

The Role of Youth Participation in Community Development

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Youth participation in community development has been viewed as one of the most effective methods for promoting young people's active engagement with social services. However, in rural communities of Sri Lanka, young people's participation is most commonly related to their labour contribution. The core components of participation such as decisions, choices, and management are rarely seen.

Addressing these issues this research, from a qualitative research method, aims to contribute to local understandings about youth participation in development. With a focus on Agalawatta rural area, it explores the grounded experiences of two youth groups in order to offer considerations for social practice, programme implementations and further studies. The research involved in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations with youth, village heads, NGO staff, religious leader, a school teacher and young people's parents in Mathugama Grama Niladhari divisions. Both Quantitative and Qualitative data were collected using semi structure questioner, focus group discussions and observations.

The respondents considered charitable contributions of youth as their primary form of active participation, including educational awareness and campaigns in the community. There are some positive outcomes from youth engagement; one of the influential aspects is contributed by local partnerships. This substantial contribution stimulates interactions between key local members and youth so they can work together for positive change in the community. This research suggests that young people do need support from key local groups or recognized agents to assist them in initiating participation in terms of forming groups, and providing training and coaching to open new possibilities and strengthen youth's initiatives.

These include religion and development, power relations, and women's leadership. This research suggests that these factors either motivate youth participation because of social norms and cultural acceptance.

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