contributed to eradication of absolute poverty and brought significant increases in household income, improvements in the residential environment as well as social development (Lee, 2021).

Generally, the decade 1970s demonstrated an unprecedented transformation in the rural society of South Korea owing to implementation of several rural life improvement programs and increasing government investment in the rural sector (Douglas, 2013; Reed, 2010). The drastic change was evident in that while less than 20% of rural households had electricity in the late 1960s, the figure changed to over 90% by 1977, almost all villages were connected by road network, irrigation infrastructure expanded, the entire thatched roofs were replaced with modern houses, self-sufficiency in rice production was achieved, and farm income increased in manifolds (Douglas, 2013; Park Jin-hwan, 1998; Park Si-hyun, 2010; Reed, 2010). The rapid increase of farm households' income and that of rice yield attributed to the combined effects of Saemaul Undong, Green Revolution and agricultural extension services (Douglas, 2013; Shahbaz et al., 2014). Due to this unprecedented change and the overwhelming impacts of Saemaul Undong on rural residents in the 1970s, the decade is regarded as the "golden age" of Korea's rural development (Kim, 2010; Park Si-hyun, 2019).

### 2.3. Rural life improvement programs in 1980s

In the 1980s, there was a major paradigm shift globally on development agenda to regional development and decentralization based on a bottom-up approach with involvement of the private sector and mass participation in the entire development process as it was the case throughout the world in the same decade. Accordingly, the community-based development approach, which Saemaul Undong pursued was ousted by the regional development approach and government's initiation and control was given to private sector including Saemaul Undong itself (OECD, 2021). This time the Korean government applied the concept of settlement zone (administrative zonal approach) setting a rural center and its surrounding as a settlement zone to improve its economy, living conditions, social welfare, and rural tourism. The local government was given the mandate to prepare the budget plan and the central government financially supported the project (Park, Yoon, & Lee, 2008).

In this decade, the emphasis of policy direction was on balanced regional development and rural industrialization through industrial complexes together with improvement of rural living standards. The industrial complexes were meant to provide jobs in both manufacturing industries and agricultural product processing so that rural non-farm income can be enhanced (OECD, 2021). Achieving rice (a staple food) self-sufficiency in 1978 led to a paradigm shift in the 1980s in rural development policy from increasing agricultural productivity to increasing rural households' income through diversified farming including cultivation of cash crops such as vegetables and fruits and non-farm livelihood strategies. The introduction of greenhouse in this decade, all year round cultivation of vegetables including unfavorable weather conditions became possible (OECD, 2021; Park, 2010). The proportion of a rural household's annual non-farm income was 35.0% in 1984 (RDA, 1990).

A comprehensive rural development program was put into action with a goal of linking rural towns and hinterlands to improve regional and local level living conditions in the mid-1980s. Consequently, three less developed urban areas

together with their surroundings were selected for pilot implementation (Park, 2013). The program aimed to make rural areas places for living rather than simply places for food production for which it embraced projects to create job opportunities and increase income besides improving the living environments (Eor, & Kim, 1994; Park, 2013).

In this decade, there also emerged a changing role of rural women increasingly engaging in agricultural activities. Rural farming women's agricultural labor rapidly increased from 28% in 1967 to 46.2% in 1988, which implies rural women's prioritization of agricultural labor over household work in the peak farming season (RDA, 1990). To respond to this changing role of rural women, rural life improvement projects with goal of nurturing competent rural farming women were implemented. These projects mainly targeted at rural nutrition including food preparation, processing and storage methods, health, sanitation, education and training, and kitchen and toilet renovation. The projects also included house management, environmental cleaning, time management, housework sharing, and community sewerage (RDA, 1990).

#### 2.4. Rural life improvement programs in 1990s

The rural policy of Korea was synonymous with agricultural policy until the 1990s (Park, 2013). In the 1990s, the Korean Government passed "the Special Law for Agricultural and Rural Development" to implement rural development plans, rural industrialization and development of rural industrial complexes, and creation of non-agricultural income-earning opportunities for rural residents. The 1990s witnessed rampant increase in government investment in rural development as a small area development approach with the responsibility of implementing rural development projects moved down to *eup* (village) and *myeon* (community) level from the *gun* (county) level (OECD, 2021; Lee, 2021). Accordingly, government subsidies were provided to *gun* and *myeon* to expand income generating activities notably for rural women. The income generating activities promoted during this time included kimchi factories, drying and processing agricultural products, and extracting sesame oil (Kim, 2006; RDA, 1990). Among

the projects in this decade were also farmers' health management, living environment improvement, and daily life management particularly targeting at rural women were worth mentioning (Kim, 2006).

As a result of the liberalization of agricultural market following the Uruguay Round of negotiations (1986-1994), volatile situation was created for farmers and rural life encountered crisis (OECD, 2021). The rural life improvement policies during this period were designed in response to this situation and made to combat the adverse effects of agricultural market liberalization. Accordingly, the hinterland development project, fishing village, mountain village and island development projects were launched with main goal of improving living conditions, non-farm income, and welfare of rural residents. These small area development projects markedly contributed to the improvement of rural life as they targeted small administrative zones (Lee, 2021; Park, 2013).

Generally, the rural development projects implementation procedure in the 1990s followed an efficiency-oriented top-down approach with very limited community participation. This approach later gave way for Korea's decentralization policy, which gave local administration a better power (Park Si-hyun, 2013; Park Si-hyun, 2019). After late 1990s, there was also a major policy paradigm shift in rural development into partnership, community participation, networking, and empowerment. Rural life improvement programs in line with this paradigm shift such as rural revitalization, integrated village development, small business formation, and rural tourism have also been put into practice (Park et al., 2008).

#### 2.5. Rural life improvement programs after 2000

In the new millennia, there emerged an increasing understanding about importance of region-specific conditions for rural development planning and role of residents in their community development. Regional development and decentralization aimed at balanced growth were policy priorities in order to reduce disparity between regions and distributing the socio-economic benefits and infrastructure into villages (OECD, 2021). Accordingly, a major shift took place from government-

led unilateral rural development to participatory, partnership, community-led rural development including community participation in policy formulation process. Thus, rural development programs and projects in this period were designed and implemented as participatory rural community development programs and projects (Park, 2013; Song, & Seong, 2004). The programs implemented to improve and strengthen the living conditions of the rural residents since 2002 had a motto of cooperation, partnership, and entrepreneurship focusing on “bottom-up” approach and community participation (Park et al., 2008). As a result, there were numerous conclusions about positive correlations between success of these rural community development projects and community participation (Song, & Seong, 2004).

The enactment of the Special Act on Improvement of Quality of Life of Farmers and Fishermen and Promotion of Development in Rural Areas in 2004 to enhance the general living conditions in rural areas led to launching of a Comprehensive Rural Village Development Program (CRVDP) (2004-2017) to improve rural quality of life, encompassing health and welfare, education, enhancement of rural residents’ income, convenient settlement area, economic activities and job, culture and leisure, clean environment and landscape, and community safety. The target areas for the program were selected through competition based on community members’ plans and a deliberative bottom-up procedures through active community involvement (Choi, Park, & Lee, 2020; Park, 2019). Partnership, an important issue in the rural community development, was developed between the community residents, local governing body, external experts, and government ministries across the entire process of site selection, planning, and execution (Choi et al., 2020).

Since 2000, the rural policy targets of the government were diversification of rural livelihood, enhancing non-farm employment opportunities and increased income for rural households from these activities (Shahbaz et al., 2014). In this decade, rural women’s role and contribution as the main actors of the rural economy increased due to change in the farming system from paddy rice to horticultural crops such as vegetables, fruits and flowers. Women’s role as main

actors increased from 46.2% in 1988 to 49.0% in 2000 as a result of which rural life improvement projects targeting at their working and living conditions were promoted (RDA, 1990; Kim, 2006). Some of these projects were trainings for female farmers to improve their professional competence, agricultural products processing technology and sideline jobs for rural women. An informatization pilot project was also an other prominent rural life improvement project specifically targeted at rural women with the goal of making rural women knowledge and information based careers holders (Kim, 2006).

Commercialization of rural resources dominated the policy direction of the government since early 2010s. The so called “6<sup>th</sup> industrialization policy” has been implemented as a strategy to diversify income of rural residents through production of high-value-added agricultural products. The 6<sup>th</sup> industrialization represented rural socio-cultural resources and farm products processing, value adding and sale where the government fostered rural community firms and village enterprises engaging in this business (Park, 2019). The 6<sup>th</sup> Industrialization Act of 2015 elucidated the legal framework to implement the 6<sup>th</sup> industrialization where the government rendered plenty of supports for rural households and enterprises in line with rural tourism (Hwang, Park, & Lee, 2018). Happy Living Zones, regional development policy aimed at enhancing residents’ happiness and quality of life in rural areas was also introduced in 2013 (OECD, 2021). Generally, rural life improvement programs in the 2010s mostly took the form of block grant subsidy programs in the form of integrated rural development programs and linked to various sectors and implemented by local governments (Lee, 2021).

### 3. Rural Development in Ethiopia

The period after the World War II i.e., the late 1940s was the time when national development as well as rural development efforts were initiated in most part of the world (Ellis, & Biggs, 2001). Accordingly, the rural development efforts in Ethiopia began in the late 1940s as part of the national development motive of the emperor (Ofcansky, & Berry, 1991). Since



Ethiopia's national development policy was designed under polarizing political ideologies under three regimes, categorizing the rural development endeavors into periods of the three regimes would make understanding easier.

### 3.1. The period 1950–1974

This was the period of absolute monarchism politically when the country was led by a feudal king Emperor Haile Selassie I (reigned 1930-1974). Rural development issue got little attention during this period with primacy accorded to industrial development having the goal of national import substitution industrialization policy through its three successive five-year development plans between 1957-1973 (Zewdu, 2002). Between 1945 and 1957, several technical missions from the United States and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) designed a series of development plans. However, the plans ended without any meaningful achievements due to weak institutional arrangements and lack of skilled human resource. In 1955, the king established National Economic Council, chaired by himself to coordinate the development plans (Ofcansky, & Berry, 1991).

During this period, the rural agricultural sector was discriminated by the consecutive five-year development plans receiving little attention and investment in the first (1957-1962) and second (1963-1967) plans, respectively despite its huge contribution to GDP (68%) and employment (85%). The largest share of this investment was also allocated for government owned commercial farms than smallholder peasants (Alemu, Oosthuizen, & van Schalkwyk, 2002). Moreover, the first five-year plan designed by Yugoslavian experts assumed that agriculture will play its role up to expectation and concluded that there is no need to bring about fundamental changes in the rural agricultural sector (Aredo, 1992). The little attention given to the rural areas in the second and third five-year development plans (1968-1973) was simply to boost agricultural production than improving the life of rural residents (Zewdu, 2002). The extension and project implementation department was established in 1971 as a national rural development organization within the Ministry of Agriculture (Tecele, 1975).

However, it could not perform up to expectation due to its limited capacity and the short life span it had before the downfall of the monarch.

During the third five-year plan, pilot agricultural development projects in the form of comprehensive package program: fertilizer, improved seeds, credit, and marketing facility were implemented in few selected potentially agriculturally productive rural areas of the country with the objective of increasing small holder farmers' income. This move was attributed to the advice from the World Bank (IBRD), the FAO and the USA (Aredo, 1992). Accordingly, Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit (CADU) in 1967, Wolayta Agricultural Development Unit (WADU) in 1970, and Ada District Development Program (ADDP) in 1972 were implemented (Berisso, 1995; Tecele, 1975). However, these projects could not help the small holders that accounted for about 90% of the total population and the majority of whom were tenants mainly because of the land tenure system; and the projects lasted only for few years due to lack of finance because much of their cost was covered by the external donors (Aredo, 1992; Berisso, 1995). Alemu et al. (2002) argue that this development concern in few selected areas was instigated by food shortage in the nation in the 1960s elucidating government's concern for increased agricultural production than improving the rural residents' life.

### 3.2. The period 1974–1991

This was the period when the country was ruled by a military regime that pursued a political ideology of agrarian socialism with the economic activity being governed by a central planning authority. In 1975, this regime undertook a radical land reform where land was expropriated from the land lords without compensation and redistributed to the former tenants granting them only a usufructory right while keeping the land a state property. In addition to the land reform, the regime declared agricultural collectivization, agricultural marketing policy, resettlement and villagization in rural areas (Alemu et al., 2002; Berisso, 1995). To implement the land reform policy, the small holder farmers were organized

into peasant associations, each comprising households within 800 hectares boundary.

The regime executed six annual development campaign programs known as *Zemetcha* between 1979 and 1984 under the National Revolutionary Development Campaign and Central Planning Supreme Council with the main objective of changing rural living conditions. However, the campaigns were primarily designed to inculcate socialist political and production ideology among rural farmers and were formulated in the absence of long- and medium-term plans (Alemu et al., 2002; Aredo, 1992). They were, thus, inadequate in solving the pressing problems of the time and could not be effective in changing rural life and in laying the foundations for the economic growth of the country (Asfaw, 1992). In an attempt to improve rural living conditions and the general socio-economic progress of the nation, villagization has been implemented since 1984 with the belief that dispersed rural settlement is a bottle-neck to this end (Berisso, 1995). However, it ended in failure due to fierce resistance from the peasants as it was implemented involuntarily (Rahmato, 1984).

The socialist regime also held the view that agriculture is source of surplus to make industrialization possible with no concomitant resources into it, while industry continued to be the priority sector. The main focus of the government was on state farms and producer co-operatives, not considering peasant agriculture as a viable undertaking. When the state farms were formally launched, the main objectives were to alleviate the county's food problems, to produce raw materials for the industrial sector, and to produce export crops in order to generate foreign exchange (Zewdu, 2002). The policy instrument adopted to achieve these objectives gave preferential treatment to state farms and producer cooperatives against small holder agriculture. However, the state farms and producer cooperatives only accounted for not more than 5% of the total agricultural output but enjoyed about 90% of the inputs (credit, low bank interest, agricultural inputs, etc) and skilled man power. This retained rural residents' life unimproved and remain as it was before (Alemu et al., 2002; Berisso, 1995).

Coercive pricing and marketing policy was also introduced

with a quota system in 1979 where small holder peasants and licensed merchants were forced to supply part of their produce and purchase to the government for a fixed price, which is much lower than the prevailing market price. The government opted for this policy as the produce from the state farms and that of the cooperatives was not sufficient to cope with the demands placed upon agriculture by the increasing population. The collected surplus was distributed to food industry, urban dwellers association and ministry of defense for price fixed by the government (Alemu et al., 2002; Aredo, 1992).

### 3.3. The period 1991– 2018

Ethiopia's development strategies radically changed in 1991 following changes in the political system. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) seized power in 1991 and introduced a new national development policy in 1995 that was opposite to the policy of its predecessors, Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI) and liberalized the economy. During this time rural poverty was rampant in the country with about 48% of the ruralites wallowing in absolute poverty (\$ 1.25/day) in 1996. The figure remained relatively high being 45% and 39% in 2000 and 2005, respectively (OECD/PSI, 2020).

With the enactment of ADLI, several measures were taken to increase agricultural production and marketing as well as to improve rural living conditions as this policy puts agriculture and rural areas at the heart of national development agenda (Alemu, 2002; Zewdu, 2002). Some of these actions include introduction of small scale irrigation, and provision of package of inputs and credit. Since 1995, the government also launched Participatory, Demonstration and Training Extension System (PADETES) with the main objective of raising the productivity of the rural smallholder farmers (OECD/PSI, 2020).

Ethiopia did not have an explicit policy for rural development before 2003. In the same year, the first rural development policy in Ethiopian history has been issued as "Rural Development Policy and Strategy". The policy promotes smallholder agricultural development-driven rural transformation and was the first

comprehensive development endeavor specifically aimed at rural areas and at the well-being of the rural population. The policy was generally designed to address the low agricultural growth and productivity, food shortages, and disproportionately higher levels of poverty in rural areas compared to the urban centers. In line with the national development policy ADLI, the Rural Development Policy and Strategy sees agricultural development as the main facilitator for overall rural development. The policy indicates an integrated rural development approach as a right path to rural development and the need to integrate agricultural sector development plans with wider industrial development plans and linking rural areas to the nearby towns and cities (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), 2003).

The main focus of the policy is smallholder peasants. It envisages that productivity of small holder agriculture will be improved through mutually reinforcing ways of achieving enhanced productivity levels. These include combining resources of the peasant, i.e. land, labor, and capital in a better way with a package program through: distribution of improved seeds, fertilizer, improved farm implements and pesticides. Provision of improved extension service; construction of small scale irrigation scheme; minimization of post-harvest loss; improved feed and veterinary service for the development of livestock resource; and better use of improved breed and livestock products are also the other pillars of the package. Furthermore, this policy also intends to cover proper use of land, expanding rural infrastructure (health, education, access to potable water and rural roads), rural financial system accessible by small holders, promotion of private commercial farms, and developing and strengthening rural institutions (MoFED, 2003).

The EPRDF government further implemented subsequent medium-term development plans on rural development. Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) (2002- 2005) and Food Security Program in 2003 were launched mainly to reduce rural poverty and achieve food security at household level. Later, the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) (2005-2009), the Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP I, 2010-

2014 and GTP II, 2015-2019) were implemented. Under these interventions, agriculture and rural development received substantial public investment. According to Dorosh and Minten (2020), the largest portion of the investment was allocated for agricultural technology improvement to boost production than rural life improvement.

The sound rural development policy during this period, in general terms, has led to reduction of poverty or at least no rise in poverty bringing it down to 25% in 2016 (OECD/PSI, 2020). Even though the rural poverty head count was significantly reduced since the last decade, it was not witnessed as a rural transformation nor as improvement of well-being for the rural people. Food insecurity rate, malnutrition, and stunting and wasting in young children are prevalent attributing to sluggish agricultural productivity growth, which couldn't catch up the rapidly growing rural population (World Food Program (WFP), 2020). Moreover, rural infrastructure and the general living condition including road, housing, sanitation, energy sources and health facilities are still in their rudimentary stage (Dorosh & Minten, 2020).

## 4. Discussion

After the end of World War II, the economy of both Korea and Ethiopia was generally based on agriculture, both countries had weak industrial base, rural poverty and hunger were rampant, and the land lords dominated the agrarian sector in both countries. As far as the national development policy in the 1960s was concerned, both countries accorded primacy to industrial development over agriculture and rural areas were given less attention. In fact, Ethiopia (1957) preceded Korea (1962) to inaugurate national development planning. While this decade became a turning point in Korea's development history and Korea succeeded with industry first policy, Ethiopia could not succeed with this policy and could not register any remarkable change in the economy because it had weak industrial base and its share in the GDP was quite small (Gebreeyesus, 2013; Lee, 2021; Zewdu, 2002). Even though Korea's development policy accorded primacy

to industry, an equivalent attention was given to agriculture and rural life improvement, notably in the decades that followed the 1960s (Shahbaz et al., 2014). On the other hand, rural life improvement was not part of the overall development agenda of Ethiopia during both the feudal and socialist regimes, both of which did not have a clear rural and agricultural development policy. In fact, the two regimes neglected the rural residents and left the rural agricultural area as traditional as it was centuries ago. By doing so, both regimes failed to emancipate the peasantry from poverty and hatched the vulnerability of peasants to periodic famine.

Big discrepancy took place between the two countries during 1970s due to swift industrialization and Saemaul Undong that accelerated the rate of transformation in rural Korea. In the same decade, Ethiopia was in a state of civil unrest and turmoil of movements against the feudal regime, civil war and also engaged in Ethio-Somali war. The civil war continued up to 1991 when the military socialist government was overthrown. In mid-1970s, the country also shifted its political ideology into agrarian socialism and changed its development policy accordingly up until 1991.

Korea's rural development policies have remarkably contributed to improvement of rural life and increase in agricultural production as well as income in absolute terms. According to the data from focus group discussion, Korea's success in addressing rural poverty and ultimate improvement in rural quality of life mainly attributes to its dynamic rural development policy that was adjusted in line with the changing domestic and international conditions. The focus group discussants further revealed that the specific tasks implemented during each decade were required in response to the social, political, economic, human and cultural factors (changes) of the respective time. The trend of the rural life improvement projects also reveals that the projects focused on the specific problems of that particular decade. For instance, improving diet to cope with food shortages, clothing to introduce an agricultural work conducive cloth than the traditional long dress, cooking stoves in response to fuel shortages, and others.

The rural life improvement programs have also been implemented within the context of the rural areas and the

reality of rural residents as well as the national development policies (Kim, 2006). Moreover, the rural development policy was embedded in the consecutive national five-year development plans (1962-1997) that rapidly industrialized and transformed Korea's economy (Lee, 2021; OECD, 2021). This harmony between the rural life improvement programs and the five-year development plans thus, was of paramount importance for Korea's success in rural transformation. On the other hand, Ethiopia's rural development endeavors were neither boldly articulated in the national economic development plans nor implemented in line with the plans until very recently. The commendable efforts of Korea's research and extension organizations also take the largest share of its success in the transformation of rural areas (Shahbaz et al., 2014). On the contrary, research and extension has been rather sluggish in terms of contributing to rural transformation in Ethiopia.

Commitment of the top level leadership to rural life improvement, predominantly during the Saemaul Undong decades was identified as a principal factor for transformation of Korea's rural life, according to data from the focus group discussion. An equally important factor mentioned by the discussants was determination of the community leaders, continuous capacity development training, and enthusiasm as well as diligence of the populace. The rural life improvement projects that were implemented at each village were ultimately overseen by a central committee from Rural life improvement division of the Rural Development Administration through hierarchy (RDA, 1990). In the case of Ethiopia, the political leadership showed less interest in rural life improvement until recently. Similarly, the local level leadership lacked capacity to plan, mobilize resources and implement rural life improvement programs due to the generally weak individual as well as institutional level capacity of the nation. As a result, nearly 80% of the country's population is still living in rural areas, almost all of whom are employed in traditional rain fed, ox and hoe based agriculture and struggling with subsistence agriculture (National Bank of Ethiopia, 2020).

## 5. Conclusion and Some Lessons for Ethiopia

As far as the national and particularly, the rural development of Korea is concerned, Saemaul Undong has been presented as a single decisive element and enthusiastically portrayed to the developing world as such. However, Korea's rural transformation is the result of multitude of consecutive rural life improvement programs that preceded the Saemaul Undong, implemented during the Saemaul Undong and those implemented afterwards.

Ethiopia has historically been stricken by recurrent famine which has continued until today. Drought has also been frequently presented as a pretext for this distress. The actual triggering factor, particularly in the recent decades is vulnerable living conditions of the rural agrarian population, which in turn attributes to less policy attention to rural life improvement and institutional arrangements pertaining to policy implementation. Although there has been relative decline in the last decade in percentage of people living below poverty line in rural areas, multidimensional poverty is still rampant in rural areas. Therefore, Ethiopia needs to learn from the success story of Korea and needs to adapt similar rural life improvement programs that transformed Korea's rural areas so as to change the living condition of its rural population.

Different factors can play a varying role in the development of a country. Historical, political, economic, and socio-cultural factors can facilitate or hinder development of societies and these factors need to be taken into account while comparing performance of different countries. These factors can again influence adoption of success stories by the developing countries like Ethiopia. But still some important lessons can be learnt from the experience of the recently developed countries like Korea and can be carefully adapted.

- *Policy issue*: Korea's rural transformation attributes to the consecutive rural life improvement programs implemented across decades along with agricultural productivity development. Ethiopia's rural development policy prioritizes agricultural productivity boosting and addressing food

insecurity problem of the country over improving the life of rural residents. Rural life improvement is not overtly indicated in the policy document. Thus, an equal emphasis should be given for both agricultural production increment and rural life improvement.

- *Leadership*: Korea's national as well as rural development is the result of commitment and enthusiasm of both the top level politicians and local leadership. Both high ranking political leadership and community level leadership are of paramount importance. It, thus, requires determination and coordination of these leaders to improve the living condition in the rural Ethiopia.
- *Synergy between public and private organizations*: Research organizations, universities, cooperatives, and private companies jointly planned and worked towards rural life improvement in Korea. Such a synergy among organizations and the rural residents may play its part in improving rural life. The current linkage between research centers, universities, private sector and the rural residents in Ethiopia is weak.
- *Education and training*: The better literacy rate of Korea during the initial years of development made the attitude change and skill enhancement trainings that inculcated "can do spirit" into the minds of the people easier. The continuous capacity development trainings not only enhanced the leadership skills and created a pool of leaders at community level but also motivated the people to work with spirit of diligence, self-help and cooperation. We believe similar approach would help Ethiopia.
- *Improving the status of rural women*: Korea's rural life improvement programs mostly targeted rural women differently in such activities as income generating and reaped the benefits accordingly. Improving the current low status of rural women in Ethiopia would accelerate the rate of rural transformation.
- *Social organization*: Social organizations such as women's association and youth group played a pivotal role in rural development endeavors of Korea. Institutionalized social mobilization and organization of the residents with specified mission than campaigns for rural development endeavors would also help Ethiopia.

- *Pilot projects*: Implementing projects in few selected areas initially and scaling up later was commonly practiced in Korea's rural life improvement programs. Implementation of pilot rural life improvement programs initially in selected few districts and scaling up gradually learning from the implementation of the pilot programs would help Ethiopia to cope with financial resource constraints to implement the programs across the nation.
- *Diversification of rural economy*: Side income generating activities were frequently implemented to supplement agricultural income in rural Korea. In Ethiopia, the rain fed, traditional agriculture has frequent risks and shocks. Thus, diversifying rural economy into non-farm income earning sources would reduce rural households' livelihood risks and improve their living conditions.

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