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Assessing the Contribution of Self-help Groups in Community Development: A Case Study of Lwabenge Agali Awamu Community Health Workers and Butale Kugumikiriza Group, Masaka District

The research assessed the contribution of self-help groups to community development. It was a case study design of two self-help groups based in Masaka district. These groups are: Lwabenge Agali Awamu Community Health Workers (CHW) and Butale Kugumikiriza Group. To assess the groups' contribution, the study was guided by three specific study objectives: To establish how self-help groups are contributing to community development; to find out limitations that hinder self-help groups' contribution to rural community development; to explore possible mechanisms that could lead to self-help groups' sustainable and effective contribution to the community. The research reached to a total of 101 respondents. These included self-help group members of Lwabenge Agali Awamu CHWs and Butale Kugumikiriza groups, beneficiaries to the two groups, and key informants. The key informants were sub-county chiefs, Community Development Officers and Local Council III chairpersons of Lwabenge and Mukungwe sub-counties, World Vision staff, and the Masaka District Community Development Officer. The research used the qualitative approach design and employed convenient sampling methods to select survey respondents and non-random purposive sampling to choose key informants and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants. It used interviews, FGDs and observation methods of data collection. The research found out that self-help groups contribute to community development. This contribution is manifested through a number of activities the groups are involved in that are geared towards development. It was also found out that much as the groups may have a vision that embraces the general community to which they belong, most of the activities are more inclined to helping the individual group members. The study revealed that people's perceived meaning of the concept of self-help groups influences significantly their expectations from such structures. The associated reasons for their joining also determine their willingness to participate meaningfully in such groups. Moreover, meaningful participation of group members determines the quality of activities implemented by the group and thereby determining the trend and impact on individuals, families and communities in general. This eventually determines the self-help groups' contribution to the general community's development.

Keywords: Community development, Community health workers, Masaka district