

**DETERMINANTS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES  
OF BULILIMA AND MANGWE DISTRICTS IN MATABELELAND SOUTH PROVINCE OF  
ZIMBABWE**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

Lack of participation of youth in rural development is a major challenge throughout sub-Saharan Africa. The reasons for this *status quo* have not been well-documented and they seem to be area-specific. It is important to generate this knowledge so as to yield informed youth empowerment and development programming.

In Zimbabwe, analysis of the records of Bulilima and Mangwe District Councils in Matabeleland South Province revealed that youth were not participating actively in rural development programmes within their communities. This situation necessitated carrying out an empirical study to investigate the factors that promoted or discouraged youth participation in the rural development programmes. An exploratory study that involved 106 respondents, categorised into female youth, male youth, women and men was conducted in three and five wards of Mangwe and Bulilima Districts, respectively. Semi-structured interview guides and formal questionnaires requiring responses on a Likert-type scale were used to collect data relating to the perceptions of female youth, male youth, women and men who were organized into reflection circles. Significant differences in perceptions on youth participation were observed across age, gender and Districts of origin of the participants. Perceptions of youth and adults regarding *food for work programmes* significantly differed ( $p < 0.05$ ). Significant differences ( $p < 0.01$ ) in perceptions relating to *cattle breeding programmes* and *brick moulding programmes* were also noted between males and females, and Mangwe and Bulilima Districts. Perceptions relating to *foster parenting for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)* between Mangwe and Bulilima District were not the same ( $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, significant differences were observed in the perceptions of youth and adults regarding "*provision of various skills*" ( $p < 0.05$ ) and "*provision of entertainment*" ( $p < 0.01$ ).

The results of this study highlighted the fact that youth participation in rural development programmes could be achieved if the approaches used were sensitive to differences in age, sex and geographical area of residence. It was revealed that youth were not comfortable to participate in rural development programmes that adults led. It is important to carry out a study to investigate how to bridge the gap between youth and adults. It seemed there were gender-based stereotypes such as burdening female youth with endless household chores while male youth enjoyed abundant free time. All these factors discouraged the participation of female

youth in rural development programmes. There is need to address these issues in order to enable the female youth to participate more actively in rural development programmes.