

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS - A SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NORTHERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA

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The term "community participation" commonly refers to the collective involvement of local people in assessing their needs and establishing strategies to meet those needs. It is hence important to place the community at the center of any development initiatives. The main aim of community participation is to encourage people to have meaningful input into the decision-making process affecting their lives. Ensuring effective people's engagement leads to having a development intervention with relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. The purpose of the study is to analyze the vital benefits of community participation and make suggestions on how to improve constructive society participation in development projects in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. The paper adopts a desk review and a conceptual analysis of information collected from 15 Focus Group Discussions (FGD) drawing attention to the importance of community-based participatory planning (CBPP). The empirical study reveals that effective society participation is the first step for sustainable development efforts. The paper concluded that by improving the participation of the local community in the development process, development interventions will succeed in bringing desired results for improved living standards of the people concerned. Development actors and people can use study findings as guiding principles to understand and encourage meaningful community engagement in development initiatives.

Keywords: *Community; Participation; Development; Project*
