

Unit 10

Active Community Participation

Introduction

In Grade 9 lessons, you studied and discussed active community participation. You also learnt that participating in community organizations is one of your rights and responsibilities. Now you will learn about the different levels, types and roles of voluntary organizations.

Lessons

1. Levels of Community Participation
2. Types and Roles of Civic Societies

What you will learn

You will:

- understand the essence of the various levels of participation.
- recognize the role of civic societies.

Key words and concepts

- Community organizations
- Discrimination
- Empower
- Legislation
- Lobby
- Policy
- Political campaign
- Political party
- Political party membership
- Political party program

Citizens involved in community activities



LESSON 1

Levels of Community Participation

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

- describe the importance of making a contribution to the political life of your community/country.
- contribute to community life.

- What do you think is the difference between political and social participation? Discuss this in class.
- Have you ever contributed to your community? Explain what you did.

In Grade 9, you discussed community participation. There are different levels of community participation.

One level of participation is political participation. This includes being a member of a political party, commenting on its program and contacting public officials. A political party is an organization which **campaigns** to get into government. As you saw in Unit 1, in a democratic country different political parties compete to gain political power through free, fair, and regular elections. When you become a

member of a political party you can be elected as a representative. You also have the right to elect party leaders.

Every political party has a **policy** which states what the party will do if they are elected. During elections, all political parties present their party policy to the public. You can also take part by commenting on the different party policies. You can support or criticize their aims. You can also consider the positive aspects of the different party policies. Parties campaign to get support from the people. People usually become involved when they are very interested in policies of the parties.

If you are a representative of your community, you can contact government officials and talk about your community problems. You can also influence government officials and **lobby** them to solve the problems in your community.

- Discuss other ways in which you can take part in the politics of your country.
- Try to identify and critically evaluate the different policies of the parties in your area. Discuss this as a class.

Levels of Community Participation

CASE STUDY

The Girls Empowerment and Management Project

The Girls' Empowerment and Management (GEM) project seeks to empower girls who are committed to their education, but whose family circumstances mean that they may not be able to complete secondary school. The project gives money, academic support and life skills training to over five hundred girls in Amhara, Gambella, and SNNPR pastoral areas. In July 2007, thirty girl beneficiaries and four female empowerment workers visited Addis Ababa to meet with members of the House of Peoples' Representatives.



The GEM girls opened the visit by reading a letter they had written to parliament declaring that, although many laws regarding women's rights are on the books, these laws are not being fully implemented. A representative of the parliament's Legal Affairs Standing Committee gave a briefing on the committee's women's rights' activities, as well

as the civil and criminal codes regarding women/girls' rights, with particular regard to gender violence and harmful traditional practices. In their discussion with the parliamentarian, the students emphasized the need for laws on sexual harassment as well as the inclusion of gender education in the school curriculum, in order to bring about a fundamental change, beginning at primary level.

The students also raised questions such as, "What kind of supervision is underway to implement the laws that have been issued by government organizations and justice bodies to protect women's rights?"

The girls, who showed that they were bright young female leaders of today, returned home with renewed hope, knowledge and confidence about their ability to have an impact on the status of women in Ethiopia

➤ List some articles from FDRE Constitution which promote women's participation in the politics of their country.

? ➤ Why do we need groups like the Girls' Empowerment and Management (GEM) project when we have these articles in the Constitution?

Discuss in pairs.

There are different types of social participation in your community. People participate in *Iddir*, *ikubs*, *mahiber* and other self-help organizations. You may have participated in the kebele youth association. Other family members and your neighbours may participate in women's associations, professional associations and consumers' associations.

So you can see different types of social

participation in your community. Some organizations are working in your kebele and even in your school. They are working against discrimination or stigma against HIV/AIDS patients. Some organizations are also working to correct past discrimination based on culture, disability or gender. You can get involved in such voluntary organizations.

There are also voluntary organizations which

Levels of Community Participation

work against crime, drug abuse and bad behaviour. In some communities there are voluntary association projects that improve literacy skills. In your spare time it is a good idea to participate in these clubs. You can also be a member of a public library, which is established by voluntary associations, and help in sharing knowledge.

- Form groups and discuss the different purposes of social participation, then present your ideas to the class.
- List some of the social problems in your community. Try to propose ways of solving these problems.

CASE STUDY

Taitu's New-Found Literacy Skills

WORTH is a women's empowerment project that teaches literacy, helps women to save, builds women's micro-enterprise skills and their capacity. Taitu Bekele participates in one of the programs of WORTH operated by the Adult and Nonformal Education Association. Her WORTH group began in September and has saved 486 birr to date. Taitu has found that, with literacy skills, she developed her knowledge and the quality of her life improved.

Taitu says "After WORTH, I am now able to write my name in the Afaan Oromo language and my children are able to read Afaan Oromo script."

"After being organized into WORTH groups, we learned about our rights and obligations. If we faced a problem, we asked each other for help. Then the class discussion clarified the issue. After learning to read I have come to know my rights and obligations."

"Before WORTH, I sent five children to school. Now I am sending an additional one... All of my children go to school now. I may be old, but I can understand the importance of education."



Taitu

- Have you ever taken part in literacy activities in your community?
- Discuss the possibilities of engaging in literacy activities during your school holidays.

REMEMBER

- ❑ A political party means an organization which tries to be elected to have state power.
- ❑ Political participation includes being a member of a political party, commenting on its program and contacting public officials.
- ❑ Social participation aims to improve the quality of life in the community.

LESSON 2

Types and Roles of Civic Societies

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

- state the different types of civic societies.
- describe the role of civic societies in democratic and undemocratic countries.

- Have you ever participated in any civic societies? Tell others about your experience of participation in any club in your school.
- Do you think that there would be civic societies in undemocratic countries? If there are, what could be their role?

You learnt about civic societies in your previous lesson. Civic societies are voluntary organizations and institutions that are run by the community, no matter what the political system is.

Civic societies include organizations such as registered charities, environment protection associations, women's organizations, youth organizations, professional associations and the like.

Different types of community organizations are established for different purposes. For example, there are youth associations which are working on issues such as HIV/AIDS awareness, environmental protection and employment problems. They are also involved in peace building efforts, literacy and cultural exchanges, as well as sporting activities and fighting other social problems.

Women's associations are involved in empowering women. This includes fighting against the abuse of women's rights and improving access to equal opportunities. Professional associations, on the other hand, work on the development of their professions and safeguard the interests of their members. They also lobby the government on issues concerning their professions. Charity organizations are involved in helping people to enhance their living and working conditions. Finally, environmental protection associations help to preserve natural resources and the environment.

? Are there any civic societies in your community? What are their programs? How could you become involved?

The roles of civic societies depend on their needs and aims. Here are some of the common activities:

- Coordinating and employing the concerted effort of the people to create a peaceful and pleasant living environment in the community;
- Educating the community and creating access to information;
- Lobbying to influence legislation;
- Conducting research and creating the opportunity for public discussion to

Types and Roles of Civic Societies

develop policies and programs;

- Raising funds to implement activities and/or development projects;
- Peace building, democracy and good governance.

Some associations involve the public by organizing workshops, seminars and other events that will make people more aware of the issues in their community. Other civic societies lobby the government and attempt to influence legislation. Sometimes they use the media to let the public know what they are doing.

Civic societies in undemocratic countries are different. They serve the government, not the people. Most of the civic societies are established by the government. For example, during the time of the Derg the Ethiopian Revolutionary Youth Association, the Ethiopian Revolutionary

Women's Association and many other community organizations were established and controlled by the government. These organizations did not serve their members' interests. They were not to lobby the government and keep it accountable. Rather they served the purpose of the government by controlling antigovernment resistance.

Civic societies in a democratic state are vital to the political independence of society. Citizens make better voting choices, participate in politics and hold the government more accountable as a result.

The role of civic societies is very important for democracy, because they build trust and shared values. These help to hold society together.

? Evaluate the different nature and purposes of civic societies under democratic and undemocratic governments.

CASE STUDY

The role of NGOs in creating the Farmers of the Future

Teach is an NGO working to promote education. The TEACH alternative basic education methodology focuses on making learning relevant to the needs of students and to local conditions. Because 85% of Ethiopia's population is rural, the alternative basic education centres are located in the most remote rural areas. Therefore, integrating environmental education into TEACH is highly relevant to the daily lives of learners and the livelihood of their parents.

The TEACH project is now piloting the Farmers of the Future in an agro-forestry approach in five alternative basic education centers. The Farmers of the Future approach looks at the shortfalls of traditional agricultural education and introduces a new approach integrating agriculture, natural resource

management, forestry and environmental awareness. This knowledge is woven into the lives of young learners in ways that are linked to the real life of the youth, their parents and communities. The integration of forestry and agriculture helps the environment, and also provides food for the community and fodder for livestock.

TEACH provides basic equipment, like watering cans and hand tools, and covers the cost of buying seedlings. Agricultural development agents, based in each kebele, help the centres select special species of ecologically-appropriate trees: fodder trees, fruit-bearing trees and garden vegetables for the demonstration sites. The community then joins in to help the alternative basic education centres prepare

Types and Roles of Civic Societies

a nursery site. Adults do the heavier labour, digging holes, preparing compost and mulching. Children then plant the seedlings and maintain and water them.

After learning these new agro-forestry skills, children take their knowledge home to their families, explaining what they learned during the day. Since most parents are engaged in farming, the agro-forestry techniques are directly relevant to their livelihoods. Parents witness the differences between their own agricultural practices and the agro-forestry being practiced by their children. Community members also visit the demonstration sites and see

the new skills and technologies in action. Through these model alternative basic education centres, the local community is learning about new technologies and techniques and integrating them into their own agricultural activities.

- ?**
- How do programs like the Future Farmers Program promote the interests of farmers? Discuss this with your group and the class.
 - Do you think that educating children can also be a benefit to the community at large? Explain your answer.

REMEMBER

- ❑ Different types of civic societies are established in different communities for different purposes.
- ❑ Civic societies in undemocratic countries have different purposes. They serve the government.
- ❑ Civic societies in democratic countries play a role in promoting their members interests and holding a government accountable to the public.

UNIT SUMMARY

In this unit, you learnt the different levels of community participation such as political and social participation.

The objective of active community participation is to work for the welfare of the community. For example, you can freely take part in elections and vote for parties you support. This is political participation. Outside politics you have seen that you can have social participation to control crime, corruption, drug abuse and the spread of HIV/AIDS. You can also participate in community meetings. During meetings you have a chance to raise issues affecting the community.

You have examined the role civic societies play in improving community life. These societies are formed by the free will of their members to solve their common problems. Their purpose, as you have seen, is to mobilize members to take part in works which are for the common good.

GLOSSARY

Empowerment:	The process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes.
Discriminations:	The deliberate imposition of differences on grounds such as race, religion, language, merit etc. Discrimination on grounds such as race or religion is illegal in democracies, while discriminating between people on the grounds of merit is usually lawful.
Lobby:	To influence policies and opinions on a particular issue like protection of the environment, wildlife etc.
Policy:	A program of actions adopted by a person, group, or government, or the set of principles on which they are based.
Political campaign:	Rallies and speeches that are intended to persuade people to support a cause.

UNIT REVIEW EXERCISES

Do these review exercises in your exercise book.

Part I – Short answers

1. What is a political party?
2. State some of the levels of political participation.
3. Describe some of the roles of civic societies.
4. On what grounds might you support a political party?
5. What are the two main features of community participation that help to solve societal problems?