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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ASSESSMENT OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: AN EXPERIENCE FROM MEKELLE, ETHIOPIA, EASTERN AFRICA

Dr. Muthyalu Meniga¹, Gebrecherkos Gebregiorgies² and Mr. Mulugeta Aradom³

1. Associate Professor, Dept. of Cooperative Studies, College of Business and Economics, Mekelle University.
2. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Cooperative Studies, College of Business and Economics, Mekelle University.
3. Lecturer, Dept. of Sociology, College of Social Sciences, Adigrat University.

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Abstract

The main objective of the study was to assess the level of youth participation in Community Development programs. The cross sectional research design was used for this study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the primary and secondary source to meet stated study objectives. The primary data was collected from the sample respondents. The secondary data was collected from related annual reports, progress reports, published and un-published documents, journals, books, internet and other sources. Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used. The study used simple random sampling technique to select sample respondents. The study results revealed that youths were interested to participate in sports and recreation activities, entrepreneurship and artistic activities. However, all respondents agreed that there were limited sport and recreation centers in the study area so that youths were not enjoyed more according their interest. The study also indicated that majority of youth were not involved in needs assessment level, prioritization stage, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stage of the community development programs. This implies that youth are not given opportunity to involve in the community development process in the study area. The study further revealed that, youth were motivating to participate in community development programs, to learn new skills, experiences and to achieve personal goals. Therefore, for effective, genuine and active youth participation, government, non-government and other youth concerned organizations priority should be given to designing program activities that meets youth new skills, experiences and personal goals.

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Introduction:-

The development of community is a dynamic process involving all segments of the locality, including the often-overlooked youth population. Youth participation can thus be seen as an ideal strategy for community and youth development. Youth represent a vast and often untapped resource for immediate and long-term community development efforts (Ogbonna and Agboti I.O, 2015). Research shows that youth are in a unique place in life, as they are developing their decision making skills, continuing to learn, and entering the labor force, cultivating

Corresponding Author:- Dr. Muthyalu Meniga

Address:- Associate Professor, Dept. of Cooperative Studies, College of Business and Economics, Mekelle University, Ethiopia.

character and a healthy lifestyle, and learning to exercise their leadership (McNulty, 2005). The true development of human capital comes through broadening opportunities for youth.

According to (World Bank, 2010) about 50% of the developing world population is youths' estimated at about 1.2 Billion of age between 15 and 24 years. It is clear that investing on youth is very important and need to focus on their issues. Ethiopians are predominantly young and have a key role in both the current and future development of the country. Young people are at the heart of today's great strategic opportunities and challenges, from building the economy, reducing poverty to strengthening democracy (UNICEF, 2013).

A study indicated that the youth participation has great impact in strengthening of social development, building organizational capacity, and creating changes in the environment. Author further noted that there have been relatively few systematic studies of youth participation outcomes in developmental research (Checkoway, 2006). In Ethiopia there is a lack of proper attention in addressing youth issues, problems, and their organizations, therefore, there is a need to create mutual cooperation and networking among youth, family, society, other partners and government. Various government institutions, in line with their respective policies which they have formulated to realize their missions, have been making efforts to address the problems and needs of youth. However, these efforts are not being made in an integrated and satisfactory manner (FDRE, 2004).

According to (UNICEF, 2004), genuine participation gives young people the power to shape both the process and the outcome. However in Ethiopia, there is a visible problem in understanding of their genuine interest motivated for participation, and the various challenges what youths is negatively influence from active involvement of their local community development programs.

Nowadays government and non-government organizations are focusing bottom up approach and people's participation in designing and implementing developmental and welfare programs, so as to these programs aim at increasing knowledge and empower rural people especially poor, youth and women. Government and others targeted to meet the needs of youths and development interventions. The government of Ethiopia has established a national youth policy that seeks to integrate youth in development programs. The national youth policy encourages youth involvement in the development process.

There is lack of information and research studies on youth participation in community development activities in Mekelle city. Furthermore, there is no studies on assessment of youth in community development interventions. Therefore, this study is aiming to assess the level of youth participation in CD programs. The study focuses on assessment of youth participation in various activity of community development programmes in Mekelle, specifically in Hadnet sub-city. There are widespread community development activities in the area which is directly or indirectly related with youth in community development.

Objectives of the study:-

To examine the level of youth participation in Community Development programs

To identify the main areas of youth participation in the community development programs

Methodology:-

The study population consists of young people between the ages of 15 and 29 residing in the study area. The age of respondents is based on the definition of Ethiopian Ministry of Youth, sport and Culture (FDRE, 2004). Out of seven sub-cities known as Semien, Ayder, Hawelti, Kedemay Woyane, Adi-Haki, Hadnet and Quiha, the Hadnet sub city which is found south of the Mekelle city was selected purposively because of the following reasons. There are widespread community development activities in the area, and there are many youths around this area, directly or indirectly influenced youth of the local community. The previous studies did not focus on youth participation and community development interventions.

The study used simple random sampling technique to select sample respondents. The researcher first prepared a comprehensive list of all youth those who are residing in the study area with collaboration of Hadnet local Administration, Youth affairs office. The prepared list was used as a sampling frame. Based on the sampling frame 167 sample respondents (young people those who aged between 15-29 years) were selected by using simple random sampling technique.

According to Kothari (2004) in order to determine the sample size of the population which is less than 10,000, the sample is calculated by using the following formula.

$fn = n/1 + n/N$, where fn = the desired sample size when the population is less than 10,000

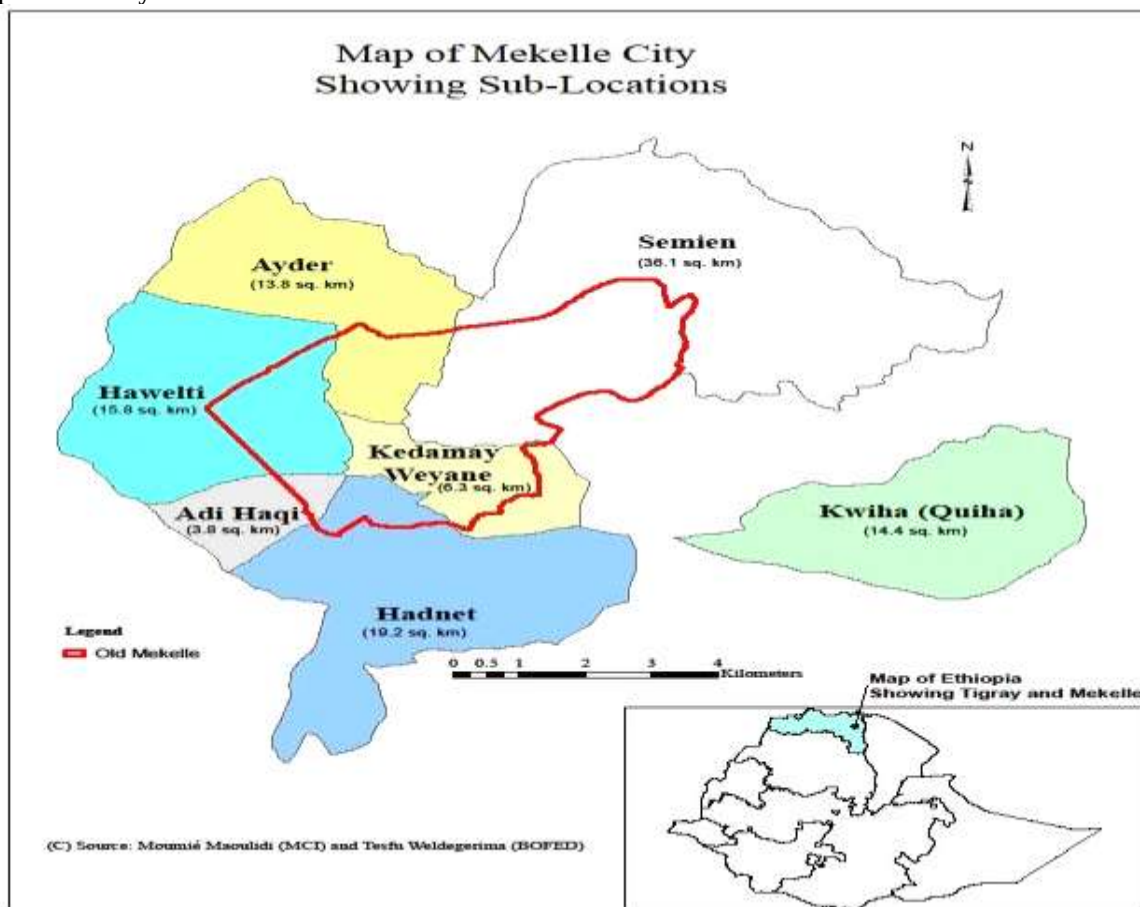
N = population size

n = desire sample size

So, $FN = 167/1 + 167/10,000 = 167$, the sample size comes 167.

The cross sectional research design was used for this study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the primary and secondary source to meet stated study objectives. The primary data were collected from the sample respondents. The secondary data were collected from related annual reports, progress reports, published and un-published documents, journals, books, internet and other sources. Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used. The primary data were collected from 167 sample respondents through interview method by using pre-tested interview schedule. First a standardized interview schedule was prepared in English and then translated in to local language "Tigrigna". In addition to the interview method 2 focus group discussions were conducted each FGD comprises of 8 members. Furthermore, the study used 6 key informants interviews with sub city administrators, youth Associations and youth league in Governmental organizations, officials of Non-Governmental organizations those who worked in community development programmes, youth leaders and individuals who have knowledge on the study area and community development activities are interviewed. The study was used both quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods. The quantitative data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics through percentages and frequencies. This involved detailed description of the items that comprised a sample. The qualitative data that were collected through key informant interviews and focus group discussions were analysed narratively and incorporated into the quantitative results.

Map of the study area



Source: Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BOFED).

Results and Discussions:-**Table 1:-** Respondents distributed by gender, age, marital status, family size, occupation.

Variables		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	86	51.5
	Female	81	48.5
	Total	167	100.0
Age	15-20	70	41.9
	21-25	81	48.5
	26-29	16	9.6
	Total	167	100.0
Marital status	Single	147	88.1
	Married	18	10.7
	Divorced	2	1.2
	Total	167	100.0
Family	<2	9	5.4
	2-4	14	8.3
	5-7	80	48.1
	>7	64	38.2
	Total	167	100.0
Occupation	Formal Employment	30	18.0
	Informal Employment	33	19.8
	Recreational Activity	11	6.6
	Self employed	11	6.6
	Job seekers	65	38.8
	Students	17	10.2
	Total	167	100.0

Source: Primary data**Gender of Respondents:**

Table 1 shows that 51.5 percent of the sample respondents were male and remaining 48.5 percent of the respondents were female. This implies that male respondents are slightly more than female respondents. It is understood that there are sufficient female participation in community development activities, further it indicates that there is no any gender gap and bias in participation.

Age of Respondents:

Participants' age groups are from 15-29 as defined by the National Youth policy of Ethiopia. Out of them (41.9%) of the respondents were between the age of 15-20, while (48.5%) were in the age group of 21-25 and (9.6%) were between the age group of 26-29. As a result of this, the majority of the study respondents who participated in this study were between 21-25 years. This implies the age level of 21-25 was actively participated in community development programmes in the area.

Marital Status:

Table 1 further reveals that 88.1% of the sample youths were single, 10.7% were married and the remaining 1.8% respondents were divorced. It is concluded that the majority of the sample respondents were single. This implies that the single youth can spare more time to participate in the community development.

Family size of Respondents:

Table indicates that 48.1% of the respondents replied that they are living with family size of between 5-7. The results also indicated that 38.1% respondents are having greater than 7 family size and 8.3% respondents were living with family size of between 2-4. The study results revealed that the majority of the respondents were living with family size of 5-7. This implies that most of the respondents were living with big family size it can contribute to more and effective participation in the developmental activities.

Occupation of Respondents:

Based on the study findings, majority (38.8%) of the respondents are un-employers while 19.8%, 18.0% were working as formal and informal workers respectively. The study implies that majority of the respondents were unemployed youth so need to focus on youth related community development programs, as well as activities that can generate jobs unless they will be resulted in negative consequences.

Figure 1:- Educational level of sample respondents

Source: Primary data

Educational levels are highly significant in the extent, intensity and pattern of participation. The respondents' educational status varies from illiterate to College or university level as type of formal education. Based on this, the majority of study respondents (55.6%) were completed college or degree university level. On the other hand, (34.7%) respondents were secondary level, followed by (7.9%) of respondents were at elementary level. And very few respondents (1.8%) were illiterate respectively. This implies that most of the youth in the study area were at college or university levels education which will help them to make effective participation in different levels of community development activities.

Figure 2-Level of Participation

Source: Primary data

Respondents were asked for their current participation condition, in order to assess the level of participation in community development programmes. Fig. 2 shows that 78.4 percent of the respondents replied that their participation is high and remaining respondents replied that their participation is low. It implies majority of respondents perceived that their participation in the community development program is high.

As illustrated on above fig.3, the majority 41 percent of the respondents stated that they got information from their peers and friends to involve in the CD activities, followed by medias 19 percent and banners also 10 percent, advocacy campaign for the youths (20%) respectively. 10 percent also accounted from other sources of information. This concluded that, friends/peers/family play significant role on giving information for youths to participate in community development programmes.

Figure 3:- Sources of Information for participation.

Source: Primary data

The levels of youth participation are presented on table 2. The stages of development process include; needs assessment level, identification, prioritization, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages. The result was analyzed in the following manner.

Table 2:- Respondents distributed by level of participation in CD programs.

Level of involvement	Involved=1		Not Involved=0		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Needs Assessment Level	73	43.7	94	56.3	167	100.0
Identification process	86	51.5	81	48.5	167	100.0
Prioritization stage	68	40.7	99	59.3	167	100.0
Planning stage	62	37.1	105	62.9	167	100.0
Implementation stage	79	47.3	88	52.7	167	100.0

Monitoring stage	66	39.5	101	60.5	167	100.0
Evaluation	102	61	65	39	167	100.0

Source: Primary data

As illustrated on table 2, 43.7 percent of the sample respondents were participated at need assessment level of community development activities. Meanwhile, majority of respondents (56.3%) reported that they are not involved in community development programs at the needs assessment level. The study results revealed that majority of the sample respondents did not participate at the need assessment level of community development programs. This implies that there is no enough participation in the initial stages of the community development programs. Also there will be limited ownership of the development program by the youth since they were not brought on board at an early stage. Further, the study results revealed that 51.5 percent respondents were involved at identification level while 48.5 percent of respondents were not involved at identification stage.

This study also analyzed level of youth participation at prioritization stage of community development programs. As indicated on table 2 majority of the sample respondent's (59.3%) were not participated at prioritization stage of community development programs. However significant numbers (40.7%) of respondents were participated at this level. In addition majority 62.9% of respondents reported that they are not participated at the planning stage of community development programs. While (37.1%) of respondents were participated at the program planning level. Generally, there is limited youth participation at planning stage in the study area. Since planning stage is very crucial for any programs, youth participation is very important at this level. If there is no sufficient youth participation at planning stage, community development programs will not be success and sustainable.

Further, Table 2 indicated that the majority of the respondents (52.7%) reported that they did not participate at program implementation stage of community development programs, while 47.3% of respondents were participated at implementation stage of the community development programs. Excluding of youth from participation of community development at implementation level cannot be achieve the program objectives and goals. This study further examined the participation of youth in community development programs at the program monitoring level and the study result shows that there is limited involvement of youth at program monitoring level of community development programs. Majority of the respondents (60.5%) were not participated at this stage, with small number (39.5%) of respondents were involved in community development program process at monitoring stage. Table 2 also indicated that majority of respondents (61%) were participated at evaluation stage of community development programs. with limited small number (39%) were not involved at this level.

Generally, the youth are more involved in the community development programs at the identification and evaluation stage in the study area. According to FGD results most of them are invited to participate at the implementation and evaluation stage like meeting, in contrary they are out of participation especially with prioritization and planning stage, this is hindrance to active participation of youth in the study area."

Interest areas of youth to participate in community development programs

The study finds out that most interest areas of youth to participate in community development programmes. The researcher used five scale "Likert scale" where one indicating "strongly disagree" and five indicates "strongly agree".

Table 3:- Interest areas of youth to participate in community development programs.

S/N	Areas of interest to participate in CD activities	Category										Total	
		SD		DA		UD		A		SA			
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1	Sport	16	9.6	31	18.6	12	7.2	50	29.9	58	34.7	167	100.0
2	Art	14	8.4	37	22.2	17	10.2	46	27.5	53	31.7	167	100.0

3	Entrepreneurship	14	8.4	26	15.6	21	12.6	47	28.1	59	35.3	167	100.0
4	Politics	64	38.3	37	22.1	24	14.4	31	18.6	11	6.6	167	100.0
5	Religion	16	6.0	40	24.0	39	23.3	34	20.3	38	22.8	167	100.0
6	School Clubs	18	10.8	33	19.8	21	12.6	60	35.9	35	21.0	167	100.0
7	Charity	10	6.0	35	21.0	36	21.6	52	31.1	34	20.3	167	100.0
8	Others	38	22.8	65	38.9	11	6.6	38	22.8	15	8.9	167	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table 3 presented the interest areas of youth participation in community development programmes. Majority 34.7% of youth respondents in the study area were responded strongly agreed, while 29.9% agreed with sport. The result also indicated that, 35.3% of respondents were strongly agreed, while 28.1% agreed in the area of entrepreneurship. Further, the study results revealed that 31.7% of respondents reported that strongly agreed while 27.5% agreed with artistic activities. In addition, 21.0% of respondents strongly agreed, while 25.8% agreed to school club participation and 20.3% respondents were strongly agreed while, 31.1% respondents were agreed with charity activity. 22.8% and 20.3% of the respondents were strongly agreed and agreed with religious participation respectively. The remaining 8.9% and 22.8% respondents were strongly agreed and agreed to participate out of the those listed areas of community development programs. The study also indicated that, very low numbers of respondents 6.6% strongly agreed while, 18.6% were agreed with politics. From this result we can understand that sport, entrepreneurship and art were the highest interest areas of youth to motivate them to participate in community development activities. Furthermore, it is revealed that the key informant interviews, regarding the interest areas of youth participation in community development programs, one key informant in Hadnet local Administration stated that "...young people resided in our sub city are more opportunity to participate in sports and other recreational activities. In FGD and KII found that youth are active participants mostly in recreational areas such as sport, art and other familiar areas. While, they are also passive participants in areas like politics, and religion in the study area, because many youths are reflect negative attitude especially to political participation. They considered politics as a non-interesting areas and difficult areas so that they didn't choose by most them in the study area.

Conclusion:-

Youths are the pillar of the current progress and future of any nation, because they have the energy, intellect and mind-set which can be enhanced to accelerate development goals. Youth participation therefore is a mechanism that enables them to gain skills, knowledge and experiences in order to contribute to their families, their countries, and the global community. This study indicated that majority of the youths were literate enough to participate in community development programmes. This helps them to make effective participatory decisions in community development activities. It is further concluded that, proportional number of female and male youth participating in community development activities so that there is no any gender discrimination in participation. The study indicated that majority of youth were not involved in needs assessment level, prioritization stage, planning, implementation, and monitoring stage of the community development programmes. All respondents agreed that there were limited sport and recreation centers in Hadnet sub-city so that youths were not enjoyed more according their interested. Limited youth centers in the area might be caused youth exposed to extensive social media exposure and heavy use and abuse of drugs and alcohols and other unwanted habits. The study further concluded that, youth were motivating to participate in community development programmes, to learn new skills, experiences and personal goals. Therefore, for effective, genuine and active youth participation, government, non-government and other youth concerned organizations priority should be given to designing program activities that meets youth new skills, experiences and personal goals.

Recommendations:-

This implies that a number of youths in the study area were not involved in various community development activities such as attending trainings, distribution of community development resources, acquiring skills, experiences and knowledge's and so on. However, the key for active participation has greater implication on the participation of youth in the community development programme at all levels.

When youth do not participate in the development process at the needs assessment level it may cause to limited ownership of the development program. So it should be encouraged youth to participate at an early stage to improve sense of ownership towards community development programmes.

The study recommends that it is the time to mobilize youth to participate in planning as well as implementation activities of development process. Youth should be participated at all levels right from needs assessment to program evaluation, because the present participation of youth has an implication for their future development. So youth should engage at all levels of development by considering youth have key role in their community.

The concern government bureaus should collaborate with other civil society organizations for creating various opportunities, build strong sense of responsibility and leadership so as to help youth to make a difference in their local community as well as their country.

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