

Unit 10

Active Community Participation

Introduction

In Grade 11, you studied and discussed how active participation of citizens can monitor and influence the actions of governments. You also saw how civic participation performed voluntarily can enhance societal development and support the democratic process. In this unit, you will discuss the importance of effective leadership and recognize the role of leadership in promoting active participation of citizens. Furthermore, you will see and appreciate the importance of civic participation for sustaining democracy.

Lessons

1. Effective Leadership for Active Participation
2. Civic Participation

- appreciate the importance of civic participation for sustaining democracy.

What you will learn

You will:

- recognize the role of leadership to promote active participation.

Key words and concepts

- Charismatic
- Quality leadership
- Press freedom
- Versatile

Citizens involved in community activities



L E S S O N

1

Effective Leadership for Active Participation

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

- describe the quality a leader should have to promote participation of citizens.

What do you think effective leadership is? What personal qualities in leadership are important for active community participation? Give examples in your explanation.

The success of an organization depends on its leader — his/her attributes, approaches, and problem-solving techniques. Leadership simply means giving direction and the quality of a good leader comprises of the personality and style of treatment which influences the behaviour of others. There are three important features of leadership: influence or support, voluntary effort and goal achievement.

A good leader creates vision and inspires others to achieve goals through stretching their capabilities. A leader influences members of the community so that they perform together willingly for the achievement of their goal.

In a democracy, effective leadership is very important to enhance good governance, transparency, openness and accountability which are cornerstones for active community participation. A democratic environment requires a good leader who inspires and develops followers to achieve the stated objectives. He/she assumes the responsibility of looking after the well-being of a community. Threats and coercion are not part of good leadership. It is mutual trust and confidence which helps the community to attain its objectives.

Some personal qualities that are required from a leader to promote public participation include being:

- **A planner:** Somebody who has the ability to set appropriate courses of action through well-prepared plans.
- **Versatile:** Somebody who is adaptable, flexible, resourceful, multitalented and an all-round personality. A leader can work in situations totally different from routine functions. Intelligence, ambition, assertiveness, politeness and psychological stimulation are essential attributes of a leader.
- **A motivator:** It is a quality of a leader to inspire others to be willing, feel enthusiastic about, interested, and committed to the objective of the task. It is the ability to give somebody a reason or incentive to do something. The leader's own performance guides and motivates the members; for example, being prompt themselves when asking members to come on time.
- **Engaging:** A good leader has personal qualities of being charismatic, attractive, appealing, charming and influential. A leader must have the quality to influence others morally and socially by using good communication.
- **Realistic:** A leader will realise what is achievable or possible, based on known facts. This is evidenced by setting realistic goals and being practical.

Generally, active community participation requires effective leaders who have personal integrity, self-confidence, analytical ability, knowledge, creativity, charisma, flexibility and direction.

Effective Leadership for Active Participation

? In small groups, identify a leader who you all know from your kebele or another organization. Identify their personal qualities and compare them with those listed here. Do you believe this person is an effective leader? Why?

CASE STUDY

Mandela and Roosevelt — Examples of Good Leadership

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, was a South African statesman and a leader in the struggle against apartheid. Before becoming the first black president of South Africa in 1994, he spent much of his life in prison for leading black opposition against the oppressive rule of the white minority government. During his many years in captivity, he became a worldwide symbol of resistance to white domination in South Africa. He served as President from 1994 until his retirement in 1999.

In November 1999, Mandela became peace mediator in the civil war in Burundi; a peace deal was achieved the following year leading to the establishment of an interim government in November 2001. In retirement Mandela became a vocal critic of the African National Congress (ANC) policy on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), admitting that



during his term of office he had not given enough attention to this hitherto taboo subject.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the only United States president elected to four terms. He guided the nation for 12 years, through the Great Depression and World War II and initiated a series of programmes, termed the New Deal, to help bring the US back to prosperity. Although he was crippled by polio at age 39, he continued his political career, which spanned 35 years.

? Find out more about each of these great leaders. Compare the leadership qualities of these figures. What were their strengths? Did they have any weaknesses in their leadership styles?

Feed this information back to the rest of the class and conduct discussion on how a good leader can motivate his people for various commitments.

REMEMBER

- ❑ The success of an organization depends on the leader's attributes, approaches, and problem-solving techniques.
- ❑ A good leader creates vision and inspires others to achieve the goals through stretching their capabilities.
- ❑ In a democracy, effective leadership is very important to enhance good governance, transparency, openness and accountability.
- ❑ Active community participation requires effective leaders who have personal integrity, self-confidence, analytical ability, knowledge, creativity, charisma, flexibility and principles.

LESSON

2

Civic Participation

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

- explain what civic participation is.
- explain the role of associations and groups in civic participation.

Do you have any experience of group participation? Explain your role in the group.

Associations or civic societies are organizations formed by the collection of voluntary individual members. Civic societies are not static; they are dynamic and ever changing to meet the needs of society, their members, corporate objectives and environmental changes. Some organizations are established with the objective of advocating certain societal issues. Others are formulated to help the individuals in the group. Therefore, organizations need to formulate their objectives and structures.

Once the objectives have been agreed:

- suitable plans or courses of action are prepared;
- appropriate structures and arrangements are decided upon; and
- the actions for individuals and groups of people are identified to achieve those objectives.

Active participation of the members in their civic organization enables the attainment of individual

and collective goals. Usually the members of associations have the following characteristics:

- they define themselves as members;
- they share common goals;
- they engage in different activities.

As discussed in the previous lessons, citizens' participation is vital for the construction of a democratic system. This participation of citizens extends from merely voting in a democratic election to reflecting interests in policy processes.

? In small groups discuss how a self-help group could be organized in your community. Identify the aims of this group, its objectives and the roles of the members. Discuss the ideas with the rest of the class.

Citizens' participation in policy making and evaluating public policies has many advantages. It is very important for a democratic government to know how the citizens feel and react to various issues. This enables a government to shape policy that suits society so that its policies will be more sustainable and productive. Consequently, as members of society, citizens will benefit from the good policies that enhance development of their society.

In a country like Ethiopia, where we have diverse cultural and social backgrounds, different political stands and perspectives are expected. It is

Civic Participation

CASE STUDY

Community conversation in a southern Ethiopian village

In one of the southern Ethiopian villages, a large group of people sat in a wide circle under a tree to discuss their problems. These included widespread poverty, harmful traditional practices, lack of employment opportunities, lack of accessible services (including schools) and weak transport links. Their main concern, however, was why many local girls were not being educated. The women and men participating highlighted the negative impacts on girls' education and identified one of the main reasons why girls do not go to school. It was because of abduction.

This widespread harmful traditional practice affects girls, particularly on their way to schools which are long distance away. In spite of efforts by the elders to stop abduction, it still exists. Yet some believe that girls should stay at home and work.

The economic problems of most of the families contributed to the girls dropping out of school. Since there is no high school in the locality, after elementary school, students have to travel about 20 km every day or live away from home, rent a house and buy food, so they need more money. Although this affects both sexes, its effect is more serious for girls. Some families do not worry about the education of girls and this also contributes to girls dropping out.

By the end of the meeting, they had reached an agreement. They now intend to have another session to explore how the community might deal with the challenges they had discussed.



Community members gather to discuss problems

Source: Afework Ayele

? Form your own discussion groups and advise the community on how to solve the problems of female education?
Present your group's ideas to the class.

useful and important that citizens from all walks of life participate in the democratic process for, only then, can the nation develop alternative ideas and the government use the opportunity to consider and balance different perspectives. Also, if citizens participate actively in the process of policy making and evaluation, consensus could be reached on developing a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Citizens engage in the process of policy making by directly participating in civic life and by discussing pressing issues with their neighbours

or with citizens who belong to civic forums in their communities, like parent-teacher associations, service organizations, neighbourhood associations or Iddir. Citizens also engage in policy making by taking part in various facets of the formal process of governance. For instance, citizens can attend public meetings and hearings sponsored by government agencies; they can meet with, or write to, public officials to express their concerns; they can join organizations such as trade groups etc.; and, of course, they should vote in elections. These forms of

Civic Participation

participation enable citizens to have a say on policy issues.

Associations and organizations help extensively in the participation of citizens in policy making. First of all, these groups organize the venue for airing views and important issues in the community. Also, they serve as a forum to analyze the problems of the community. Sometimes they are organized directly to influence public policy and to advise the government by identifying local issues and problems and raising awareness of the community. Finally, they can propose suitable solutions to a problem. These associations and organizations could be in the form of professional associations, non-governmental organizations (NGO), community clubs etc. All these have access to information about society's problems and the possible solutions.



In the same discussion groups study the contribution and success of associations and groups in your area to see what the advantages are of acting in groups rather than individually. There are model organizations which are acting in groups and are successful such as the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, EWLA.

The media are vital in democratic systems. The power of the media is widely recognized in the world today. It can be used to check the accountability of government officials and is also one of the major means used in shaping the perceptions and impressions of people. For instance, it is often observed that in times of conflict, media play a major role in either escalating or de-escalating the war.

In a democratic system, where public responsibility and public participation is high, media are expected to be instruments by which citizens make their participation active. In the

process of policy making, media can be used as a means of communication between the government and the people *i.e.*, media take messages from the government to the people and vice versa. Hence, citizens should be enabled to use the media freely.

By freedom of the press it does not mean that anybody can write what he/she pleases. Writings or speeches should be based on the truth and unbiased. Press freedom is a means of protecting values, such as individual rights and a viable representative government. It implies, on the other hand, substantial obligation to search for the truth, and to be fair and unbiased. However, the basic idea of this principle is that the press should be free to communicate to the people. Moreover, freedom of the press implies that the press should get access to government information in order to communicate its activities to the people.

The FDRE Constitution, Article 29: Right of Thought, Opinion and Expression

1. *Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference.*
2. *Everyone has the right to freedom of expression without any interference. This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice.*
3. *Freedom of the press and other mass media and freedom of artistic creativity is guaranteed. Freedom of the press shall specifically include the following elements: (a) Prohibition of any form of censorship. (b) Access to information of public interest.*
4. *In the interest of the free flow of information, ideas and opinions which are essential to the functioning of a democratic order, the press shall, as an institution, enjoy legal protection to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions.*

Civic Participation

5. *Any media financed by or under the control of the State shall be operated in a manner ensuring its capacity to entertain diversity in the expression of opinion.*
6. *These rights can be limited only through laws which are guided by the principle that freedom of expression and information cannot be limited on account of the content or effect of the point of view expressed. Legal limitations can be laid down in order to protect the well-being of the youth, and the honour and reputation of individuals. Any propaganda for war as well as the public expression of opinion intended to injure human dignity shall be prohibited by law.*
7. *Any citizen who violates any legal limitations on the exercise of these rights may be held liable under the law.*



Should the press have complete freedom to say or print whatever they want, or should this freedom be curtailed by laws e.g., a constitution? Debate this issue as a whole class.



Citizens have the right to receive information

REMEMBER

- ❑ Civic participation in policy making is very important.
- ❑ Groups are stronger than individuals when it comes to airing their concerns.
- ❑ Organizations and associations promote civic participation.
- ❑ Media are important tools to help forward the opinions of the public and serve as watchdogs on the activities of the government.

UNIT SUMMARY

Effective leadership is one of the decisive factors in attaining goals or objectives. The success of an organization depends on the leader's attributes, approaches and problem-solving techniques. There are three important features of leadership; influence or support, voluntary effort and goal achievement. A good leader creates vision and inspires others to achieve the goals through stretching their capabilities. A leader influences members of the community so that they perform together willingly for the achievement of their goal.

Associations and organizations help citizens to participate in policy making. First of all, they organize the venue for airing views and important issues in the community. Also, they serve as a forum for analyzing the problems of a community. In a democratic system, where public responsibility and public participation is high, media are instruments by which citizens make their participation active and strong.

GLOSSARY

Charismatic:	A quality to attract followers.
Press freedom:	The right to express oneself through speech and the written word.
Quality leadership:	The ability to take people towards the organisation's goals.
Versatile:	Having an all-round personality and being multifaceted.

UNIT REVIEW EXERCISES

Do these review exercises in your exercise book.

Part I – Multiple choice

- The success of an organization depends on the leader's:
 - attributes
 - approaches
 - problem-solving techniques
 - all of the above
- Among the personal qualities of leadership, giving somebody a reason or incentive to do something is being:
 - realistic
 - a motivator
 - engaging
 - a planner
- In a democracy effective leadership is very important to enhance:
 - good governance
 - transparency
 - openness
 - accountability
 - all of the above

Part II – True or false

- Leadership means the quality of a good leader.

2. A leader influences members of the community so that they perform together willingly for the achievement of their goal.
3. Threats and coercion are part of good leadership.
4. Media can be used to check the accountability of government officials.
5. Freedom of the press means that anybody can write what he/she pleases.

Part III – Short answers

1. List some of the personal qualities that are required from a leader to promote public participation.
2. What is required for an individual to actively participate in a cause?
3. What do you understand by effective media?

© MOE, FDR Ethiopia
Not to be republished