

An assessment of the Saemaul Undong programme to enhance living standards of the people in rural areas with reference to Wahawa Grama Niladari Division in Rambukkana

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In developing countries, community-based integrated rural development programmes have been used as a special strategy to enhance the economic and social standards of rural people over the past few decades. Saemaul Undong was such a rural development programme introduced by the government of Korea and implemented in Sri Lanka through the KOICA in 2012. The main objective of this study was to find out how community-based rural development programmes contribute to economic development in rural communities. Wahawa GN Division in the Rambukkana Divisional Secretariat Division was purposively selected as the study area. A purposive sample of 23 potter households was selected from a total of 395 households. Structured questionnaires and four focus group discussions were used to collect primary data on income, infrastructure, availability of employment, and attitudinal changes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials and coordinators of this programme. The analysis drew on descriptive statistical techniques and content analysis. According to the research findings, it can be concluded that, as a result of high daily productivity, potters earned a higher income compared to the beginning of the programme in 2012. When this programme began, 72% of the village potters had no housing. After beginning the programme, they were able to construct their own houses using materials such as cement and tin for roofs given by the KOICA. Furthermore, 84% have got electric potter wheels and 60% have gone to Korea to learn new techniques. Moreover, they have introduced five varieties of new clay products to the market by using knowledge gained from workshops. The content analysis shows that the programme resulted in positive attitudinal changes about their livelihood amongst the people. As a result of the programme, the pottery industry in the area has been augmented. Therefore, it can be concluded that community-based rural development programmes contribute to overcoming poverty among rural people in developing countries.

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