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**Resources Mobilization by  
Self-Help Approach to  
Rural Development Program  
in Vietnam: Lessons from  
Saemaul Undong in Korea**

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## Resources Mobilization by Self-Help Approach to Rural Development Program in Vietnam: Lessons from Saemaul Undong in Korea

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### Abstract

Vietnam, which started its “Doi Moi” (economic reform) process in 1986, has experienced high economic growth accompanied by rapid urbanization, but it has also widened the gap between rural and urban areas. The Government of Vietnam’s National Target Program on New Rural Development for 2010-2020 aimed at developing the rural economy and improving living standards of rural people, but after nearly five years the urban-rural gap remains substantial. Two main reasons are the lack of investment capital and lack of effective ways to mobilize community involvement. In contrast, during the 1970s rural areas in Korea experienced huge improvements under the government’s New Village Movement (Saemaul Undong). The program’s success at promoting sustainable development in Korea’s rural areas has inspired rural programs in other developing countries. In this paper, we compare and contrast NRD and SU to explore explanations for the different results in rural area between the two countries. We examine survey results from North and South Vietnam. Based on this analysis, and policy implications stemming from it, we recommend resource mobilization strategies to change villagers’ attitude and increase their involvement in Vietnam’s rural development movement. These recommendations align with the NRD inclusivity principle “people know, people discuss, people do and people check”.

**Key words:** Village, Rural, Rural Economics, Comparative Country Studies, Development

**JEL Classification:** O2, O18, O57

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Rural development has always interested policy-makers, scientists and experts in both developing and developed countries. Since introduction of Vietnam's Doi Moi policy in 1986, Vietnam has witnessed high economic growth accompanied by rapid urbanization. According to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (GSO), however, the percentage of total Vietnamese living in rural areas decreased from 80.7% to only 69% in 2010 - about 0.7 percentage points per year. This has raised significant concerns about the pace of improvements in living standards in rural Vietnam. In 2010, the average income of rural people was approximately USD \$80, two times lower than that of urban inhabitants, while the poverty rate in rural areas was 17.4%, four times higher compared with urban areas. Additionally, rural people in Vietnam have limited access to adequate infrastructure and high-technology farming methods, and human resource quality remains low. These have been barriers to improving quality of life in rural areas.

The Government of Vietnam's National Target Program on New Rural Development (NRD) for 2010-2020 is one of 16 National Target Programs. Mr. Le Huy Ngo, Vice, Minister of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), initiated NRD, which aims at developing Vietnam's rural economy and improving living standard of rural people. After nearly five years, NRD has improved quality of living for rural people by some measures. According to MARD, the average income of rural people increased 1.98 times compared to 2010, and the rate of poor households decreased 2% per year from 2008-2014 to 10.1%. In addition, the program has upgraded infrastructure with more than five thousands construction sites nationwide. However, the gap between the program's targets and actual outcomes is wide. Two main reasons are the lack of investment capital and ineffective mobilization of community involvement, problems common to many developing countries.

Capital allocated for NRD programs from 2011-2014 of about US\$ 23 billion represented 25% of the total capital allocated for the program. Loans make up the biggest part, accounting for 57.2% of total capital, with community contributions totaling only 10%. We found that a large number of rural people have not even heard about the NRD, implying that external resources play a significant role in NRD implementation. Rural inhabitants should have ownership of NRD, according to the slogan of the program: "People know, People discuss, People do, People monitor and for the benefit of rural people themselves". This is similar to the slogan of New Village Movement in Korea "diligence, self-help and collaboration" to encourage people to participate proactively in rural development.

One way to foster success of the NRD program is to better mobilize internal resources, especially community contributions. This study compares and evaluates the Saemaul Undong movement (SU) started in Korea in the early 1970s to Vietnam's NRD. To shed light on the main issues of resource mobilization for NRD, we conducted a survey in rural North and South Vietnam with two types of questionnaires: one for commune people, and the other for commune leaders. From these survey results, we recommend policies to improve rural development in Vietnam.

We chose SU because of its success in mobilizing community participation to bring about a revolutionary change in Korean village life. In addition, we see a number of socio-economic similarities between 2010 Vietnam and 1970s Korea: GDP per capita of Vietnam reached nearly US\$ 1,800 in 2012, about the same level as Korea in 1979, while literacy rates in Korea had reached 90% in the late-1950s (Cho and Oh 2003), similar to Vietnam's over 90% in 2011.

However, the main difference between the two countries is in policy priorities. From the outset, all Korean Government policies under the administration of President Park directed the Korean economy away from import-substitution and toward export-oriented industrialization. In contrast, Vietnam's government has considered both agriculture and industry as strategic sectors.

The paper consists of six sections: 1) introduction, 2) a summary of our theoretical approach and review of literature, 3) methodology, 4) comparison and contrast of NRD and SU, 5) policy implications, and 6) conclusion.

## 1. Theoretical review

The first use of the term “community development” was in 1948 during a British Colonial Office conference in Cambridge on *Development of African Initiatives* (Holdcroft, 1976). Rural development approaches have experienced many changes since. Generally, two main approaches to community participation emerged: one approach focuses on external assistance, while the other focuses on resources within a community.

**External approach:** The external, or “Need-Based Community Development”, approach evaluates problems within a community and then seeks to attract external resources to meet needs. This approach has led to significant consequences: communities begin depending on external resources, dampening local effort to find solutions, and suppressing community problem-solving capacity (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1996, Gary Paul Green, 2010, Chaskin et al. 2001). It also has negative effects on local community leadership decisions. Instead of encouraging people and utilizing internal resources in the community, local leaders highlight or even exaggerate village problems and deficiencies to get resources from outsiders. This weakens neighbor-to-neighbor support links, replaced by linkage to experts, social workers and funders. This approach can never lead to serious change in community development.

**Internal approach:** The most popular internal approach is “Asset-based Community Development” (ABCD), an alternative to the needs-based approach. Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight first mentioned the approach in 1993 in their book *Building Communities from the Inside Out: Asset-Based Community Development*. In contrast with the external approach, ABCD points out that a community can drive development through identifying and mobilizing available assets, and then creating local economic opportunities. These assets can come in various forms, including individual and community talent, skills, and even social relationships. ABCD looks at brighter, positive, and optimistic aspects rather than at problems. The approach focuses on fostering development through community resources rather than by external resources. MacKnight and Kretzmann (1993) also proposed a series of basic steps to motivate community participation: 1) collect successful stories, 2) organize a core group, 3) map the capacities and assets of individuals, associations and local institutions, 4) build a community vision and plan, 5) mobilize and link assets for economic-socio development and leveraging activities and resources from outside the community. The main challenges in the ABCD approach are how to motivate domestic processes to prevent dependence on outside resources; how to motivate and include community-wide participation, including women and poorest people; and how to improve community leadership.



## 2. Literature review

Researchers have studied community mobilization in Korea intensively. Saemaul Undong (SU)—known as the “recipe for Korean rural development” —is a special model because of its unique features and spillover effects of its successful story for developing countries.

### 1) Studies on resources mobilization under a “self-help” approach for SU

Korea government launched the Saemaul Undong as a New Village Movement in 1970 when rural areas lagged in comparison with the development of the country as a whole. The most successful result of SU is that it planted the seed of “the self-help spirit or can-do spirit”. The outstanding achievements of SU must credit some external factors, especially the leadership role and efficient organization of the Korean Government. In general, the SU model integrated external and internal rural community development approaches, utilizing creative innovations. SU avoided the mistakes of external approach by not depending too heavily on resources from outside, and villages had to perform well to receive continued support. We explore factors that contributed to the SU “miracle” below.

First, strong leadership was important, especially in the first phase of SU. Many analyses show that the implementation of the national campaign depended heavily on the dictatorial leadership of President Park (Han 2004, Kwon 2010, Yong Yoon and Robert Mudida 2015). This included the strict condition of SU programs that government only support villages that display willingness to help themselves (Sung-Hee Jwa, 2015).

Second, proactive and volunteer involvement of each village and individual played an important role. As highlighted by President Park Chung-Hee, “Unless the residents have a desire of self-help for the change of their life, even if they wait for 5000 years, there will be no change. ‘If the village residents try to change their life now, even with little support of government, they will be able to change their life in 2-3 years” (Han, Do Hyun, 2012). This represented a huge change in perspective since, up to the 1960s, the many foreign experts that had visited rural villages in Korea had characterized villagers as lazy and helpless (Sung-Hee Jwa, 2015).

Third, efficient implementation made significant contribution toward results. Simple goals and main directions targeted rural people, and SU units were as small as possible. A village unit of about 600 people each independently decided how to implement each project (Kim 2004). As a result, throughout the 1970s, community contributions gradually increased until they began to

outweigh government support by the end of the SU period. SU utilizes the advantages of internal approaches by focusing on resources within the community. Rural people created wealth and happiness for themselves, and by themselves, eagerly and proactively.

Fourth, SU created competition among villages by following an “economic discrimination” principle (Sung-Hee Jwa, 2015) by “Rewarding high performance and penalizing low performance”. President Park Chung-Hee applied this strict principle early in both economic and social policies, including promotion policies in export, heavy and chemical industries, and in the “New Village” factories. Moreover, the government divided villages into three groups based on performance, only providing support to outstanding “self-reliant” villages (Mike Douglas 2013, Jwa and Yoon 2012, Chung Kap Jin 2009, Kim 2009, Kim 2005, Ministry of Home Affairs of Korea 1981). This prevented “moral hazard”, creating a strong atmosphere of competition and incentives among villages.

Fifth, preparations before launching SU helped fit the program into the Korean context. Two important reforms facilitated favorable conditions for implementation of SU: 1) comprehensive land reform from 1948-1951 and the 1949 New Land Reform Act (Yong Yoon and Robert Mudida 2015, Edward P. Reed 2010, Lee 1995, Wade and Kim 1978), and 2) heavy government investment in human capital, which the government accelerated in the 1960s (Edward P. Reed, 2010).

SU’s success has created spillover effects in many countries. Persuaded by the SU success story, some Korean universities have opened SU-related departments. Many developing countries send students and officials to Korea to learn about SU, and Asian, African and Latin American countries have applied lessons from the SU model. The Democratic Republic of the Congo established its 1,075-member “Congo Saemaul Undong Center” in 2004 in Kinshasa, the country’s capital. Uganda and Tanzania also initiated an SU movement in 2009 after representatives from both countries visited Korea’s SU Center. Vietnam has implemented some Saemaul Projects, such as the *Cow Bank Project* in three villages from 2002 to 2007, and the Saemaul Project for *Developing Agriculture Value-Chains* in two villages in Ninh Thuan Province from 2014 to 2017. Inspired and persuaded by SU stories, we choose the SU approach as a better way to motivate Vietnamese rural people to improve living standards.

### **2) Studies on resources mobilization for NRD**

Most studies only focus on evaluating the achievements and drawbacks of Vietnam’s NRD, overlooking obstacles limiting the implementation of NRD. None of these studies evaluated SU

approaches for suitability in rural development in Vietnam. Some studies mentioned capital and community mobilization to develop agriculture, help farmers, and improve rural areas, but they concentrate on specific provinces or regions (Nguyen Tien Dinh, 2012; Nguyen Ngoc Luan; 2012; Nguyen Duc Thanh 2008). Nguyen Tien Dinh studied the theoretical background and proposed policies for mobilizing domestic help from people living in mountainous North Vietnam. Nguyen Ngoc Luan researched experiences in mobilizing community resources to build new rural areas. Nguyen Duc Thanh analyzed factors affecting investment in agriculture. Other studies concentrate on investment on agricultural production, but these studies did not assess mobilization of internal resources or participation by people.

## 1. Survey research methodology

Our main research instrument is a “*Questionnaire on Mobilizing Community Involvement for NRD*”. We constructed two types of questionnaire: One type for commune people, and the other type for leaders of the commune. A total of 60 questions cover comprehensive aspects of NRD. The sample size consists of 200 people, including 50 leaders and 150 people.

### [TABLE 1: Basic Nature of the Survey]

The *Questionnaire* for people includes five main parts: opinions, contributions of money and land, two parts cover monitoring & evaluation of NRD implementation, and the last part covering issues related to policy implications.

The *Questionnaire* for leaders covers three main parts: the first two on how leaders can encourage and persuade people to participate and contribute to NRD, and the final part asks leaders to give advice on solutions.

We surveyed in both North and South Vietnam to broaden understanding of NRD. In the North, we talked with and interviewed people and leaders in five communes of Hanoi. In the South, we surveyed areas such as Kien Giang province, Ba Ria-Vung Tau province, and Ho Chi Minh City. We implemented the survey in three months from October to December 2013. According to survey results, the male and female respondents accounted for respectively 46% and 54% of total. The average age was about 42 years. We also interviewed people who engaged in many kinds of economic activities: farmers, people working in social associations, teachers, businesspersons, officers, freelancers, and homemakers.

## 2. Other research methodologies

We applied other research methods as follows:

Expert method: discussions with Vietnamese experts, including officers in the NRD Central Steering Committee and Korean experts from the KDI school of Public Policy and Management, helped us to understand NRD and SU comprehensively.

Analysis and synthesis method: to analyze theoretical background and practice on resource mobilization for implementing NRD and SU.

Comparison method: We used comparative country studies to identify similarities and differences in resource mobilization between SU and NRD.

Descriptive method: Analyzing data from NRD official reports and studies on SU.

People cited similarities between Vietnam and Korea at the onset of the NRD program<sup>1</sup>. The ultimate goal of both SU and NRD is to raise quality of life and well-being for rural people, thus narrowing the urban-rural gap. However, the two projects achieved different outcomes. NRD's goals are difficult to achieve due to the ineffectiveness of community participation. By contrast, effective community-based mobilization played the most important role in SU's success. Comparison between NRD and the SU in terms of self-help mechanisms sheds light on the differences between the two programs.

### 1. General overview of NRD

General objectives of NRD target not only rural people directly, but also other fields of national development. Vietnam's Government considers NRD, with 9,000 rural communes nationwide (2010 to 2020<sup>2</sup>), as part of its overall socio-economic, political, and security and defense programs. The general objectives of NRD are to:

- Build a new countryside with gradually modern socio-economic infrastructure, rational economic structure and forms of production organization.
- Associate agriculture with quick development of industries and services, and rural with urban development planning.
- Assure a democratic and stable rural community deeply imbued with national cultural identity.
- Protect the eco-environment and maintain security and order.
- Raise the quality of life in rural areas under socialist orientation<sup>3</sup>.

NRD includes 11 groups of activities to achieve these goals. In addition, the NRD Central Steering Committee assesses achievement of the activities based on a national set of 19 criteria<sup>4</sup>.

To receive recognition as a new commune, a commune must complete these 19 criteria.

### [FIGURE 1: The 11 Activity Groups on New Rural Development Program]

<sup>1</sup>Korea government implemented SU in the 1970s while Vietnam government did NRD in the 2010s.

<sup>2</sup>The Prime Minister's Decision No.800/QĐ-TTg dated 04 June 2010.

<sup>3</sup>In Vietnam, socialist orientations of the market economy include: 1) the fulfillment of the objective of a "prosperous people, strong country, democracy, equity and civilization"; 2) development of the economy with different forms of ownership and economic sectors, where the state economy plays the decisive role, and the state economy together with the collective economy serve as foundation for the national economy.

<sup>4</sup>The Prime Minister's Decision No.491/QĐ-TTg dated 16 April 2009 on national set of criteria on new rural development ranks 11 communes in the pilot program for new rural development.

## 2. General overview of SU

In 1971, Park Chung Hee's government in Korea initiated SU as a national community-based program for rural areas. The clear and direct goals of SU were to:

- Develop a modern, comfortable and convenient social community.
- Establish companies that workers can be proud of and to achieve sustained growth in a cooperative and trusting working environment.
- Develop and maintain sound and healthy society whose members are able to enjoy pleasant and intimate relationships.
- Build a continuously improving nation that we can be proud of.

This movement aimed to bring well-being for rural people and for rural community. Moreover, it emphasized changing the attitudes of rural people. The basic spirit of SU was, "We can do it. We will do it". Government aid would be useful only if rural people endeavored to improve their living standard by themselves and in cooperation with others in their community. The three central social values of SU were *diligence, self-help, and cooperation*, with government support and assistance (Chung Kap Jin, 2009).

## 3. Main directions and implementation

### 1) Economic directions

Both movements aimed to increase income and reduce poverty in rural areas. However, the study shows the difference of economic direction between NRD and SU. Vietnam's implementation of NRD between 2011 and 2020 (under Resolution No 26/NQ-TW) aims to achieve national economic goals on "agriculture, farmers and rural areas"<sup>5</sup>. Currently, the agriculture sector accounts for about 20% of GDP and 50% of jobs in Vietnam. Additionally, the sector plays a very important role in food security. Thus, a main NRD focus is to improve economic infrastructure and organization in the agricultural sector to help it to catch up with the industrial and service sectors.

Meanwhile, during the Park Chung Hee era, Korea's economy shifted from import substitution to export-oriented industrialization and development of heavy industry. Korea's Government

<sup>5</sup>Resolution No. 26/NQ-TW dated 05 August 2008 of the 7th Congress, the Party Central Committee (Xth) about "agriculture, farmers and rural areas".

initiated SU for rural industrialization with a “factory Saemaul” campaign and favorable working environment for workers. Moreover, SU factories not only contributed to export promotion, but also created the foundation for building industrial complexes in the agriculture sector (Chung Kap Jin, 2009).

## 2) Social directions

All people in communities in the two movements have equal chances to enjoy social benefits, such as health and education. Villagers should play a central role, but rural people have difficulty understanding NRD goals, and they are not encouraged to participate in the movement. A large number of interviewees in our survey said that words such as “socio infrastructure”, “modernized”, or “socialist orientation” are quite strange to them, especially to uneducated people. Moreover, they do not understand the benefit of the program to their lives.

In contrast, the goals of SU were specific and easy to understand, using words such as “community”, “members”, and “we”. Rural people understood how the movement related to them personally, and they understood their roles and benefits from the movement. This helped them to take part in the movement proactively. The SU movement was, in other words, socially inclusive.

## 3) Targets

The Vietnam Government identified 19 national criteria to assess a new rural commune (Table 1). NRD has two phases of targets: by 2015, about 20% of all communes should achieve all rural criteria, and by 2020 50% of communes should achieve all criteria. However, these 19 wide-ranging criteria are difficult to follow, and some criteria do not reflect the current needs, desires, and situation of rural people. This wastes resources, and makes people reluctant to get involved in NRD. One controversial criteria, for instance, stipulates that each commune must have at least one marketplace, but each region has its own marketplace style. In the Red River Delta, people often go to marketplace on certain days of lunar month; in mountainous areas, villagers buy and sell only on weekends; or in the Mekong Delta, people trade on floating markets. It is essential that NRD adjust its criteria to cover these geographic differences.

### **[TABLE 2: The National Set of Criteria on New Rural Development]**



SU's, meanwhile, had three stages: in the formation stage from 1971 to 1973, the government classified about 30% of villages as "basic", 60% as "self-help", and 10% as "self-sufficient". In the self-help development stage from 1974 to 1976, about 60% of villages fell in "self-help" category, while 40% had become "self-sufficient". In the independent stage from 1977 to 1981, nearly 100% of villages had become "self-sufficient". Village classification depended on only eight criteria (Table 2) concentrating mainly on infrastructure, income, and village fund. This was a helpful and transparent way to track and "score" progress and contribution by each village, creating competition among villages in Korea.

**[TABLE 3: Criteria for Village Classification and Required Standard Projects]**

4) Basic implementing unit

In Vietnam, NRD execution follows the top-down administrative hierarchy country system (central government → province → district → commune). The commune is the lowest planning and budgeting unit under the provincial level and district level, as well as a basic unit of NRD. Each commune includes from five to ten villages. Since residents in each village do not share the same interests, implementation of NRD at the commune level makes it difficult to harmonise benefits and allocate resources effectively among these villages.

The SU implementation network was quite different (the central government → large cities, provinces → small cities, counties → up, myon → villages). The Korean government chose the village as the key unit of community involvement. Rural villages were traditional units for mutual help and cooperation. Thus, the government used this understanding of the roots of society to encourage each individual to participate in the development of their own community.

5) The implementing agency

In Vietnam, the Central Steering Committee directs the NRD. The head of the Committee is a standing Deputy Prime Minister, its standing deputy head is the Minister of Agriculture and Rural development (MARD), and remaining members are ministers of concerned ministries. Moreover, MARD, the program's standing body, assists the Central Steering Committee to inspect and supervise program implementation through other ministries and local agencies. However, MARD does not control the administrative network, and it does not have power to force local agencies to follow NRD requirements.

In Korea, the government created the Saumaul Central Promotion Council to maintain implementation along the hierarchy of the administration network. The head of the council was Minister of Home Affairs, and members were deputy ministers of 22 related departments. The Korean Government chose the Ministry of Home Affairs, not the Ministry of Agriculture, to organize and implement SU because it had more power to control police and local administrative systems (Looney, Kristen 2012). This facilitated successful coordination of SU policies.

#### 4. Achievements

##### 1) General achievement

Up to June of 2015, about 860 communes in Vietnam achieved all 19 criteria, accounting for only 9.7% of the total communes, while 1,195 communes received from 15 to 18 criteria, nearly 13.4%. Exactly 6,844 communes, or 76.9%, achieved fewer than 14 criteria. Vietnam is not likely to reach its goals of having 20% and 50% of communes with full 19 criteria by 2015 and 2020 respectively.

#### **[TABLE 4: The Result of Implementation of National Criteria up to 06/2015]**

SU made a significant shift from “basic” to “self-help” and then to “self-sufficient” villages in the first stage. In 1972, about 18,515 underdeveloped (basic) villages accounted for 53% of total villages in Korea. However, in 1974, basic villages decreased considerably to 6,165 villages, only 18%. During the same period, the number of self-help villages increased from 40% to 62% and self-sufficient villages increased from 7% to 20%. This suggests that SU contributed to improve the living standards of rural people.

#### **[TABLE 5: The Result of Village Development (Unit: Thousands and %)]**

##### 2) Improvement of infrastructure

Infrastructure development is the first priority of NRD. After four years, many communes have achieved targets on post office and electricity implementation. However, fewer communes have achieved targets on schools, transportation, and culture sites. To sum up, these results fall far short of goals to bring modern socio-economic infrastructure to Vietnam’s rural areas, especially underdeveloped social infrastructure.

#### **[TABLE 6: Achievements of Infrastructure Criteria (Unit: %)]**

Improvement of infrastructure undeniably brings more opportunities for rural people and improves their lives. Our analysis of survey data identified key findings about the effects of infrastructure enhancement. About 82% of interviewees said that “Improved transportation and irrigation system positively impacted my life”, while 69% respondents agreed with the positive effect of having a marketplace. In addition, more than half of respondents confirmed that “A better electricity grid and water supply system positively impacted my life”. Interviewees also said that they were willing to contribute to NRD when they could see real benefits for them, their family, and their commune.

**[FIGURE 2: Respondents to Positive Impact of Infrastructure (%)]**

However, the development of rural infrastructure also brings some negative effects. In particular, 23% of respondents said that the “School system does not meet my requirement in both quantity and quality”. In addition, 24% of the comments implied that “The infrastructure of power grids does not guarantee the technical standards” leading to degradation and insecurity of rural power grid. About 23% of respondents said, “The construction works polluted the environment, especially regarding air pollution”.

**[FIGURE 3: Negative Impact of the Infrastructure Development (%)]**

In contrast, the remarkable and tangible achievements of SU infrastructure development are clear. In the first stage, people played an active role in enlarging roads and paths in rural area. In 1972, villagers built 21,634 kilometers (km) of roads under SU, 89% of the target. In 1973, SU broadened 10,862 km of village paths, surpassing the target by 10%. Furthermore, housing improvement projects achieved impressive results. From 1971 to 1973, people replaced about 899,000 thatched roofs with tin or slate covering. These infrastructure improvements supported villagers with more comfortable access and more opportunities to create a better environment, leading to meaningful increase in household income and long-term improvement of villager well-being.

*3) Improvement of living standards*

In Vietnam, official statistics report that rural monthly average income per capita increased about 1.5 times, and the poverty rate decreased from 17.4% to 12.7% between 2010 and 2013. In 2013, the gap between urban and rural income reduced to two times. In addition, 44.5% of communes reached government income criteria, and 36.4% of communes reached government poverty

criteria. Some surveys also confirmed improvement of income in rural area: 56 communes in Ho Chi Minh City enjoyed increased income thanks to NRD, according to one survey. In our survey, 69% of interviewees stated that NRD positively influenced their income because of more job opportunities, better transportation, and easier communication.

In SU, however, the effects on increasing rural outcome is larger compared to NRD. Income per farm household in Korea increased nearly three-fold by the end of SU's Stage 1, even surpassing that of urban dwellers in 1974. Urban-rural income disparity decreased, with the ratio of household income in rural area to urban ones improving from 67.1% in 1970 to 104.7% in 1974. Moreover, the absolute rural poverty<sup>6</sup> rate decreased from 27.9% in 1970 to 10.8% in 1978 (Sooyoung Park, 2009). Some research questioned how much SU was responsible for these improvements, arguing that heavy rice subsidies not directly linked to SU (Park and Ahn, 1999) were responsible. Nonetheless, SU undeniably brought many opportunities to rural people through income-increasing projects. In a survey by Brandt & Lee (1981) in Korea, about 80% of respondents in rural area said that their standard of living was better in 1976 than that in 1971.

#### *4) Involvement of community*

Up to June of 2015, capital mobilization from community and government budget (including central and local governments) for NRD account for 10% and 28.8% of total capital, respectively. Loans (credit) contribute the largest part, about 57.2%, implying that the program does not mobilize enthusiastic rural participation, and depends heavily on external resources.

#### **[FIGURE 4: Investment Contribution to NRD and SU (%)]**

Additionally, our survey confirmed that many villagers did not pay attention to NRD. Our team had many deep and straightforward conversations and exchange of ideas with rural people and leaders. More than 80% of respondents reported that they did not want to contribute land because it is their most valuable asset, and the key means of making a living. In addition, 45% of interviewees were not ready to contribute workdays. While 86% of respondents contributed money, they often said that it was because commune leaders forced villagers to do so. Notably, 95% of officials interviewed said that people did not contribute money for NRD. Nearly 86% of people did not know any information about their contribution, reflecting lack of transparency. As a result, people gradually lose confidence and motivation to contribute to the program.

<sup>6</sup>Absolute poverty was defined as monthly household income below W17,000 for a rural household.

In contrast, SU attracted active and voluntary participation of villagers. In 1971-1974, participants per village increased 14.3 times, from 216 participants per village to 3,082, while community funds invested increased from 66% of total investment to 78.3% (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1980). Average labor days contributed per household were 19 days in 1973, reflecting availability of very important volunteer labor to construct village roads, fix drinking water systems, and other activities. In fact, the number of workdays could be underestimated because it did not include labor days needed for replacing thatched roofs with cement tiles (Park, 1998).

### **5. Key determinants affecting resource mobilization by self-help approach between NRD and SU**

Implementing SU is more efficient than NRD, from selecting general goals and targets to choosing the basic unit of implementation. The SU implementation process attracted proactive participation from rural people. People understood their role and benefits from SU. Other key factors also contributed significantly to the success of SU compared to NRD.

#### **1) The role of leadership**

NRD regularly organizes national meetings to discuss program results, but most participants have been leaders in related ministries and provinces. NRD has paid less attention to the “voice” of rural people. In addition, by 2014 only 13% of rural districts had established NRD coordination offices and most communes lack specified officers in charge of NRD (Central Steering Committee, 2014). According to our survey, commune leaders did not frequently discuss NRD with people, reflected in the fact that 60% of respondents said that they did not believe in commune leaders and were not proactively involved in NRD. This implies weakening NRD leadership.

President Park Chung Hee was a pioneer and supervised SU strictly. He spent 9.0% of his inaugural speech promoting SU and discussing development policies for this program. Every month, the President chaired the meetings of a Government Council, with participation by Ministers and two local leaders of SU in random villages to report on the movement. The President and ministers also often visited villages without notice. During his term, the President visited approximately 3,000 villages countrywide, where he listened to the opinions of villagers, and enhanced the belief of peoples’ belief in their leaders. Village leaders, voted in by villagers, also played an important role, and male leaders worked in equal relationships with female leaders. These leaders were independent from political and administrative systems in rural areas and did not receive any material support. They often organized meetings to discuss and make decisions regarding SU projects, giving powerful recognition to the opinions of villagers (Seok-Jin Eom, 2011; ADB, 2012).

## 2) Active role of rural people

### 2.1) Opinion contributor

Currently, NRD does not regulate in cooperation between commune leaders and villagers. First and foremost, NRD should consider sharing opinions on aspects of the movement. Currently, many people do not know, do not discuss, and do not contribute opinions regarding NRD. According to our survey, while most commune officials said that rural people did contribute opinions to NRD, rural people did not agree. We present some highlighted findings below:

About 75% of respondents said that they have not expressed their opinions about master plan formulation, and 63% said they had not expressed opinions on plan implementation. Meanwhile, 100% of officials said that rural people had contributed their ideas.

#### **[FIGURE 5: Opinion Contribution to Master Plan (%)]**

About 92% and 90% of rural residents said they had not discussed irrigation works and water suppliers with commune leaders, respectively. Identifying a large disparity, 85% of commune officials said in our survey that they had received ideas from villagers in these two areas.

#### **[FIGURE 6: Opinion Contribution to Irrigation Work and Water Supplier (%)]**

In SU, government and villagers co-existed in an institutionalized relationship (ADB, 2012). Village meetings were vibrant and active. At meetings, villagers raised their voices on projects and how to implement them in their village. Based on this input, village development committees made decisions on new projects and management of village assets (Wha - Joon Rho, 2014). Village leaders' listening made villagers feel accepted and valued. Importantly, village leaders organized many informal meetings, such as drinking, lucheon, or dinner meetings with rural residents (Han, Do Hyun, 2012). According to a large Korea Rural Economic Institute survey, 67% of respondents said that they took part in all village meetings, while 28% answered that they often attended (Boyer and Ahn, 1991).

### 2.2) Supervisor

In Vietnam, each commune has a board that supervises monitoring & evaluation of NRD community-based results. The boards include 9 members selected from the community,

meaning that some villagers are responsible for the work. In our survey, about 95% of commune leaders responded that rural people were involved in monitoring & evaluation of NRD, but only 43% of rural residents agreed. Many people said that they had not received any information about monitoring activities.

Meanwhile, evaluation was the critical factor in overall success of the SU movement. This work included monitoring & evaluation of government assistance; the level of villagers contribution, inputs, outputs; and timeframe of projects. Local leaders often organized weekly or monthly meetings with villagers to report on progress and results of projects. Committee members also discussed daily and weekly outcomes of projects at the village level (Eom, Seok-Jin, 2011).

### 3) Competitive system

In Vietnam, NRD expects rural people to be full “owners” of the program, and to participate fully and actively. However, capital mobilization does not reflect this. According to Decision No.800/QĐ-TTg, direct community contribution accounts for only 10% of total capital for the program, funds from the State budget (central and local governments) make up 40%, and loans/credits and funds mobilized from enterprises make up the remainder of capital. Moreover, poor communes would prefer to receive financial assistance from the central budget, and government did not promote competition among communes. Thus, many communities and villagers display a passive and dependent attitude on government support, and are less motivated by, and feel less responsible for, NRD. A survey in 11 key NRD communes conducted by Nguyen Ngoc Luan (2011) proved that dependent attitudes were the biggest factor preventing villager contributions. Our survey results show that people are more voluntary and motivated to contribute to the NRD when they believe that the program brings practical benefits for them, their family, and their commune. These benefits can come from economic activities that improve and sustain their income, or can come in the form of access to healthcare, education, and other infrastructure-based services, like schools, supermarkets, and sanitation. More than 50 % of people said that they would be more willing to contribute to NRD if they can access better and faster health care and education. Nearly 40 % of them said that they contribute because they expect the program to create jobs and increase their income and living standard.

### **[TABLE 7: Factors that Affect People in Contributing to Their Village]**

Meanwhile, in the Korean Government's SU system made use of villager competitive spirit for monetary and economic gains, and social recognition. Villages with better results received



support first. This avoided equal support and made villages compete (Goh, 2010; Kim, 2013). In one example, in the initial stage of SU, the government provided 355 packs of cement to all villages with the only requirement being that they must use the cement to benefit the entire village. In the next stage, the government classified rural villages into three categories on the basis of community mobilization achievements: 1) basic, 2) self-help, and 3) self-reliant village. This classification helped to create fair competition among villages for government support. In the cement example above, for instance, the government selected 16,000 successful villages (half of total) to grant additional support of 500 sacks of cement and a ton of iron bars. Higher performers received more support, and non-performers received no further support. By the end of the movement, 100% of villages became self-reliant, an increase from only 12% of total villages in 1971.

**[TABLE 8: Government Support for the Village During the Period of 1971-1978]**

4) Transparency

Officials do not often disseminate information about NRD community contributions. It is difficult to find formal statistics on how many people participate in the program, and how much land, labor, and money they contribute. Authorities do not publish statistics on village contributions. Our survey showed that about 82% of respondents said they had not seen announcements related to their contributions. The lack of transparency opens opportunities for leakage and corruption of the type documented in Que Phuoc (Quang Nam province), Quang Minh, Quang Thang, Quang Long, Quang Thanh s (Quang Ninh province) communities. This hampers community belief and constrains NRD development.

Meanwhile, it is easy to access information about rural participation in SU. One government criterion tallied total village funds contributed, which played an important role in making it easy to check results and encourage a “self-help” spirit. Transparency was an important factor in shaping good SU governance (Eom, Seok-Jin, 2011).

5) Promotion

In Vietnam, although authorities promoted NRD in diverse ways—from mass media to commune-level bulletin boards—these methods are rigid and ineffective. When our research team interviewed people in different social strata, especially the poor and uneducated, most reported that they had never heard of NRD. Even when people know about it, they do not



understand the nature of the program. However, when we asked whether they contributed money, construction materials, or workdays for infrastructure construction at their village, most answered “yes”. This means that promotion has not drawn rural peoples’ attention to NRD. Consequently, a number of people think that rural development is only about infrastructure. According to rural people, the most effective way of promotion is direct talk and discussions between leaders and villagers.

In SU’s publicity campaign, in contrast, the Korean Government established Saemaul Broadcasting Center in 1972. By the next year, Korea had two other broadcasting companies promoting the SU movement. From 1971 to 1980, people watched 66 public films about SU (ADB, 2012). Everyday at 5:45 am, when villagers awoke, they could hear the energetic “Song of Saemaul” broadcast. All public buildings hang a three-leafed SU flag representing the three parts of SU spirit: diligence, self-help, and cooperation. The publicity campaign succeeded in delivering information to villagers, and encouraged them to participate in SU.

First, **NRD should identify comprehensive direct goals and targets, and communicate them to rural people.** This would help rural people understand and consider NRD a movement for them.

Second, **leaders play a vital and decisive role in mobilizing peoples' involvement in rural development.** Leaders need to be one step ahead, and must set a good example. Local leaders should monitor projects and frequently hold meetings to talk and listen to peoples' opinions to enhance trust in leaders as well as to raise support for the benefits and success of the program. For human resources, authorities should administer an entry exam to identify outstanding leaders who can influence other leaders and people.

Third, **rural people are key factors for NRD success.** Vietnam's Government should institutionalize the village as the basic unit of NRD and cement the villagers' central role. Villagers' opinions will keep NRD on the right track. Transparency is essential to strengthen confidence of rural people, and local leaders should organize frequent meetings to discuss project progress and results. People expect to know how officials are using villager contributions, and villagers should know details related to each project in their village. Over time, encouraging active involvement of villagers will play an important role in NRD implementation.

Fourth, **create a competitive mechanism among communes.** Government actions should comply with the principle of "supporting the commune with better performance result first". The government can classify villages into 4 categories, including "good", "medium", "weak", and "poor". Based on this performance classification, the government can allocate support and budget for each commune.

Fifth, **government should ensure disclosure of, and access to, NRD information, especially related to villagers economic contribution.** This can empower people and institutions to prevent and fight corruption. The NRD website, national and local media (newspapers, radio system, etc.), or bulletin boards of each village can display public information.

Finally, **the steering committee should simplify rural development promotion language, especially to the most poor and uneducated.** Vietnam should replace complicated and abstract terms (for example, "social infrastructure", "modernized", "socialist orientation", and "master plan") with language that people can understand and remember. Promotion requires commune leaders' to display both expertise and patience.

Vietnam's NR has improved the living standards of people in rural areas. However, external assistance is not stable, and NRD is not likely to achieve prosperity and modernization for Vietnam's rural communities. Therefore, NRD must apply a self-help approach for rural people to contribute more proactively to NRD.

Inspired by the successful Korean SU self-help model, we compared SU to NRD in their respective initial stages: NRD from 2011 to 2014 and SU from 1971 to 1974. We also surveyed people in North and South Vietnam to understand NRD issues and to identify practical policy options for ongoing implementation of NRD.

Vietnam's NRD and Korea's SU both specify rural people as the owner of these respective programs. However, NRD has not achieved the significant success of SU. The wide-ranging goals and targets of NRD—from economic to social and political issues—confuse rural people, who do not understand the program and its goals. In contrast, rural people understood SU goals with the specific “diligence, self-help and cooperation” motto.

After the first stage of implementation, Vietnam's government classified 860 communes as new rural communes, below 50% of the target. At the same stage, SU had more than 7,000 developed villages, above 50% of the target. Moreover, villagers contribute about 10% of total investment in NRD, compared with the 78% from Korean villagers in SU. This is clear evidence of much more vibrant community involvement in SU compared to NRD.

We can draw some useful lessons for NRD in term of villager resource mobilization:

- 1) NRD requires strong political will from top-level leaders, as well as effective grassroots leadership. Leaders at all levels must organize and direct villagers to perform successful rural development. Leaders who display self-discipline, patience, and strong faith can encourage villager belief in the program.
- 2) The Vietnamese Government should revamp the administrative system to place the village as the key administrative unit rather than the commune.
- 3) NRD should also revise and set clear goals and targets to help rural people.
- 4) It is also necessary to invest capital efficiently to meet peoples' demand and priorities.

- 5) Villagers must participate actively, and leaders must solicit their opinions. This will encourage proactive villager involvement in NRD, and increase their belief in the movement.
- 6) Government should also establish a system that promotes competition between communes/villages, motivates independence from government support, and increases villager sense of responsibility for NRD success.
- 7) To support the government's fight against corruption, people expect transparency and to receive detailed information regarding use of villager financial contributions.
- 8) Finally, simplified and improved promotion can attract rural peoples' involvement, including from the poorest, most uneducated Vietnamese.

**Table 1: Basic Nature of the Survey**

A. DESIGN OF QUESTIONNAIRE				
	Type	Unit	Total	Note
1	Type of objects		2	- Commune people - Leaders
2	Type of questionnaire		2	- Commune people - Leaders
3	Number of respondents	People	200	
-	Commune people	People	150	
-	Leaders	People	50	
4	Number of question	Question	60	
-	Commune people	Question	30	(1) information of respondent: 4 (2) opinion contribution: 4 (3) contribution by money and land: 9 (4) the monitor in NRD implementation: 3 (5) the evaluation of NRD implementation: 2 (6) policy implications: 8
-	Leaders	Question	30	(1) information of respondent: 6 (2) activities of propaganda and training: 5 (3) resources mobilization for NRD: 10 (4) the monitor in NRD implementation: 3 (5) policy recommendations: 6
5	Coverage of survey	Commune		
-	The South	Commune	5	Long Hoa, Ham Ninh, Cua Can, Thanh An and Condao
-	The North	Commune	5	Phu Dien, Xuan Dinh, Thanh Tri, Bat Trang and Xuan Duong
6	Time of survey	Month	3	From October to December 2013
B. RESULT OF THE SURVEY				
7	Gender	%		
-	Male	%	46	
-	Female	%	54	
8	Average age	Year	42	
9	Job of respondents			Farmers, people working in social associations, teachers, businesspersons, officers, freelancers and housewives.

Source: Authors

**Table 2: The National Set of Criteria on New Rural Development**

No	Name of criteria
<b>I. PLANNING</b>	
1	Planning and implementation of planning
<b>II. ECONOMIC - SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE</b>	
2	Communications Information
3	Irrigation
4	Electrical
5	Schools
6	Cultural Facilities and infrastructure
7	Rural markets
8	Post office
9	Residential houses
<b>III. ECONOMICS ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION ORGANIZATION</b>	
10	Incomes
11	Households Poverty
12	Labor force structure
13	Types of production organizations
<b>IV. CULTURE – SOCIAL ISSUES – ENVIRONMENT</b>	
14	Education
15	Health cares
16	Cultural lives
17	Environment
<b>V. POLITICAL SYSTEM</b>	
18	System of social organization and strong political
19	Security, social order

Source: Decision No. 491/QĐ-TTg on approval of the National criteria for New Rural Development by the Prime Minister, dated on April 16, 2009

**Table 3: Criteria for Village Classification and Required Standard Projects**

Projects	Basic	Self-help	Self-sufficient
Village road	Main village road	Branch village road	-
Farm road	Village entry farm road	Cultivation farm road	-
Small river	Small river inside village	Small river between village	Small and medium size river outside village
Agricultural water	Irrigation 70%	Irrigation 70%	Irrigation 85%
Agricultural machine	-	Power-driven machine for prevention of breeding	Power tiller, power threshing machine
Cooperative farming	Cooperative work team	Cooperative production team	Cooperative production team
Village fund	US \$ 1200 per village	US \$ 2000 per village	US \$ 4000 per village
Income per household	US \$ 2000 per household	US \$ 3200 per household	US \$ 5600 per household

Source: Rho, Wha Joon. 2014. "Triple Helix for Social Innovation: The Saemaul Undong for Eradicating Poverty," Journal of Contemporary Eastern Asia, Vol. 13, No.1, pp. 39-55.

**Table 4: The Result of Implementation of National Criteria up to 6/2015**

	Number of criteria achieved	Number of communes	The percentage of commune achieved in total communes (%)
1	19	860	9.7
2	15 – 18	1195	13.4
3	10 – 14	3190	35.8
4	5 – 9	2940	33.1
5	<5	714	8

Source: Central Steering Committee of the National Target Program on New Rural Development. 2015. “Bao cao Ket qua Chuong trinh Muc tieu Quoc gia xay dung nong thon moi den thang 6 nam 2015”. (The Report on “Result of implementing the National Target Program on New Rural Development up to 6/2015” in Vietnamese). Hanoi, Vietnam.

**Table 5: The Result of Village Development (Unit: Thousands and %)**

Year	Total	Underdeveloped Village	Developing Village	Developed Village
1972	34,665 (100)	18,415 (53)	13,943 (40)	2,307 (7)
1973	34,665 (100)	10,656 (31)	19,769 (57)	4,246 (12)
1974	34,665 (100)	6,165 (18)	21,500 (62)	7,000 (20)

Source: Seok-Jin Eom, 2011. “The Rural Saemaul Undong Revisited from the Perspective of Good Governance,” The Korean Journal of Policy Studies, Vol. 26, No. 2.

**Table 6: Achievements of Infrastructure Criteria (Unit: %)**

	Achievement
Post office	87.5
Electricity	77.5
Marketplace	49.9
Irrigation	48.7
School	31.9
Transportation	25.1
Culture site	21.7

Source: Central Steering Committee of the National Target Program on New Rural Development. 2015. “Bao cao Ket qua Chuong trinh Muc tieu Quoc gia xay dung nong thon moi den thang 6 nam 2015”. (The Report on “Result of implementing the National Target Program on New Rural Development up to 6/2015” in Vietnamese). Hanoi, Vietnam.

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**Table 7: Factors that Affect People in Contributing to their Village**  
(1: the least impact; 5: the strongest impact) (Unit: %)

Factors	1	2	3	4	5
Bring benefits to family:					
- Job creation	13			38	38
- Income increase				33	44
- Better and faster access to healthcare service				25	58
- Better and faster access to education service				33	50
Confidence in leaders of commune/ village				20	60
Clear instruction of leader				25	58
Warm concern of leaders of commune/ village				30	50
The impact of Associations				11	44
Material encouragement	25	25	25	25	
Spirit encouragement				50	

Source: Authors

**Table 8: Government Support for the Village during the Period of 1971-19789**

No.	Type of village	Result	Government support
1	Basic village	Small percentage of people participating in the movement	Living environment improvement projects and attitude reform projects
2	Self-help village	About 50 percentage of people participating in the movement	Living environment improvement projects and income raising projects
3	Self-reliant village	About 100 percentage of people participating in the movement	Income raising projects and welfare projects

Source: Pham Xuan Liem.2014.”Saemaul Undong Movement and the model of new village in Korea” (In Vietnamese) (Phong trào và mô hình làng mới ở Hàn Quốc), The Vietnamese Journal of Architecture, No.5.pp.25-27.

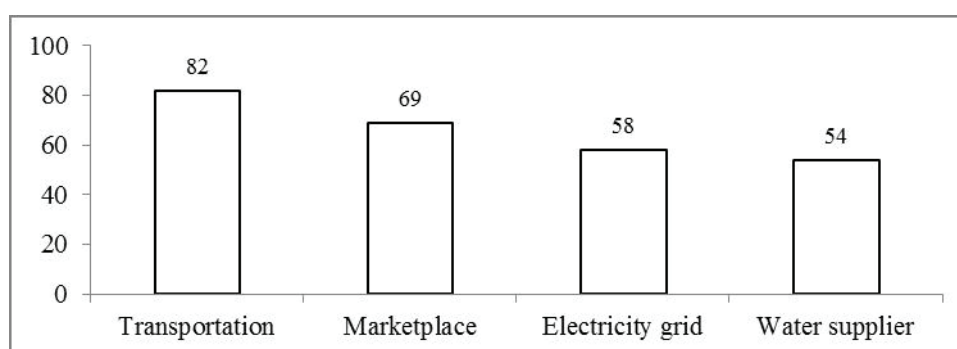


**Figure 1: The 11 Activity Groups on New Rural Development**



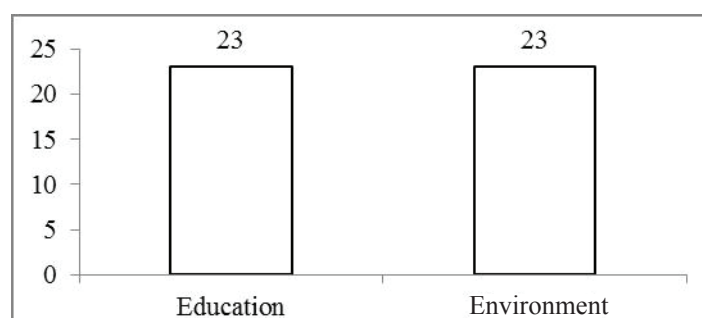
Source: Nguyen Minh Tien (2013), “National Targeted Program on New Rural Development”.  
([http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/webfm\\_send/3366](http://www.ngocentre.org.vn/webfm_send/3366))

**Figure 2: Respondents to Positive Impact of Infrastructure (Percentage)**



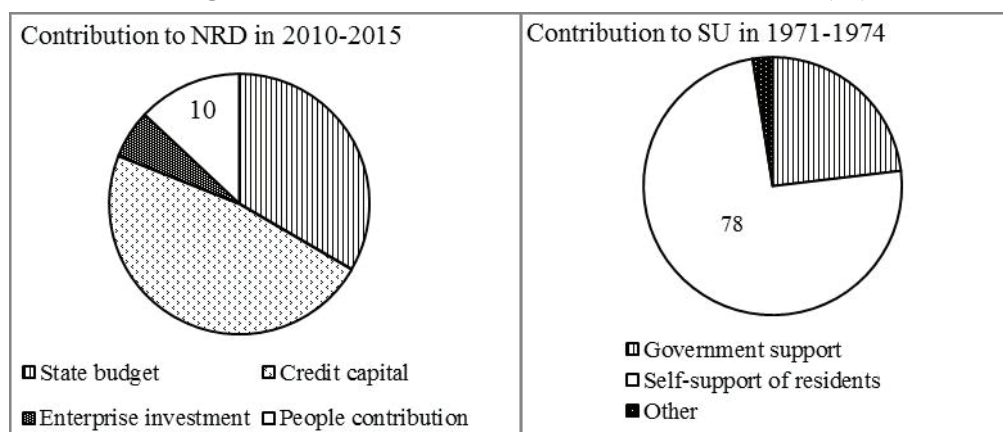
Source: Our survey results

**Figure 3: Negative Impact of the Infrastructure Development (Percentage)**



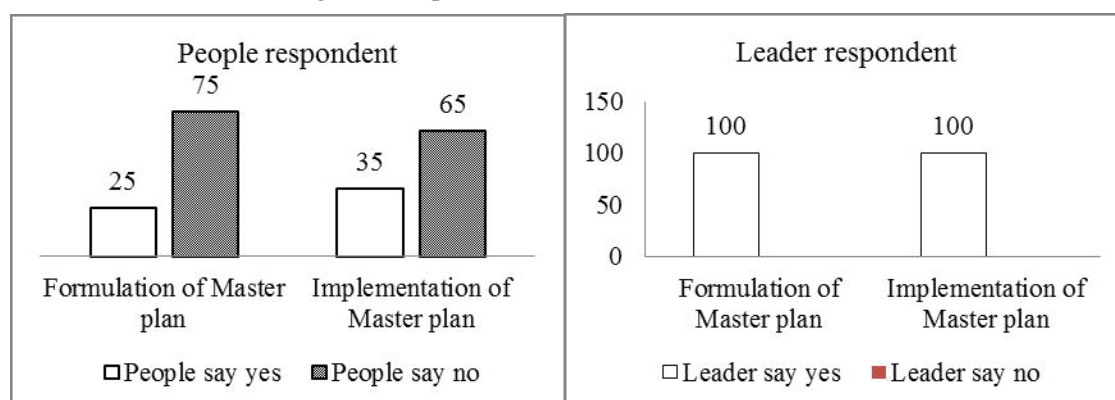
Source: Our survey results

Figure 4: Investment Contribution to NRD and SU (%)



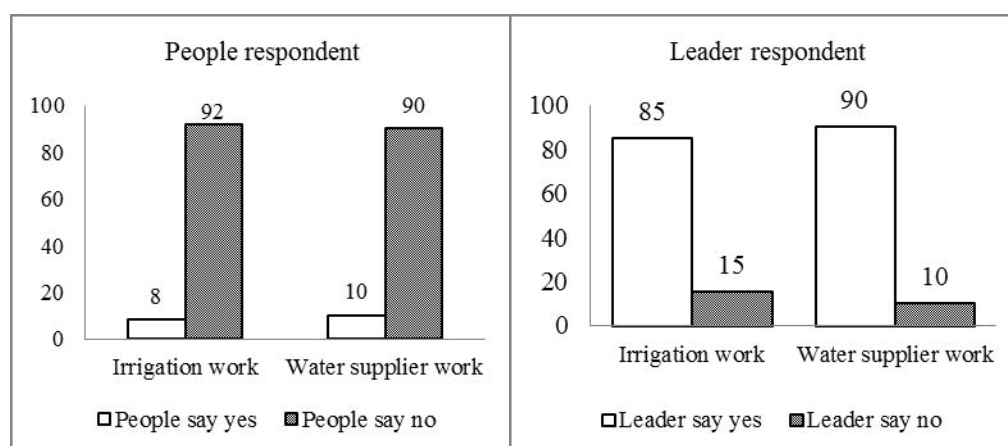
Source: Central Steering Committee of the National Target Program on New Rural Development. 2015. “Bao cao Ket qua Chuong trinh Muc tieu Quoc gia xay dung nong thôn moi den thang 6 nam 2015”. (The Report on “Result of implementing the National Target Program on New Rural Development up to 6/2015” in Vietnamese). Hanoi, Vietnam.

Figure 5: Opinion Contribution to Master Plan



Source: Our survey data

Figure 6: Opinion Contribution to Irrigation Work and Water Supplier (%)



Source: Our survey data

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