



An Evaluation of Youth Participation in Amalima Activities

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This study evaluated youth participation in Amalima activities conducted in 2018. Youth are defined as persons aged between 15 and 35 years. It is critical to Amalima's mission that youth participation in all programme activities is strengthened, as youth take the knowledge and skills gained from Amalima to future generations. This study was influenced by the 2016 USAID-commissioned Amalima mid-term evaluation and the results of our 2017 gender dialogues. The USAID-commissioned evaluation concluded that "lack of participation by young people in agriculture related activities could have long-term negative consequences on sustainability of outcomes". Similarly, youth dialogues, indicated low youth participation in SO1 and SO2 activities. The evaluation recommended the promotion of participation of young people in all program interventions. This study conducted focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) to explore activities youth were engaged in, understand which activities appealed to youth, and identify the key barriers and challenges youth were facing. Using this information, Amalima will craft strategies to strengthen increase youth participation in program interventions. In addition, the study analyzed the Amalima database in March 2018—finding that youth comprised 74% of the ration beneficiaries, 37% of care group participants, 55% of community health clinic (CHC) beneficiaries, 22% of irrigation beneficiaries, 26% of conservation agriculture (CA) beneficiaries and 29% of livestock production beneficiaries.

2. Research objectives

- a) To assess the level of participation of youth in different Amalima activities.
- b) To assess the perceived benefits of these interventions by beneficiaries.
- c) To understand the key barriers and challenges to youth participation in Amalima activities.
- d) To strengthen youth participation in different Amalima activities.

3. Research questions

- a) What is the level of participation of youth in different Amalima activities?
- b) What are the perceived benefits of these interventions by beneficiaries?
- c) What are the key barriers and challenges to youth participation in Amalima activities?
- d) Which activities should the Amalima program promote to strengthen youth participation?

4. Methodology

This qualitative study was conducted in two wards per district. In total 16 FGDs and 16 KII were conducted. Each FGD averaged 14 participants. Recognising that there could be differences in opinions from different age groups, the 227 participants were split into two age groups of 15-25 and 26-35 years.

5. Key Findings

5.1: Profile of Amalima Beneficiaries by Age and Intervention

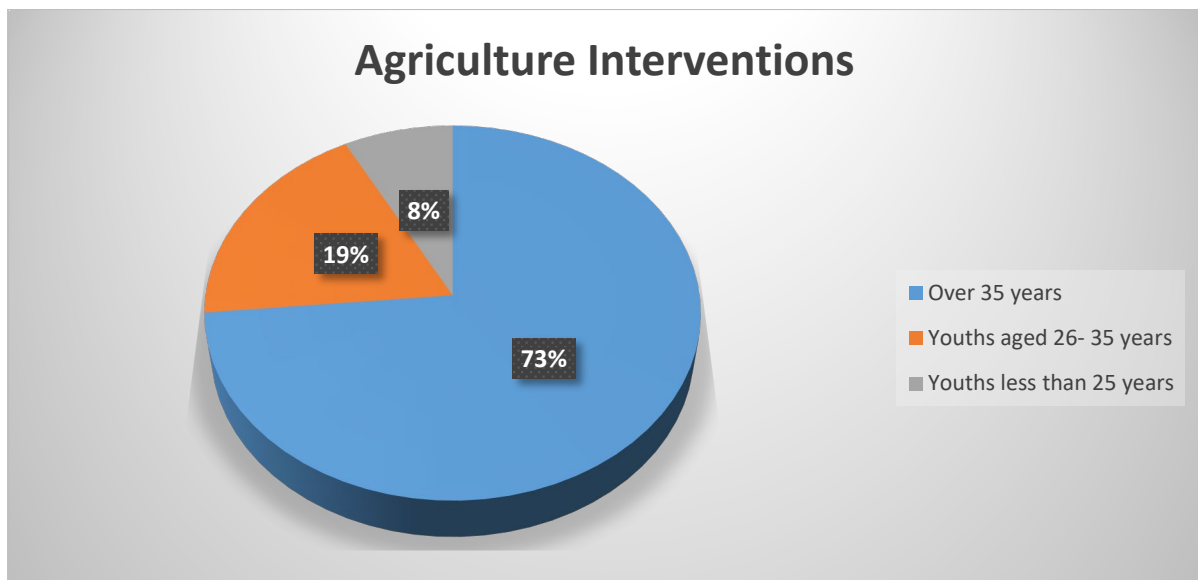


Figure 5.1 Participation of youth in agriculture Interventions

Youth participation in agriculture-linked interventions was low at 27%. This indicates reduced youth interest in these activities, possibly because of low land and livestock ownership as was indicated by the FGDs. The few youth who participated in these activities seemed to focus on raising funds to move to neighbouring countries or major towns. As such the activities were treated as temporary and a stop gap as opposed to long-term livelihood options.

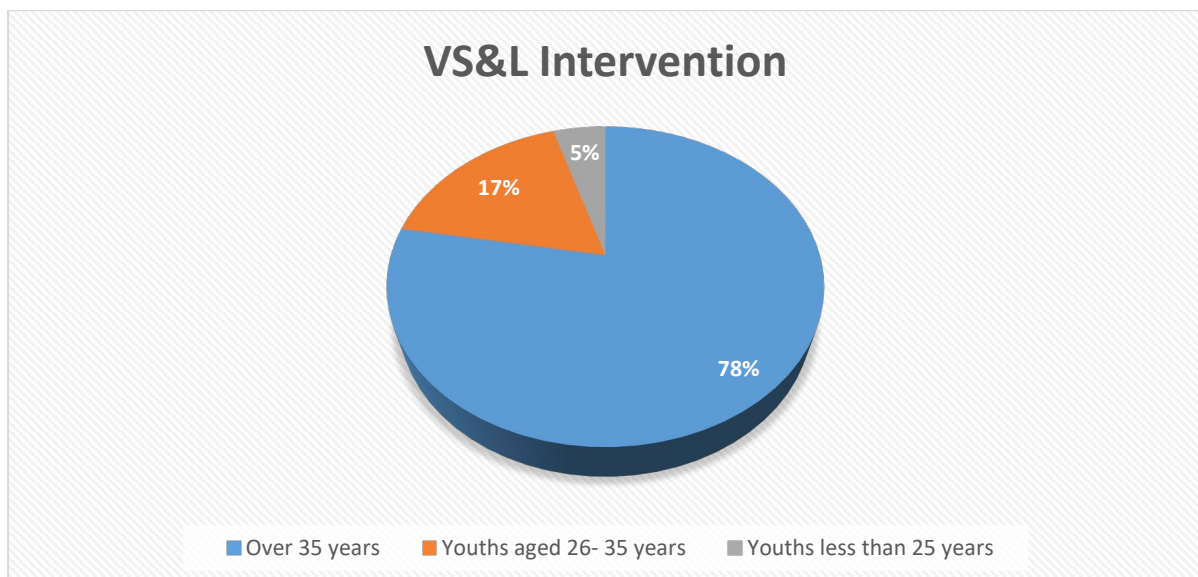


Figure 5.2 Participation of youth in VS&L activities

The same participation levels were revealed for VS&L activities with low youth participation at 22%. While this is a short-term activity which could have assisted youth to gain quick incomes/returns, the

major barrier youth mentioned in the FGDs was that the VS&L groups tended to be comprised of older people and the youth did not easily fit in.

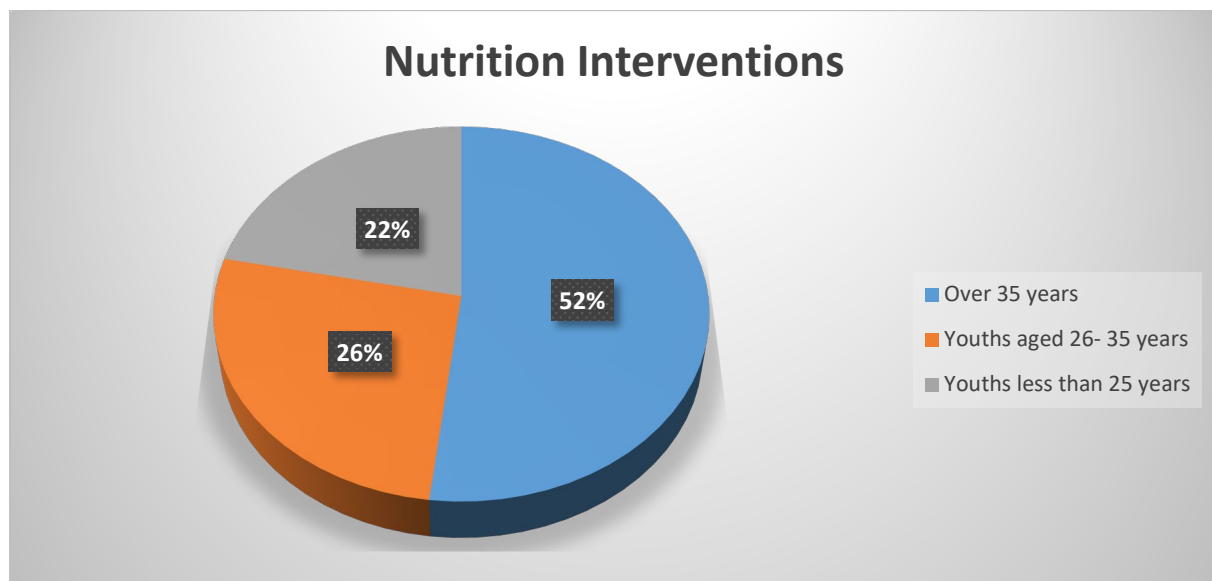


Figure 5.3 Participation of youth in nutrition activities

The youth participation in nutrition activities was higher than the previous two categories with participation at almost half (48%). Rations were much easier for youth to participate in due to the strong health system that exists at both the community and health centre level.

5.2 Perceived benefits of Amalima interventions by beneficiaries

The FGDs revealed that youth mostly participated in ration distributions, care groups, and CHCs. Community volunteers were the major source of information for youth mobilization. To effectively keep the youth engaged, Amalima used working in groups, cooking competitions and sports. Youth mentioned that they were not keen to participate in activities which required substantial start-up capital but were motivated by activities that improved their welfare and that of their children. Younger pregnant and lactating women (PLW) explained that rations lessened the food burden they were facing as most were not married and relied on their parents for support.

Younger youth (15-25 years old) saw participating in the Amalima program as an opportunity to play sports with their peers. The older youth (26-35 years) implementing CA viewed participation in Amalima activities as a workload sharing opportunity. In addition, the CA groups saw the potential of getting better crop yields through these associations.

PLWs appreciated Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) works on local roads as it improved physical access to their communities by reducing distances to catch transport. In addition, participating in VS&L improved their incomes and they were able to accumulate assets such kitchen utensils, blankets, chickens and goats. A few male youth participated in Amalima activities to avoid negative peer pressure. According to a young man in Matjinge ward (Bulilima district), most young men in the community were addicted to drugs and alcohol and he did not want to be like them.

5.3 Key barriers or challenges to youth participation in Amalima activities

Barriers to participating in Amalima activities included youth perceptions that Amalima interventions were primarily for older community members and PLWs. This was supported by the notion that

generally programme introductions came to communities through traditional leaders who required heads of households to attend, and not young people. In Jowa village (Tsholotsho district), the young men believed the Amalima programme was only for PLWs and older members of the community. In Matjinge ward (Bulilima district), the youth said their community leaders never invited them to any Amalima meetings or trainings. Moreover, whenever parents attended Amalima activities, they left youth, especially young women, at home with the responsibility of taking care of household chores.

Youth also perceived most Amalima activities as requiring long-term commitment. For mobile populations like them, it was not possible to commit to long-term activities, because they needed to look for employment in towns and neighbouring countries. In fact, older youth (26- 35 years) who engaged in Amalima activities were returnees from South Africa. Some Amalima interventions (especially asset management and conservation agriculture) were perceived by younger youth (15- 25 years) as too labour intensive.

Youth, especially young men, said that it was difficult to participate in some Amalima activities without start-up capital, because they had no assets or resources of their own. On another note, some youth explained that they thought that if one had not enrolled into Amalima at the project inception, it was not possible to join, and they considered it as a missed opportunity.

5.4 Which Amalima activities are attractive for young people?

Young Amalima beneficiaries wanted tangible benefits, whereas non-Amalima beneficiaries suggested the program consider giving youth groups some start-up capital. Consequently, there is an opportunity for youth to participate in activities like horticulture and small livestock production value chains (goats, indigenous poultry) because youth can make cash within a reasonably short time.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Youth mobilization

The program should target youth with specific information framed for them to progressively join and participate in the different activities the program offers, especially SO1 and SO2 activities. In addition to mobilizing youth through traditional leaders, the program will explore modern communication methods like SMS and WhatsApp. To motivate youth in SO1 and SO2 trainings, SBCC will be asked to consider producing modules with attractive titles like “How to Make Money through CA”, or “How to Make Money through Livestock Production”. Community supported sporting tournaments will continue to be used to bring youth together and the program will take advantage of the platform to share messages about different Amalima activities.

The traditional and religious leaders and their spouses, parents, guardians and in-laws of youth will be encouraged to welcome and support youth who join Amalima groups. Technical Coordinators and FOs will be encouraged to showcase successful youth; these youth can act as role models to other youth not participating in Amalima activities and motivate them to join Amalima groups. Field staff will ensure youth representation per village per activity by insisting on a youth quota for all activities and trainings. Older Amalima participants will also be encouraged to bring younger members of their families for trainings as part of mentorship and succession planning for sustainability.

The program will strengthen collaboration with the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development and Ministry of Youth. It will conduct program-wide campaigns to bolster youth participation using community-based events like celebrating and commemorating days of

special interest such as the Day of the African Child, International Day of the Girl Child and International Youth Day.

6.2 Capacity building for youth to engage in different activities

The Gender Specialist, Community Mobilization Coordinator, Ag/Livestock Coordinator and Value Chain Facilitator will mobilize and train youth groups to participate in Amalima horticulture and small livestock value chains. Specific trainings will include farming as a business, horticulture production and small livestock value chains. Youth will also be encouraged to focus on marketing what others have produced. The VS&L Coordinator will help youth to come up with ideas of how they can raise capital for different early maturing income generating activities.

7. Conclusion

Amalima, through various Technical Coordinators and relevant government stakeholders, will focus on two major activities, youth mobilization and youth capacity building, that have a quick turnover and do not require too much start-up capital. Traditional leaders, community volunteers and the Ministries of Women Affairs and Youth will mobilize youth. To conduct different trainings, Amalima Technical Coordinators will collaborate with the Ministries of Women Affairs, Youth, Health and Child Care, and AGRITEX.