

## Unit 10

# Active Community Participation

### Introduction

In the previous units, you realized that democracy depends on the active participation of citizens. You learned about the rights, obligations and responsibilities of citizens. You have also seen that patriots are respected in the community because of their great contribution as development heroes. In this unit, you will see the importance of active community participation.

### Lessons

1. The Meaning of Community Participation
2. The Role of Civic Societies in Community Participation

### What you will learn

#### You will:

- understand the meaning of active community participation.
- understand the role which civic societies play in the community.

### Key words and concepts

- Civic society/voluntary organization
- Community participation
- Political participation
- Social participation
- Common good
- Consumers associations
- Juvenile Delinquency

Citizens involved in community activities



## LESSON

## 1

# The Meaning of Community Participation

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- describe what community participation means.
- participate in the affairs of your class, school and community.

- Do you have any idea what community participation means?
- Have you ever participated in your community?
- Discuss the opportunities for community participation in your area with your class.

People live together in villages, towns and cities. They form different associations like Iddir, mahiber, or kebele to make life better. Members who belong to such associations form a **community**. Such associations survive because of the work of the members of the community. This is called **community participation**.



Local football team

Community participation is focused on actions that have an economic, political, and social impact. You belong to your school as a student. You also belong to the kebele as a resident. You might also belong to a football team as a player, and to a HIV/AIDS club as a member. These are different communities requiring different activities. Your membership of these communities must not be only for membership's sake. You need to be active in your class to learn and achieve a lot. Unless you are active in your football team your team mates will not want to play with you. In your kebele too, you have to do a lot with others for the good of all residents. This is also called **active community participation**.

When you participate actively in the community, you and other members of the community will all benefit. When everybody takes part, healthy relations exist among members of the community. Community projects are for the **common good**.



Successful carpentry workshop run by local Anti-HIV/AIDS Association

## The Meaning of Community Participation

- ?**
- Talk about what community participation means in a kebele, school and in different clubs.
  - What type of associations have you participated in? Tell your group and the class.
  - Discuss the benefits of active community participation in your group.

### CASE STUDY

#### Participation of Family Members

Ketema, Jittu, Eshetu and Helen are sisters and brothers who live in Addis Ababa. Helen is a student in Grade 9. Ketema and Jittu are in Grade 11 and Eshetu is in Grade 12. They are members of different clubs in their school. Jittu is a member of a mini-media club, Helen is in the HIV/AIDS club, Ketema in the school's Boy Scout Club and Eshetu is in the literature club. Jittu and Eshetu join in the activities of the clubs they belong to and have received prizes of a television and radio-cassette and certificates of participation from the school administration. Helen joined the HIV/AIDS club only three months ago, but hopes to work to help the club in the future. But Ketema is simply a registered member who does nothing at Boy Scouts. Eshetu, Helen and Jittu are also active in the kebele. They mobilize the youngsters to do work to help the disabled, the sick and the old. Ketema has never shown any interest in helping others like his brother and sisters.



Community participation

- ?**
- What do you think about Ketema's participation at school and in his kebele?
  - Is Helen doing the best she can in the HIV/AIDS club? How?
  - Do you appreciate Jittu and Eshetu for what they do? Why?

- ?**
1. Have you done anything to help your school or your local community? In class, discuss what you have done to help.
  2. Does active community participation help you to get support from government bodies and NGOs better than being passive? How? Discuss the issue.

## The Meaning of Community Participation

Community participation is a very general term. It could be helping an individual to do things that could affect them too. There are different types of community participation that you need to know about and take part in.

**Political participation** means political activities that you, as a citizen, have to take part in. This includes discussing public issues, attending political meetings and voting. It is your right to participate in everything that affects your life. It is your right to vote when reaching eighteen. When you are active in political participation you make full use of your rights and protect them.

**Social participation** is to act for social development. This includes involvement in the fight against crime, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and

corruption. Crime makes people feel insecure and could lead to loss of interest in work. Corruption can be an act by government officials to misuse public money for personal benefits. When public money goes into the pockets of individuals it is impossible to achieve social development. Drug abuse is a serious social problem that you have to be aware of. It contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS. As a citizen it is among your responsibilities to combat problems and to work to bring about change and development in our society through active community participation.

Form groups and let each choose to study either political participation or social participation.  
 ? Discuss as a group and present findings to the class.



Project Officer leading a meeting



Juvenile delinquents

### CASE STUDY

#### Participation in a Women's Association

Ato Birarra and Zeyneba are spouses who have been married for twenty four years. Zeyneba is a member of a women's association of the kebele where they live. She is very active and has borrowed money from an organization that helps women to open a small shop on the outside of their house. Her effort has improved her family life and she is able to feed

her two sons and a daughter well.

She goes to meetings and often raises issues and asks questions that concern the public. During elections she votes only for those she believes work to improve the community's life. In meetings she complains about those kebele officials and the residents of the kebele who are not doing enough

## The Meaning of Community Participation

to control crime, drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. She once exposed an official in the kebele for his corrupt practices when everybody else decided to keep quiet.

However, Ato Birarra is not happy and discourages her. He insists that she should not go to meetings in the kebele. The children do not accept their father's idea. They are always encouraging Zeyneba to participate.

They are proud of their mother.

- List Zeyneba's political and social activities.
- ? ➤ Does Ato Birarra's attitude help the well-being of the community?
- Were the children right to be critical of their father? What do you think?

## CASE STUDY

### Juvenile Delinquency

In one town more than two hundred youths created problems in the community. Because they had no jobs and recreational facilities, they started to abuse themselves using drugs like chat and shisha. Eventually, they were engaged in criminal activities. As a result rape, HIV/AIDS and other social problems increased. The community had to cooperate with the police to control their criminal acts and keep the community peaceful.

They were sent to prison for a couple of months. An NGO came up with a project to teach them. They were organized and given technical training

in activities like roadside paving. After they were released they apologized to the community and started working to earn a living.

- Do you appreciate what the NGO has done? How?
- ? ➤ Is it helpful for society to train the jobless to get work? Why?
- What do you think the community can do for the jobless in your kebele?

## REMEMBER

- ❑ When groups of people try to make their life better through cooperative engagement, it is called community participation.
- ❑ Political participation means being prepared to vote, lobby, persuade, or protest. It includes discussing public issues and attending political meetings.
- ❑ Social participation means acting to help social development. This way problems can be overcome.

# LESSON 2

## The Role of Civic Societies in Community Participation

By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- define what civic societies/community organizations are.
- explain the role of civic societies.

- Do you know anything about civic societies? Give some examples that you can think of?
- List some of the civic societies working in your kebele and explain the role which they play in your community?

People need to get together to start clubs and associations to do things efficiently. The football club is a club, while the kebele is an association. To make community participation more productive, civic societies are set up as non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

These voluntary organizations are set up and run by private citizens who want to contribute to community development. Members are united because they have common beliefs and objectives. The organizations are not businesses and do not make a profit. Members do not join for personal benefit but to do what they can to improve life in the community.

These organizations include women's associations, youth associations and associations for the disabled and visually impaired. The role of these organizations is to achieve their goals for their members and the community. These

organizations must be legal and must be registered by the government.

Perhaps your mother is a member of a women's association. Your elder brother may be a member of a youth association. These are voluntary organizations. Next year you might want to join the youth association to play your part. When you are a member of such organizations you get the chance to raise the awareness of public issues and to influence public policies. You learn to deal with social problems in your kebele and in the country and you do what you can to improve them.

**?** Make groups. Each should identify a voluntary organization and discuss it? Think about the types of activities and the members who are involved.



The Red Cross is a voluntary organization: one of the members is donating blood

# The Role of Civic Societies in Community Participation

## CASE STUDY

### Forming a Consumer Association

The residents of a town had a meeting to discuss how to control some traders who were trying to make too much profit from what they sold. Ato Awlachew suggested that these traders should be taken to court. W/o Aynalem, on the other hand, said that the residents should not buy from unfair traders. Ato Atnafu came up with the idea that a better solution could be to form a consumer association managed by voluntary members. He said that the association could help to make goods available at a fair price.

The same day almost all those who attended the meeting registered and each paid 50 Birr membership fee. Within four days most families in the town had joined the consumer association. The association is

still open to new members and is certified by the government. It is helping the town dwellers a great deal.

A consumer association can work to keep prices fair, but it can also work to identify faulty and dangerous goods and get them removed from the market.

1. Do you think that starting an association like this is helpful? Why?
2. How can town dwellers participate as members of the consumer association?
3. What can you do if traders sell bad food?

## REMEMBER

- ❑ Civic societies/voluntary organizations are associations which work together based on shared interests, a purpose or values.
- ❑ Voluntary organizations are organized by volunteers who have a common interest.
- ❑ Some of the voluntary organizations include NGOs, charities, community groups, youth associations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, environmentalists and business associations.

## UNIT SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt how you can participate actively in your school, clubs, and in the community where you live. The objective of community participation is to improve the life of the community and your environment. One way to improve community life is through participating in community meetings. During such meetings you have an opportunity to raise issues affecting the community. You can also participate in elections and vote freely for parties which you support. This is political participation. Outside politics you have seen that you can use social participation to control crime, corruption, drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

You have examined the role civic/voluntary societies play in improving community life. The societies are formed by the free will of individuals who want to solve their common problems. Their purpose, as you have seen, is to mobilize members to participate in work which promotes the common good.

## GLOSSARY

<b><i>Common Good:</i></b>	The outcome of actions intended to benefit all the members of a community.
<b><i>Community:</i></b>	A group of people in a given time and place.
<b><i>Community Development:</i></b>	The improvement of conditions of a community.
<b><i>Community Participation:</i></b>	An undertaking by the members who are organized in an area for a purpose.
<b><i>Consumer Association:</i></b>	A group of consumers coming together to solve problems such as the availability of commodities or the sale of sub-standard goods.
<b><i>Juvenile Delinquency:</i></b>	A situation where the behaviour of young people has been found by the court to be bad and dangerous.
<b><i>Political Participation:</i></b>	Voluntary participation in discussions of public issues and voting in elections.
<b><i>Social Participation:</i></b>	Voluntary participation to control specific problems such as drug abuse, crime, corruption, HIV/AIDS etc.
<b><i>Voluntary/Civic Society:</i></b>	A society formed by the free will of members who agree to try to improve the life of a community.



## UNIT REVIEW EXERCISES

Do these review exercises in your exercise book.

### Part I – Multiple choice

1. Which one is not a community?
  - (a) Iddir
  - (b) village
  - (c) kebele
  - (d) none
2. What is community participation?
  - (a) participation of all members
  - (b) participation of few members
  - (c) participation of some members
  - (d) all of the above
3. Common good means:
  - (a) action which is good for every body
  - (b) action which is good for one person
  - (c) action which is not good
  - (d) none
4. Political participation includes:
  - (a) elections
  - (b) voting
  - (c) discussion of public issues
  - (d) all
5. Social participation is participation to control
  - (a) crime
  - (b) corruption

- (c) drug abuse
- (d) all

### Part II – True or false

1. Civic societies have the right to hold political power.
2. Government establishes and properly organizes civic societies.
3. Among the duties of civic societies is political participation.
4. Civic societies must be legal and have to be registered by the government.
5. Civic societies have a significant role to create and lobby legislators for new legislation based on the community's interests.

### Part III – Short answers

1. The best possible benefits for the whole community come from .....
2. Name two different types of community participation  
(a) ..... (b) .....
3. Pulling together actions for social development is called .....
4. Discussing public issues, attending political meetings and voting is called .....
5. Associations which are based on common interests and which are non-governmental are called .....