

2.1 ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION

2.1.1 ACCOUNTABILITY

PREVIEW

What is accountability?

No. People choose representatives based on the promises they make. They tell people what they will do if they are elected.

If the people choose their representatives, doesn't this give those representatives the right to do anything they want?

The candidate who offers the people what they want will win.

I understand, but how is that related to accountability?

Those representatives only get elected because they promise to do what the people want. Therefore, it is the people's decisions they are carrying out, not their own.

For this reason, representatives must be accountable for every promise they make.

Once a candidate is elected, how can we make sure that they respect the wishes of the people? What stops a candidate from just doing whatever he or she wants?

There are many ways that democracy stops this from happening.

Can you give me some examples?

In a democracy, the main responsibility of leaders and representatives is to serve the people. This means that they are given specific duties and commitments that they must keep. Accountability means that leaders and representatives are held responsible if they don't perform those tasks or keep those commitments.

Accountability requires punishments for failing to fulfil these responsibilities. These punishments might be legal (like going to prison), professional (like losing a job) or political (losing the support of the people).

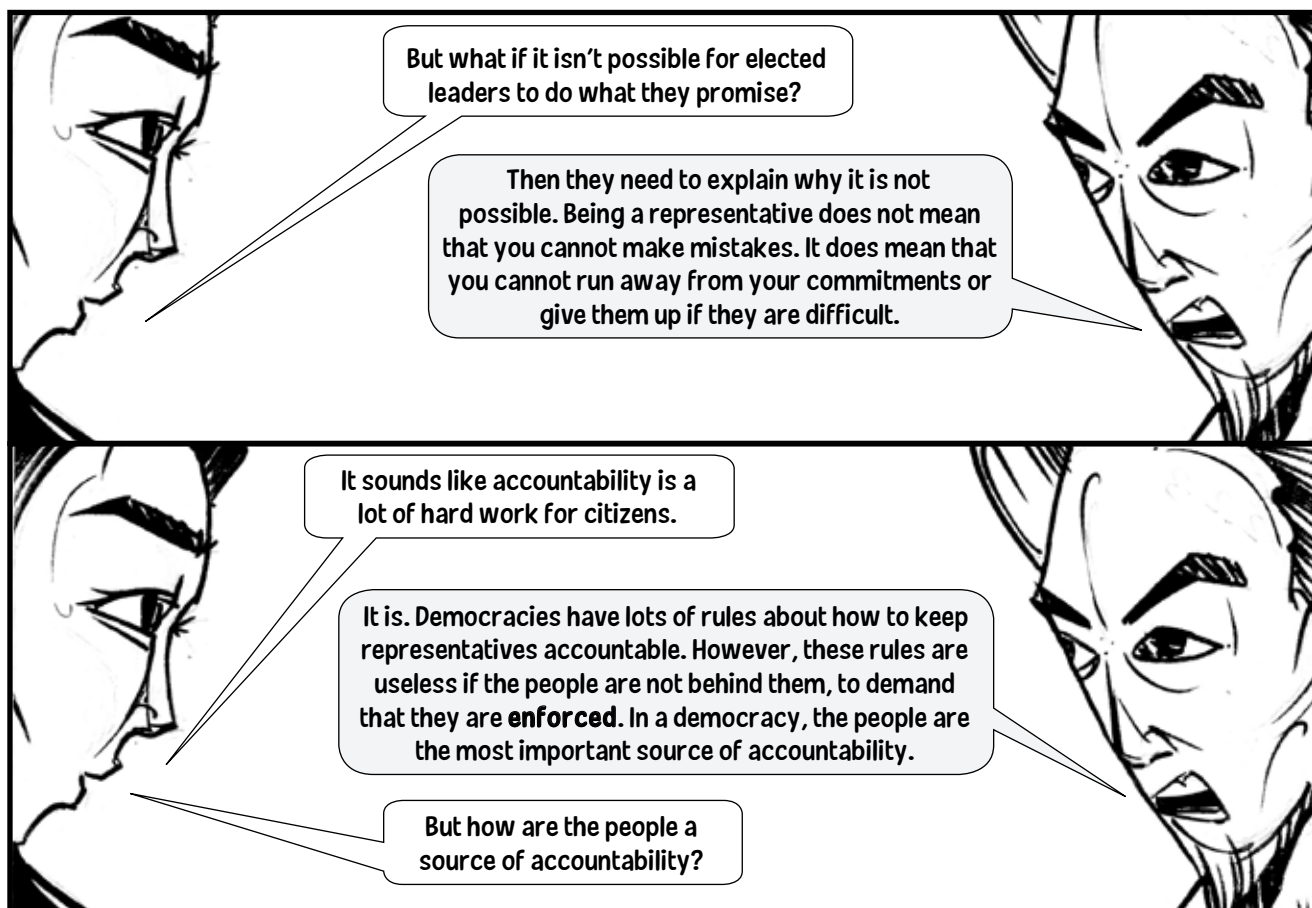
Democratic elections (where bad leaders can be replaced) are the most important way to make sure that leaders are accountable to the people. This is why people say that democracy is good at meeting the needs of the people. People will only vote for representatives who meet their needs. If a representative ignores the needs of the people, they won't stay in power.



Choose the best answer.

1. Which of the following is NOT an example of democratic accountability?
 - a. a representative being arrested for **corruption**
 - b. a representative losing an election
 - c. a representative being shot
2. Which of the following is NOT a reason why democracy is good at meeting the needs of the people?
 - a. There are regular, free and fair elections.
 - b. People choose representatives on the promises they make.
 - c. Representatives do not need to listen to the people.
3. Which of the following is NOT a responsibility of a representative in a democracy?
 - a. to be accountable for every promise they make
 - b. to explain themselves if they do not do what they promised
 - c. to never make any mistakes

Exercise



In a democracy, public officials have a responsibility to answer to the public for their actions and decisions. Accountability is a key requirement of democracy. As well as the government, businesses and citizens' groups must also be accountable to the public.

Different organisations and different parts of the government should be accountable to each other. For example, the police should obey the government, but government workers must be accountable to the police (e.g. if they commit a crime).

Accountability can be seen in the following ways:

1. Citizens remove unpopular leaders or governments from power (e.g. voting in free and fair elections).
2. Citizens make sure that representatives keep their promises (e.g. citizens are informed about actions and decisions of representatives, and complain if those actions do not match with the promises that they made).
3. Citizens make sure that representatives' decisions reflect citizens' own needs and concerns (e.g. citizens communicate with representatives to let them know their concerns).
4. Citizens challenge unpopular policies and **abuses of power** (e.g. citizen groups or the media put pressure on representatives to explain their actions or decisions).

- a. **A businessman** bribed a representative to make decisions that were good for his business. A local journalist wrote about this, The representative became so unpopular that she lost the next election.



- b. An organisation writes a newsletter called '**Election Promises**'. It gives information about promises that representatives made before the election and looks at whether they are keeping those promises.

Exercise

Match the situations with the types of accountability from the previous text. There can be more than one answer for each statement.

Example answer:

A – 1. remove unpopular leaders or governments from power; 4. make sure that representatives make decisions that reflect needs and concerns.

- c. A representative has ignored the problems of holes in the road for many years. During an election, his opponent promises to fix the roads. Lots of people support this idea so she wins the election.



- d. Citizens can call a telephone number to report government workers' bad behaviour. They do not give their name, so no-one knows who made the call.



- e. The local government creates a 'complaints office'. People can go there if they are not getting the goods or services that they were promised.



- f. Some citizens had concerns about the government. They talked to a community group about them. The group organised a meeting and the township representative explained the government's decisions to the people.

- g. Local government invites citizens to give their suggestions on how the government should spend MONEY.



- h. The government gives evaluation forms to citizens. The citizens can then let the government know what they are unhappy about.





Focus on Myanmar

Child Soldiers

In Myanmar, it is illegal for a person under the age of 18 to join the army. However, soldiers often trick or force young boys to join the army because they get extra money for recruiting new soldiers.

In June 2012, the government of Myanmar developed an action plan to stop children from joining the national army. This included punishments for soldiers who recruited children into the army. From 2007 to 2014, 312 soldiers were punished, including 48 officers. Punishments included warnings, reduced salary, and imprisonment of up to three months.

In one case, a soldier came to a woman's house. He said that her 15 year old son had run away from the army. He wanted to find her son so he could take him back.

A few days before, a general from the army made a speech. He said that the national army does not take child soldiers. In the speech, the general said that any soldiers who bring children in to the army will be punished. This was on the front page of the *New Light of Myanmar* newspaper.

The child's mother had the newspaper in her house when the soldier came. She showed the newspaper to the soldier. When he read the front page, he left her house and did not look for her son any more.

Between 2012 to 2014, a total of 364 children and young people were released from the army.



Exercise

1. Why did some soldiers try to get boys to join the army?
2. Why did the soldier stop looking for the woman's son?
3. How did the government's action plan improve accountability?

The Phone Tower

Read the text then follow the instructions.

Activity

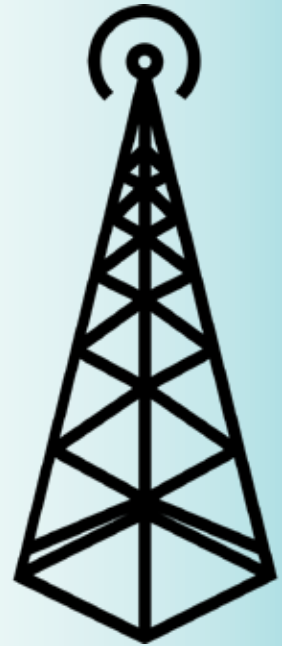
A township has elected a Township Representative Council (TRC). One important issue is that a lot of children live a long way from the school. These children have to travel for hours every day, or not go to school.

The TRC agreed to build dormitories for these students in the empty space next to the school.

However, after this decision was made, representatives from a telecommunications company met with the TRC about building a telephone tower in the township. They claim that this will allow everyone in the township to have access to the phone network and the internet. The only place available for this tower is the same land that was planned for the dormitories.

The TRC agreed to build the phone tower. They spent all of their budget paying for the construction of the phone tower.

You are at a community meeting about this situation.



1. In groups, discuss the questions.
 - a. Did the TRC have the right to make this decision?
 - b. If you were an TRC member how would you have handled the matter?
 - c. What can the people do If they are unhappy with the TRC's actions?
2. Make a presentation to the class explaining your answers.

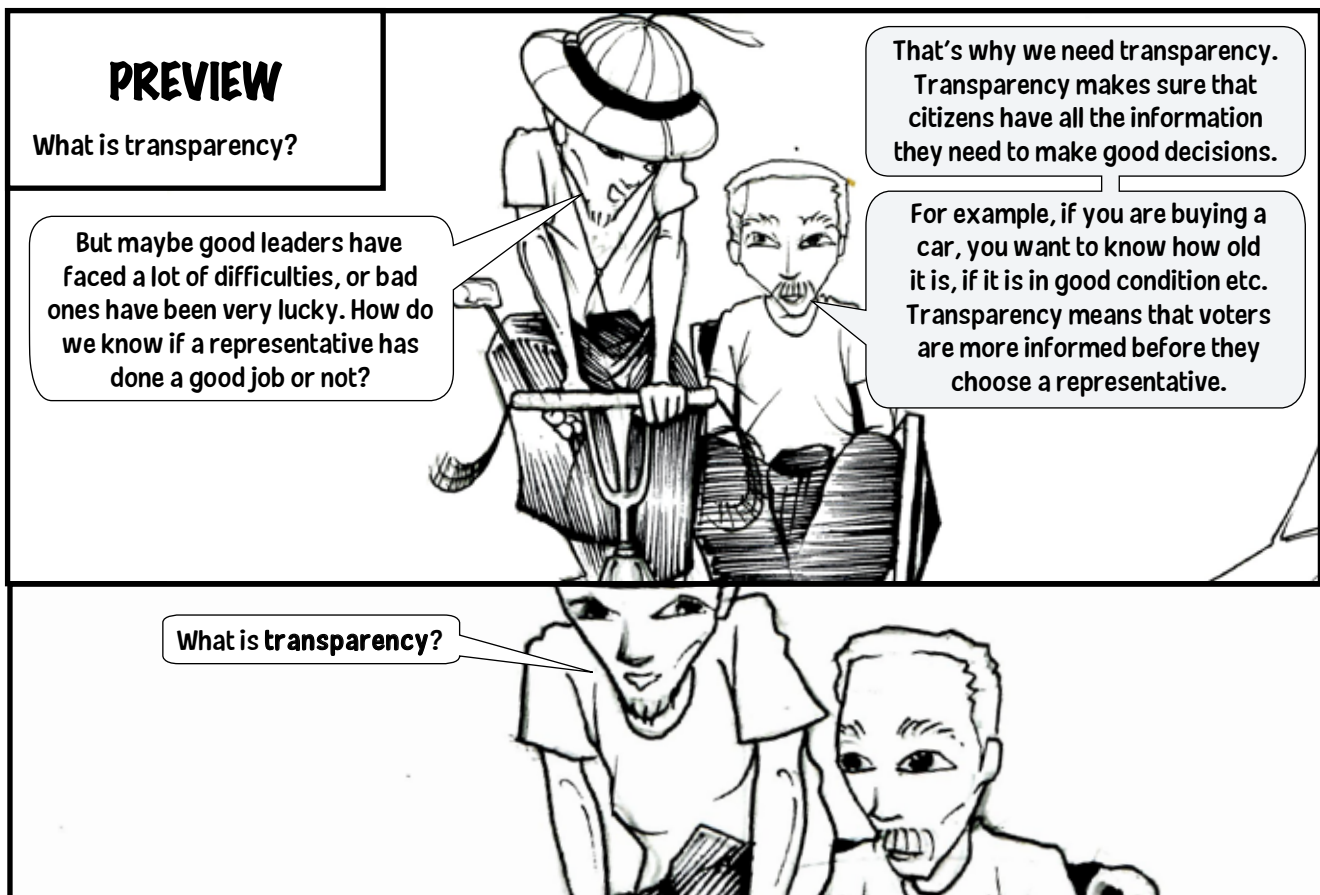
1. Why is accountability important in a democracy?
2. Who is accountable to whom in your community?
3. In what ways are leaders accountable to the people?
4. What can individual citizens do to make sure that government is accountable?

Discussion

1. In which ways are you accountable in your family, school or community?
2. What are you accountable for (what are your responsibilities?)
3. Who are you accountable to?
4. What do you do to make sure that leaders in your community are accountable for their actions?

Reflection

2.1.2 TRANSPARENCY



Before citizens make decisions, it is important that they know the facts about their leaders and the decisions they make.

Transparency means that the government has a responsibility to share information with the people. Citizens must be able to access information about decision-making. They need to know who is making decisions, how, and why.

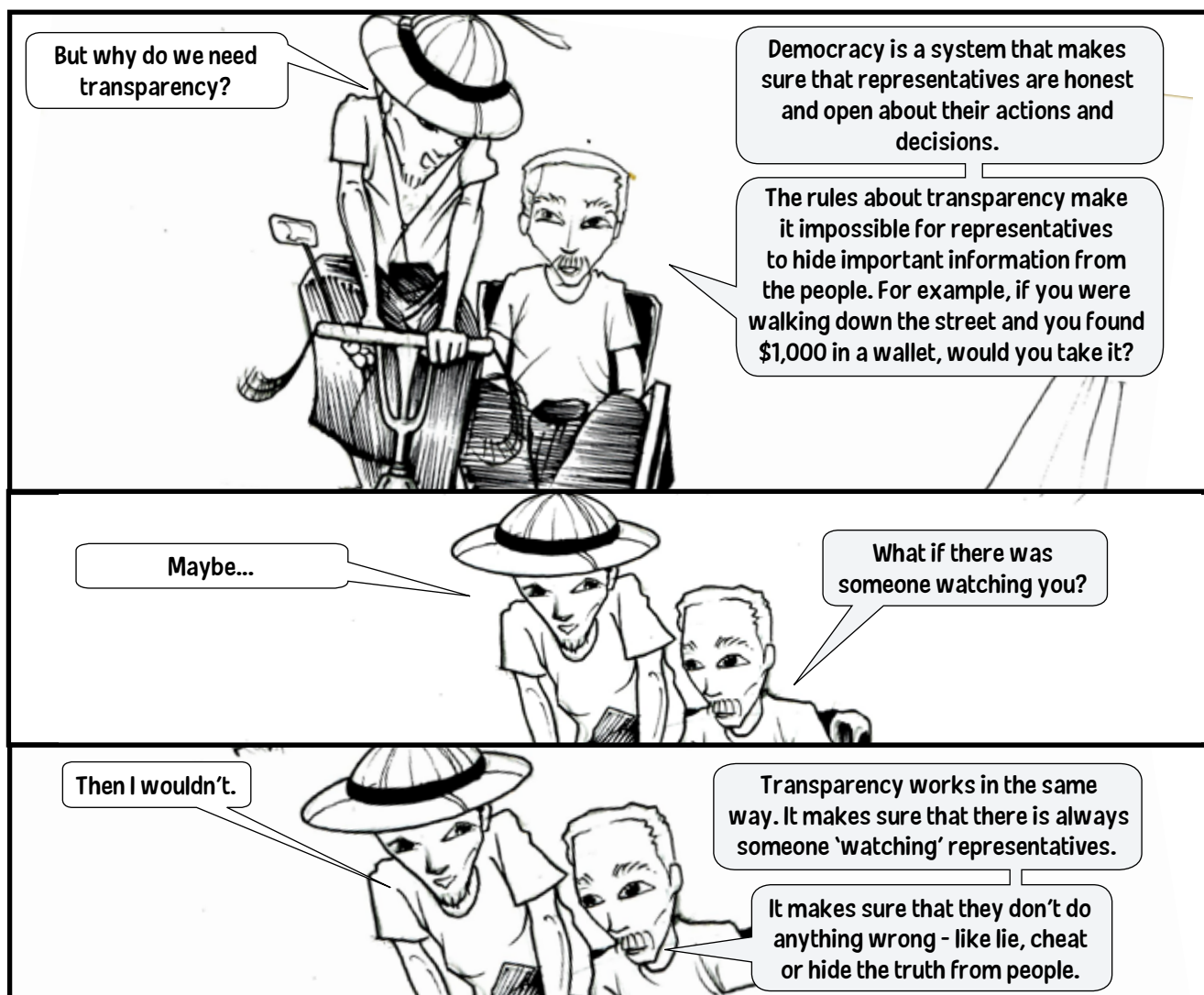
This information needs to be freely available to people affected by these decisions. It should be easy to access and understand.

The responsibility to provide this information (and the laws related to it) is often called *freedom of information*.

Exercise

Are the statements true or false? If false, explain why.

- Transparency means that citizens have access to information about the government's decisions.
- It is the responsibility of citizens to provide any information that the government asks for.
- 'Freedom of information' refers to the government's responsibility to make information available to the people.



Transparency makes sure that:

1. authorities cannot secretly abuse some citizens' rights without the people knowing. Transparency means that abuses can not be hidden, because the people have access to information about them;
2. the government must follow its own rules and **regulations**. It is harder for government workers to break the rules if everyone knows about them;
3. the government needs to work hard because information about the quality of their work is freely available. Transparency means that information about budgets, spending and achievements of the government is freely available. Any mistakes, waste or laziness will be visible to everyone. This can encourage the government to work harder so they are not embarrassed;
4. officials have to release information. This makes it harder for governments to lie to the people or hide the truth.

Exercise

Benefits of Transparency

1. Authorities cannot secretly abuse some citizens' rights without the people knowing.
2. The government must follow its own rules and regulations.
3. The government needs to work hard because information about the quality of their work is freely available.
4. Officials have to release information.

Match the situations below with the four benefits of transparency from the previous text (1 – 4). There can be more than one answer for each statement.

- a. There is public education available on the roles and responsibilities of government officials.
Example answer: 2. *The government must follow its own rules and regulations.*
- b. The government's rules and procedures are available to the public.
- c. There are strong laws about freedom of information and media freedom.
- d. There are laws to protect citizens who report the bad or illegal behaviour of government workers.
- e. Representatives and political parties must release information about all the donations they receive, to show that they are not taking bribes.
- f. The work of government is regularly reviewed by independent experts.
- g. The government publishes its goals, budgets, and reports on how well it is achieving its goals.



Focus on Myanmar

Karen Community Leaders Call for Transparency

In May 2013, more than 150 citizens from 40 Karen community organizations took part in a five-day meeting. They called for transparency and accountability in economic and development projects.

Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe, a spokesperson for the Karen National Unity Seminar (KNUS) Organizing Committee, said: "We asked the Karen National Union (KNU) to publicly explain their ideas to Karen civilians before making a final decision."

She said some business projects, such as power plants and **dams**, can be damaging to local communities.

"We only find out about the projects after they're already having a negative impact on civilians. We don't want such incidents to happen in the future," she added.

After the meeting, she said: "The KNU told us about their business **policy**. It is quite positive. It included businesses that don't harm local communities, but benefit the communities".

The KNUS said they planned to "widely distribute [information] and educate the people about the economic policies of KNU".

Adapted from: <http://www.irrawaddy.org/refugees/karen-community-leaders-call-for-transparency-on-business-deals-amid-peace-talks.html>

Exercise

1. What was the aim of the meeting?
2. Why does Naw Susanna Hla Hla Soe want there to be more transparency?
3. What actions will the KNUS take as a result of the meeting?
4. How did the meeting improve transparency?

Citizens are responsible for making sure that the government is open about its decisions and putting pressure on the government if it does not.

However, there are some situations where the government does need to limit transparency. For example, in the interests of national security, or if peoples' lives or human rights are at risk. However, it is very important that the government does not **abuse** this.

Limiting Transparency

a. The government is having peace talks with one of the country's ethnic armed groups. The people who live in the conflict area are worried that the government and the ethnic leaders are making deals that they will not agree with. However, both the government and the ethnic armed group says that the issues they are discussing are so sensitive that they cannot release any information about it.



b. There is **communal violence** in one part of the country. The government is worried that if reports about this violence are made public, members of these two groups in other parts of the country would start fighting too. Therefore the government is not allowing journalists to travel to the region.

c. A private company is building several factories in a part of the country that has very high levels of unemployment. This is creating many jobs. However, this company has been accused of violating workers' rights. A citizens' organisation wants to publish a report on these violations. The government has said it is not allowed to publish this report.

d. The government is carrying out a mission to find and arrest a group of human traffickers. They are not releasing any information about this because they don't want the traffickers to leave the country before they can arrest them.

e. A few weeks before an election, the government discovers that one member of the ruling party has been taking bribes. Because they do not want this information to affect the election, they tell the police not to act until after all the votes have been counted.



Activity

1. Read these situations. Do you think the government should limit transparency?
2. Form five groups. Each group chooses one of these situations. Within your group, divide into:
 - a 'for limiting transparency' group;
 - an 'against limiting transparency' group.
3. Prepare a list of reasons about why you either support or oppose limiting transparency. Use these questions as guidelines for your presentation:
 - Should the government release information? Why or why not?
 - Is the government acting in a transparent way? Why or why not?
 - Is the government acting in an accountable way? Why or why not?
4. In your groups, have a short debate.
5. Present your debate to the class.

Discussion

1. Why is transparency important in a democracy?
2. Are there any situations when transparency should be limited? What are they?
3. Can you think of any examples of these situations from your country/community?
4. Why is freedom of information important for transparency?
5. What can citizens do to make sure that government is transparent?



Reflection

1. Are you always transparent about your actions and decisions? Why or why not?
2. Think of a time when someone was not transparent with you about a decision that affected you.
 - How did that make you feel?
 - What did you do in that situation?
 - If you were in the same situation again, what would you do differently? How?

2.1.3 PARTICIPATION



PARTICIPATION: BEING INFORMED.



Participation is the most important role of citizens in a democracy. It is both a right and a responsibility.

Citizen participation takes many forms, including voting in elections, becoming informed, debating issues, volunteering, paying taxes and protesting.

Civic participation is important for several reasons:

1. Participation means that citizens take an active role in politics. This includes the participation of men and women, old and young, minorities and poor people. It gives all citizens the same chance to make their voices heard. This helps to prevent minorities and disadvantaged group from being marginalised.
2. Participation can help citizens to know what the government is doing. Citizens become more informed by reading newspapers, attending meetings or actively seeking information from the government. Participation helps citizens to understand the issues that are facing their community and make decisions based on accurate information.
3. If citizens do not express their needs and concerns, the government will not be able to make decisions that match the needs of the people. This is why citizens should vote. Voting is one of the most important ways that citizens can take part in decision-making.
4. Participation includes making sure that representatives work hard, and keep their promises between elections. If they don't, citizens have a responsibility to demand an explanation. This makes sure democracy works all the time, not just when an election is happening.

Exercise

Match these four reasons with the four elements of democracy discussed so far:

a. equality

Answer: 1. participation of men and women, old and young, minorities and poor people.

b. elections

c. accountability

d. transparency

Democratic government cannot work without the participation of its citizens. Democracy is a partnership between a government and its citizens. Both must be active to keep a democracy healthy. A strong democracy requires its citizens to take part in decision-making. To do this, citizens must be informed, active and responsible.



Participation can mean that:

- citizens support and work together with the government;
- citizens point out the government's mistakes, and suggest ideas for change.

Both are important forms of civic participation. Participation happens when a high number of citizens:

- vote in elections;
- are aware of, and interested in, issues affecting their community;
- understand how the government works and pay attention to the actions of the government;
- volunteer with community based organisations (including NGOs and religious groups).

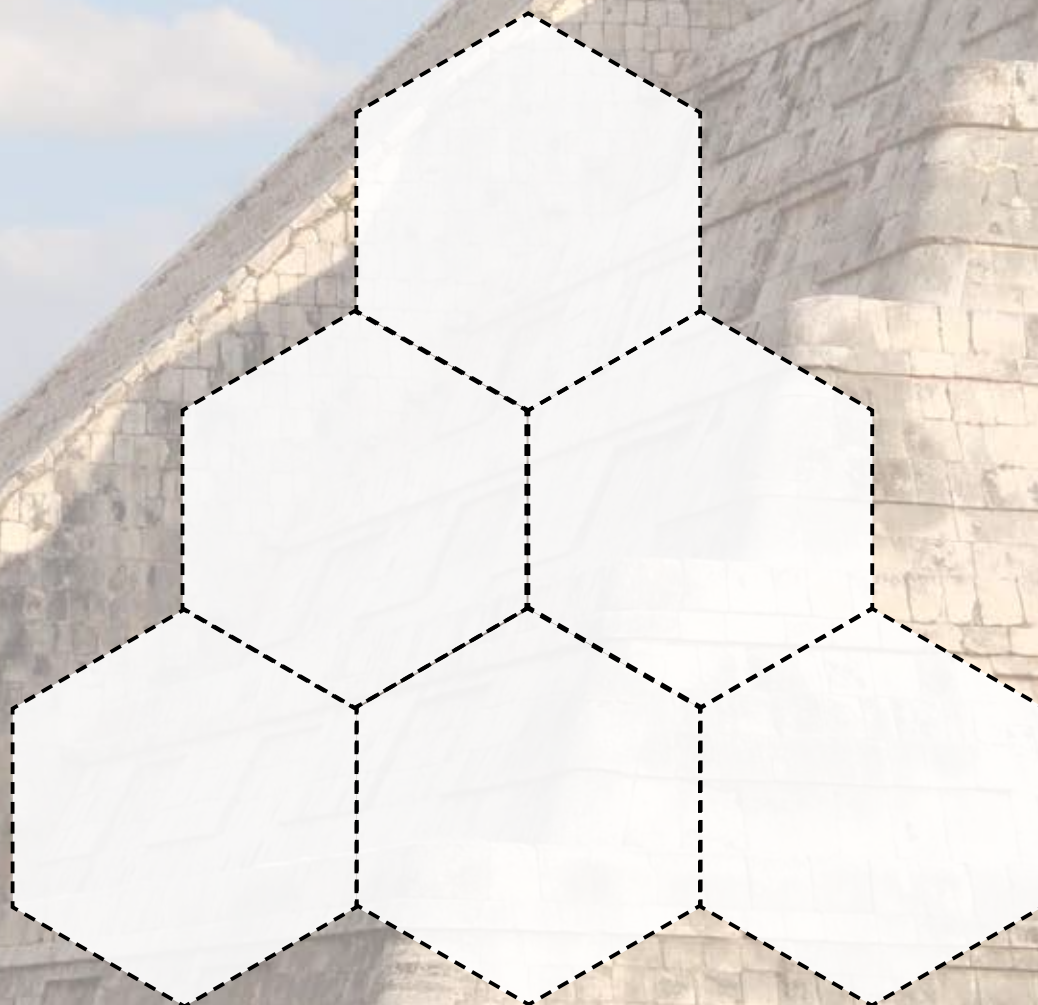


Activity

1. Rank these ways that citizens can participate in a democracy, in order of importance. Choose the six most important ways of participating, and put them in a pyramid. The most important should go at the top.
2. In pairs, decide on a ranked list.
3. Join with another pair, and decide on a group list.
4. Join with another group, and agree on a list.
5. Make a class list.

Participation Pyramid

becoming informed by learning about issues and leaders
 educating other people about issues and leaders
 debating issues
 working in the community to support a cause
 forming or joining political parties or community organisations
 attending political or community meetings
 becoming a leader of a community organisation
 voting in elections
 running for office
 paying taxes
 serving in the military
 protesting against government action





Focus on Myanmar

The Women's Party (Mon)

A group of politically active women in Mon State recently formed a party to take part in the general elections in 2015. Their goal is to win more seats for women in Myanmar's Parliament.

Party chairperson Layaung Mon talked to The Irrawaddy about Myanmar's first ever Women's Party.



Q: Why was the Women's Party (Mon) started?

A: Some Mon women were interested in politics and wanted to start a political party. We think that the role of women in Myanmar's parliament is very limited.

Q: What is the main objective of the party?

A: We aim to participate in the general election in 2015, for the advancement of women. In some areas, women do better than men – in education for example. However, women do not often have the chance to take part in national decision-making. Women will be able to prove their importance if they enter politics. We will work to promote gender equality.

Q: Was it difficult to start a party for only women?

A: There were many difficulties. We received no assistance from any organisation. There is no financial support for us. We run the party with the money from our businesses. Only a few [people] have helped us with forming the party. Perhaps they think women can't do it. But we will show how much women are capable of through this party.

Adapted from: <http://www.irrawaddy.org/interview/will-show-much-women-capable-party.html>

1. What are the goals of the Women's Party?
2. What challenges does the Women's Party face?
3. Where does the Women's Party get its finances from?
4. How does the Women's Party promote participation?

Exercise

1. Why is participation important in a democracy?
2. In what ways do citizens participate in your community?
3. What are the challenges to civic participation in your community?
4. What would happen if citizens didn't participate in a democracy?
5. How can participation be encouraged in your community?

Discussion

1. In what ways do you participate in your community?
2. Why do you participate?
3. What challenges stop you from participating? How could you overcome those challenges?

Reflection

2.2 TOLERANCE, COMPROMISE AND THE RULE OF LAW

2.2.1 TOLERANCE AND COMPROMISE



Democracy requires the different groups in society agree to work together. Different groups must reach agreement about what is best for the whole community, not just for their own group. This is sometimes called the *common good*.

This means that groups (and the government) need to think about the future. For example, cutting down forests might have short-term economic advantages. But in the long term, it could cause many environmental problems. It also means thinking about the needs and interests of other citizens.

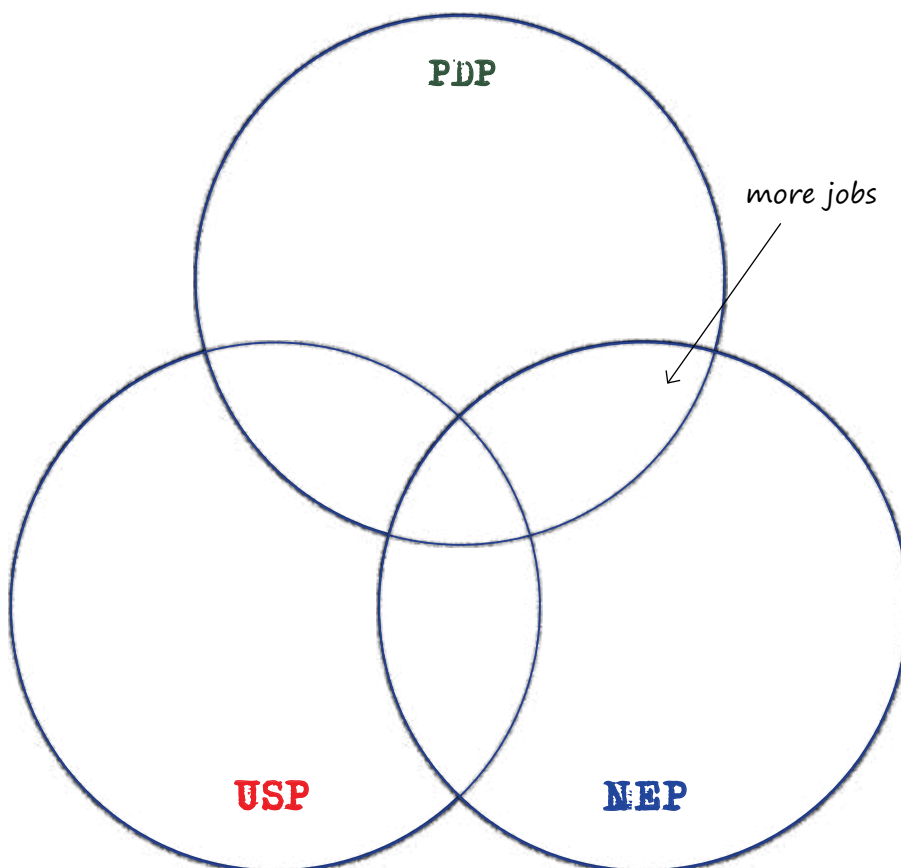
Tolerance is accepting feelings, habits, or beliefs that are different from your own. Examples of tolerance are when people from different political parties, religions or ethnic groups work together.

Compromise is a way to reach agreement where each person or group gives up something they want. They do this to end an argument or find a solution. When representatives agree on the solution that is best for the whole country (even if it is not the best for their specific community), this is an example of compromise.

Democracy requires different groups to agree on the most important shared goals and values. This builds a foundation for cooperation about smaller, more practical issues.

Tolerance and compromise can be seen in the following ways:

1. People find ways to manage their different interests and ideas, and can live together peacefully.
2. People understand that no single group can/should get everything they want.
3. Minorities respect the decisions of the majority, and the majority respects the rights and interests of minorities.



Exercise

There are three political parties in the parliament. They all have policies about what the government should do.

People's Development Party (PDP):

- **more jobs**
- **more schools in rural areas**
- **lower taxes**
- **more police**

The Unity and Security Party (USP):

- **more police**
- **larger army**
- **improve the education system**
- **higher taxes**

The National Equality Party (NEP):

- **free healthcare**
- **free education**
- **higher taxes**
- **more jobs**

1. Put the policies in the Venn diagram.
2. Which of the following policies would be the best compromise for the three parties?
 - a. Reduce taxes to create more jobs in rural areas.
 - b. Raise taxes to pay for a stronger army and police.
 - c. Have cheaper, better education in areas that need it most.

Democratic citizens manage their needs and opinions through tolerance. Tolerance means respecting other people's ideas and beliefs, even if you disagree with them.

Democracy is based on the free exchange of ideas. In a democracy, citizens have the right to express their ideas freely. However, citizens must also allow other people to do the same. People who have unpopular views – or views that go against those of the government – must be allowed to organise, participate and express their ideas and opinions.

When citizens practice tolerance, different ideas and opinions can be peacefully shared in public debates. Public debates give citizens a chance to hear and understand the views of others. Citizens often oppose an idea without really understanding it. Listening and asking questions can help citizens to understand the needs and concerns of other groups. This helps democratic citizens to manage conflicts better, and to find solutions to common problems.

If there is tolerance and compromise, decisions are more likely to be accepted, even by those who oppose them. This is because citizens have a better understanding of the reasons for those decisions.



Exercise

Choose the best answer (or answers).

1. Which of the following is NOT a requirement of tolerance?
 - a. respecting opinions that you disagree with
 - b. allowing people who you disagree with to express their views
 - c. making sure that no-one criticises the government
2. Which of the following are benefits of tolerance?
 - a. Listening to everyone's ideas often leads to the best solution.
 - b. Opponents are more likely to accept different ideas if they listen to the reasons for them.
 - c. It leads to quicker decisions .

Fishing for Compromise

Read the text then follow the instructions.

Activity

Laketown is famous for two things: its beautiful water forests, and its even more beautiful rainbow fish.

80% of the people of Laketown are poor fishermen. They fish with nets around the edges of the lake. Every winter, they go hungry, but this winter is even worse. They do not have enough food for the cold months and are very worried about starving.

The other 20% of the people own hotels and restaurants by the lake. They make their money from tourists who came to see the water forests and the rainbow fish. Business is good. They have enough money to send their children to good schools, they have nice houses and new cars and they always have enough food.

Now some of the fishermen are proposing a solution to the town council. They want to cut down the water forest to build boats. These boats will help them catch more fish. They will have enough food and sell some fish at the market. This will make sure they never go hungry again.

The hotel and restaurant owners are very against this idea. They say that cutting down the water forests will stop the tourists coming. They also say that more rainbow fish will get caught in the fishermen's nets if they fish from boats.

Now the town council needs to decide what to do...



1. Put the possible outcomes of the scenario in the table. The first one is done for you.
 - a. The fishermen cut down all the trees and catch lots of fish, but the hotel people all go poor because there are hardly any tourists.
 - b. The fishermen are prevented from cutting trees and building boats so many of them starve during the cold months.
 - c. The fishermen burn down the hotels then get sent to jail.

	Fishermen lose	Fishermen win
Hotels lose	<i>c – The fishermen burn down the hotels then get sent to jail.</i>	
Hotels win		

2. Your group is sent to Laketown to help. You must try and find a win-win solution to the problem. In your group, develop a solution and present it to the class.



Focus on Myanmar

The Panglong Agreement

From February 7 – 12, 1947, leaders from many of Myanmar's ethnic groups gathered at Panglong to discuss the idea of joining together in a **union**. **Interim** Burmese government representatives and Shan, Kachin, and Chin leaders participated in the conference, and Karen leaders attended as observers.

At this conference, Bogyoke Aung San told the ethnic representatives that joining the union would be good for their people. He made two statements that became famous: "If Burma receives one kyat, you will also get one kyat," and that Burma without the Frontier Areas was "like curry without salt."



Some ethnic leaders were concerned about agreeing to something that would go against their interests. They were afraid that joining a union would mean that they would lose their independence and culture. Some government representatives were concerned that too much separation would make the country unstable.

The leaders discussed these issues until they reached a compromise. This compromise included:

- ethnic minority states would have control over their own administration;
- ethnic minority citizens would enjoy basic democratic rights;
- the rights, traditions, and religions of ethnic citizens would be protected.

On February 12, which is now celebrated as Union Day, the leaders signed the Panglong Agreement.

Exercise

1. What were the concerns of the ethnic leaders at the conference?
2. What were the concerns of some of the **interim government** leaders at the conference?
3. What was the compromise that they agreed to?
4. In which ways was tolerance and compromise important in the Panglong Agreement?

Discussion

1. When might citizens have to put the common good above their individual interests?
2. What are the most important goals and values that people share in your community?
3. What stops people from compromising in your community?
4. What happens if people cannot reach a compromise in your community?
5. How does intolerance negatively affect democracy?

1. Think of a time when you could not reach a compromise with someone. What stopped you from compromising? What could you have done differently?
2. Are there some things that you would not be willing to compromise on? Why?
3. Are there some views and ideas that should not be tolerated? Which ones?

Reflection

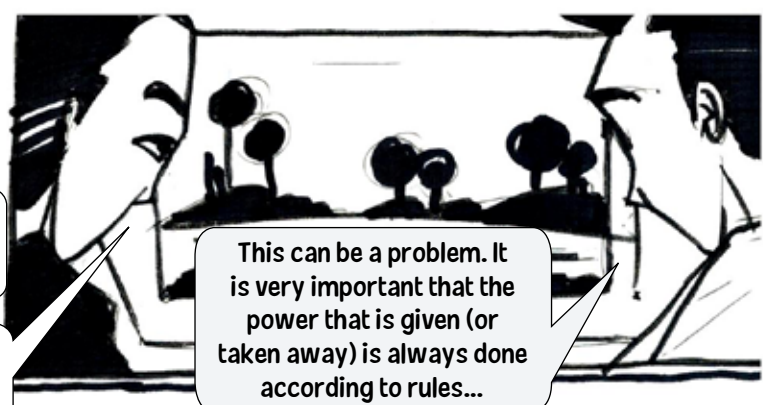
2.2.2 THE RULE OF LAW

PREVIEW

What is the rule of law?


If there are winners and losers after a conflict, then the losers have nothing to lose and the winners have all the power...

What stops the winners from doing whatever they want and the losers from not accepting the decisions of the winners?

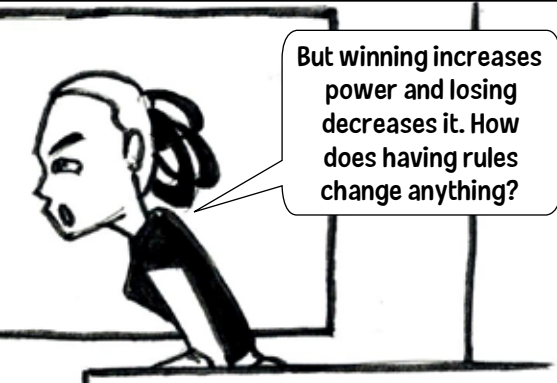


This can be a problem. It is very important that the power that is given (or taken away) is always done according to rules...

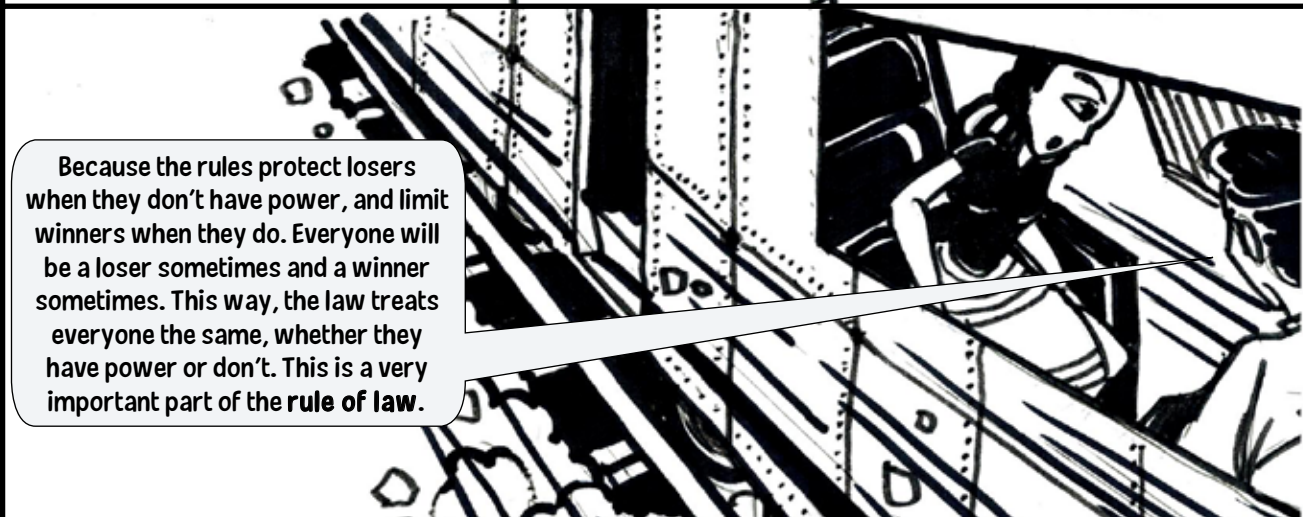
...and these rules must apply to everyone.



But winning increases power and losing decreases it. How does having rules change anything?



Because the rules protect losers when they don't have power, and limit winners when they do. Everyone will be a loser sometimes and a winner sometimes. This way, the law treats everyone the same, whether they have power or don't. This is a very important part of the rule of law.



In an effective democracy, government and citizens must respect the rule of law.

This means the law is enforced equally, fairly and consistently. There are three important aspects of the rule of law in a democracy:

- No-one is above the law.
- Everyone must obey the law.
- Everyone is equal before the law.

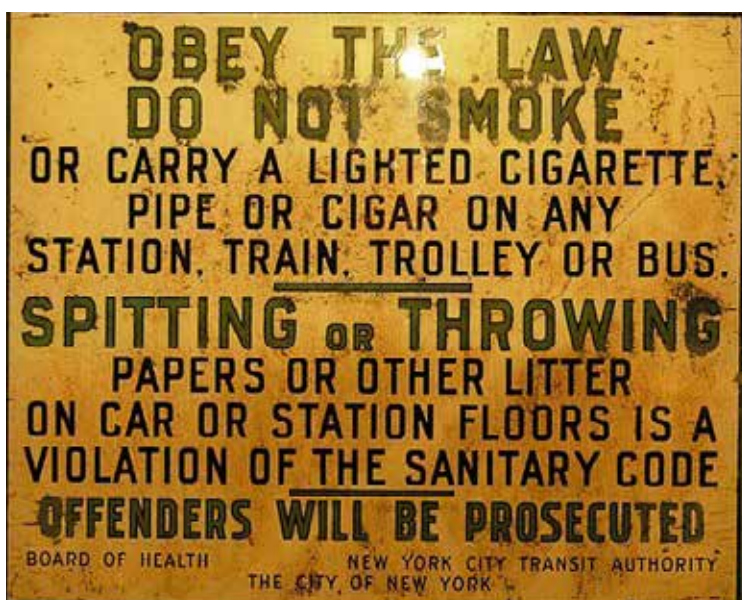
A. NO-ONE IS ABOVE THE LAW

The rule of law means that no-one is above the law. This includes the president, ministers and all other government workers.

In a democracy, the people agree to give the government power and the government rules on their behalf. However, the government cannot do whatever it wants. Part of the agreement between the government and the citizens is that the government must to use its power within the limits set by the law.

When power is used for personal gain or in illegal ways, it is called an abuse of power. Abuse of power is when government officials use more power than the law gives them. For example, if a representative used their position to protect one of his relatives from being arrested. Preventing abuses of power is one of the most important principles of the rule of law.

B. EVERYONE MUST OBEY THE LAW



The law applies to everyone. This includes the government, military, police officers and judges as well as ordinary members of society. It does not matter if the person is very powerful or wealthy; they must obey the law.

One of the biggest challenges to this is corruption. Corruption is when an official uses their power for personal gain. For example, a government official's job is to issue licenses to citizens, but she requires that citizens pay extra money (a bribe) to her before she gives the license.

Corruption is very dangerous in a democracy because it reduces people's trust in government officials. Working for the government means that you have a responsibility to serve the people. If people think government workers are not serving them (but only serving themselves) then they will not obey the laws themselves. This can weaken the rule of law and have a negative effect on democracy.

Read the following situations. Decide if each is an abuse of power or correct use of power. Give reasons for your answer.

Exercise

- a. A government worker, responsible for medicine deliveries to local clinics, is selling some of the supplies.

Example answer: *Abuse of power, because she is taking money for medicines that should be given to clinics.*

- b. After a long **drought**, the government limits the use of water to four hours a day.
- c. The local government closes a vocational training centre because they think that the facilities are too unsafe.
- d. A government worker asks people to pay him extra money to do administrative tasks more quickly.
- e. A local leader gives a contract for a big development project to one of his friends.

C. EVERYONE IS EQUAL BEFORE THE LAW

The principle of rule of law also means that everyone is equal before the law. Equality before the law works in two ways.

First, everyone must obey the same rules and regulations, and everyone gets the same punishment if they break the law. It does not matter if it is a poor or wealthy person who breaks the law – everyone must be treated the same. For example, if the punishment for stealing is up to five years in prison, that punishment should apply to everyone.

Secondly, all rules and regulations must be followed in every case. No steps or processes can be skipped or ignored. This often means that processes are longer and more complicated. However, it reduces the chance that citizens will be ignored, treated wrongly, or abused. This is often called **due process**.

The rule of law works in the following ways:

1. The actions of leaders and government workers are limited by the law.
2. All citizens are protected from crime, abuse and violence.
3. All citizens have exactly the same rights and **privileges** as all other citizens.
4. All citizens are treated equally by the law, including the rich and powerful.
5. All citizens who break the law are treated according to the same rules and regulations.



Exercise

Benefits of the Rule of Law

1. Actions of government workers limited by law.
2. All citizens protected from crime, abuse, violence.
3. All citizens have same rights and privileges.
4. All citizens treated equally by the law.
5. All citizens who break laws treated according to same rules and regulations.

Match the violations with the five benefits of the rule of law (1 – 5) in 2.2.2.

- a. After injuring a child in a car crash, a wealthy businessman pays a judge and gets less punishment.
Example answer: 4. All citizens treated equally by the law.
- b. Local authorities use violence to move homeless people when they find them sleeping on the street.
- c. It is much easier for government workers to get a passport than other citizens.
- d. A prisoner is held without trial for two months, even though the law says he should be tried no within 24 hours of his arrest.
- e. A leader builds a house on land that does not belong to her.

Activity

Rule of Law Role Play

Read the text then follow the instructions.



A poor community has a problem with drug abuse. Many young men are addicted to drugs. They sometimes steal to pay for their addiction.

The community planned a big festival that many important people were going to attend. The mayor ordered the chief of police to deal with the drug problem. The mayor said that he was told to deal with the drug and crime problem before the festival or he would lose his job.

The police arrested 20 young men who had a record of drug use and crime. Some of the men were released because their families paid money to the police. However, one of the young men had a heart disease. He died while he was in the prison. After this, the chief of police was accused of this young man's death.

1. In groups, role-play the trial. Each group should have these characters:
 - lawyers for the chief of police, to give arguments for why he is not guilty;
 - lawyers against the chief of police, to give arguments for why he is guilty;
 - judges to listen to the arguments and give their judgment.
2. First the lawyers argue the case. The judges listen, then decide whether the police chief is guilty or not guilty.
3. Judges present their opinions to the rest of the class.
4. As a class, decide what you think should happen to the chief of police.



Focus on Myanmar

Paralegals

Poor people in Myanmar face many challenges with the legal system. They often have little knowledge about laws or the legal system. Most cannot afford to pay for legal advice or lawyers to represent them.

The rule of law says that every person accused of a crime has the right to be represented by a trained lawyer. However, this is impossible if people cannot afford to pay.



To address this issue, the Myanmar Legal Aid Network is establishing centres for legal aid around Myanmar. One of these legal aid centres is the Yangon Justice Centre. The Yangon Justice centre trains community-based 'paralegals' who can give legal advice and educate citizens about the law. Paralegals are people who are trained to give legal assistance, even though they are not lawyers. The activities of paralegals include:

- education to increase public awareness of the law;
- advising people on the legal process, and their options if they are accused of a crime;
- helping people to communicate with the authorities;
- resolving conflicts;
- advocacy;
- doing research on legal issues.

1. What are some of the challenges faced by poor people in the legal system?
2. What is a paralegal?
3. What do paralegals do?
4. How does the Yangon Justice Centre improve the rule of law?

Exercise

1. Why is the rule of law important in a democracy?
2. What are the challenges of making people follow the rule of law?
3. How strong is the rule of law in your community?
4. What could be done to improve the rule of law in your community?

Discussion

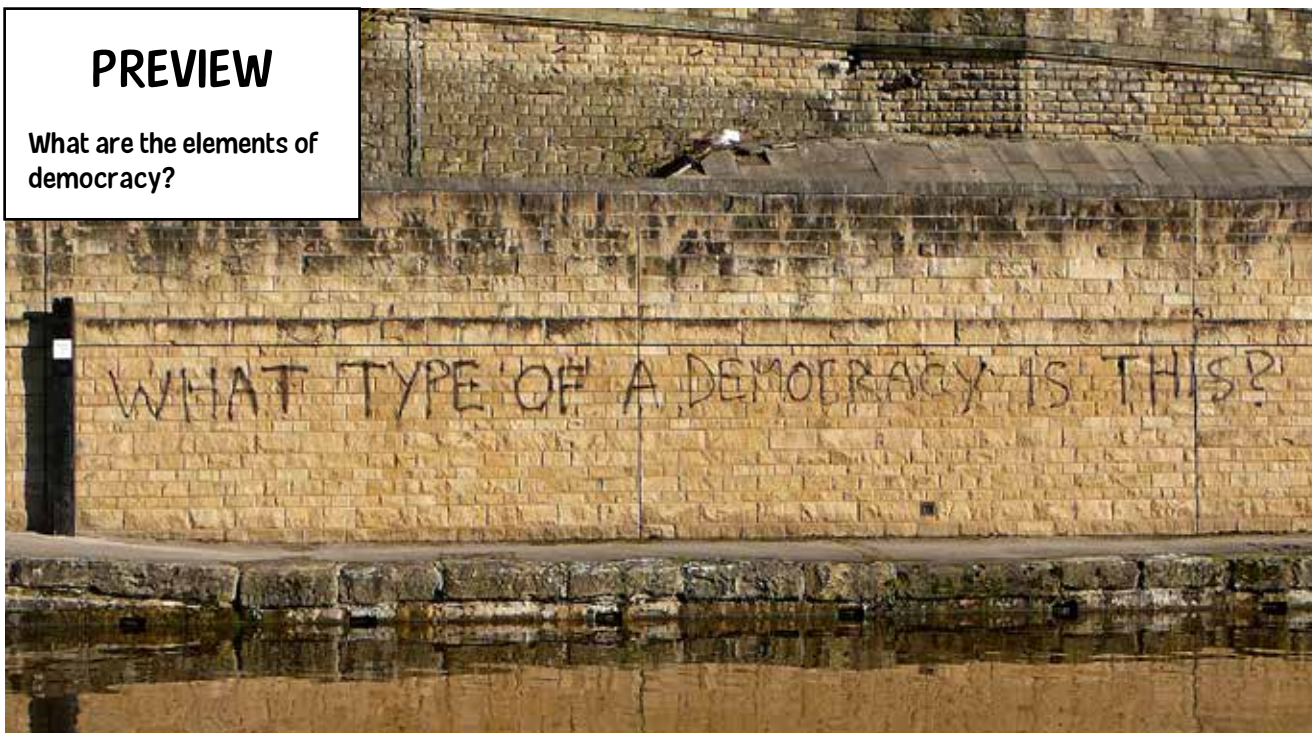
1. Do you always obey the law?
2. What are some reasons why you do or do not obey the law?
3. Have you ever been a victim of a violation of the rule of law? How did this make you feel?

Reflection

2.2.3 DEMOCRACY: ELEMENTS IN ACTION

PREVIEW

What are the elements of democracy?



A simple definition of democracy is *rule of the people*. In a representative democracy, the people choose the rulers (representatives) in elections.

However, representative democracy only works if the following seven elements of democracy are in place:

1. **EQUALITY:** Democracy only works if all people have the same rights to vote and to run for office.
2. **FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS:** Representatives must have the consent of the people to make decisions on their behalf. Free and fair elections make sure that there is a system for citizens to choose or remove representatives.
3. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** If governments lose the consent of their people, they can be removed in an election. Democracy makes sure that they are accountable to the people through regular elections.
4. **TRANSPARENCY:** The people must be aware of what is happening in the country. To make good decisions, citizens must understand the actions and decisions of the government. The media and the people must be able to get information about what decisions are being made, by whom and why.
5. **PARTICIPATION:** All citizens have a right and responsibility to take part in democracy. This includes voting, expressing their opinions, debating issues and attending meetings. Citizen participation helps to keep government accountable.

6. **TOLERANCE AND COMPROMISE:** Democracy manages **diversity** by working together to find solutions that all citizens can agree with. Being tolerant of ideas or beliefs that you disagree with is a very important part of democracy.
7. **THE RULE OF LAW:** Everyone must obey the law and be punished in the same way if they break it. This applies to all citizens, no matter how rich or powerful they are. Democracy requires that the law is enforced equally, fairly and consistently.

- a. The ruling party uses threats of violence to make people vote for them.
Example answer: *free and fair elections, the rule of law*
- b. A minister steals government money and sends it to a foreign bank. No-one knows about this because the ministry does not release its budgets to the public.
- c. Supporters of a political party uses violence to protest against a government decision that they disagree with.
- d. The media is prevented from reporting on corruption in the police.
- e. A government official is not punished for wasting public money because he is the brother of a member of parliament.
- f. Government school teachers miss their regular classes to give paid tuition to richer students.
- g. There is an area of a town where squatters are living. These people cannot vote because they need to provide addresses on the registration forms.
- h. A powerful person gets a lighter sentence than a poor person for the same crime.
- i. The local government refuses to **investigate** who was responsible for a construction accident that killed several people.
- j. Many people in remote areas do not know where or how to vote in an election.
- k. The ruling party refuses to accept the results of an election that they lost. They say the winning party is bad for the country, and there will be another election in four years.
- l. The police use force to stop local organisations from protesting against the construction of a new dam.
- m. The government makes it illegal for minority groups to form political parties.
- n. Ethnic minorities and women are not represented in parliament.

Exercise

Match these situations to the elements of democracy that they are violating. There can be more than one element for each example.

CASE STUDY**Exercise**

1. Order the stages of the participatory budgeting process.
 - a. Hold a big meeting to choose the best suggestions and elect councillors.
 - b. Hold several smaller meetings between representatives and citizens to collect suggestions.
 - c. The councillors create a budget based on the best suggestions.
 - d. Hold a big meeting to choose representatives for each area.
2. What are some of the results of participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre?
3. Which of the seven elements of democracy can you see in this case study?

Brazil – Participatory Budgeting

Porto Alegre is a city in Brazil. It is famous for the 'participatory budgeting' system that it used from 1991 to 2004. Participatory budgeting allows local citizens to make decisions about how the government spends money in their city. It is now being used in over 1,500 cities around the world.

In the Porto Alegre system, each of the 16 townships in the city held two meetings every year. The first meeting was very big. In some townships, over 1,000 people participated. In these meetings, the people elected representatives to discuss their township's budget.

After this meeting, these representatives held several smaller meetings with other citizens who lived in their township. They discussed the needs and concerns of the local citizens and made suggestions for the next year's budget.

Three months later, each township had a second meeting. In the second meeting, they chose the best suggestions that the representatives collected. They also voted to elect councillors, who were on a municipal council for their township.

The Municipal Council then developed a budget based on citizens' suggestions. They sent this budget to the city government. The city government could approve the budget straight away, or send it back to the Municipal Council to make changes. However, if over 66% of the Municipal Council voted to accept the budget without changes, then it had to be accepted by the city government.

About 20,000 people participated in this process every year. It also included marginalised groups (e.g. women, poor and uneducated people) in decision-making. This method made sure that money was not only spent in rich neighbourhoods.

This system had positive results. From 1991 to 2004:

- buses started running to the poor areas;
- the number of citizens with **running water** went from 75% to 98%;
- the number of local government schools nearly tripled.

Nigeria – The 2007 Movement

Nigerian law says that the most that anyone can be president is two terms (one term is four years). However, president Olusegun Obasanjo wanted to stay in power for a third term. He made plans to change the law so that he could stay in power for another four years.

Poverty and ethnic conflict were serious issues in Nigeria at that time. President Obasanjo said that if the president changed too quickly, the country would become poor and unstable. He said they needed strong leadership. He thought that he should stay in power to ensure the development of the country.

He needed the support of the government to change the law. He put his friends in powerful positions. Many people said that he offered money and promises if people would support his plan to change the law.

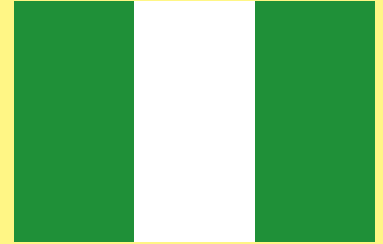
This made many representatives afraid to challenge the president. They thought it would be impossible to oppose the change because many of Obasanjo's supporters were in powerful positions.

However, some representatives opposed the plan. They worked together with citizens' groups, ethnic and religious leaders to oppose the plan. They got the support of many citizens – including street children and other marginalised groups. All these citizens put pressure on their representatives to vote against the plan to change the law.

As a result of this, the parliament of Nigeria voted against the plan. After this, Nigeria's anti-corruption organisation started to investigate the money and promises that were offered to Obasanjo's supporters.

President Obasanjo stopped being president after the election in April 2007.

CASE STUDY



Exercise

1. What reasons did president Obasanjo give for extending his presidency?
2. What challenges did the 2007 movement face?
3. Which of the seven elements of democracy can you see in this case study?

CASE STUDY**Exercise**

1. What is a grama panchayat? How are they chosen?
2. What is a grama sabha? What are their responsibilities?
3. Which of the seven elements of democracy can you see in this case study?

Local Government in India

There are two important organisations in each village (or group of small villages): the *grama panchayat* (village council) and *grama sabha* (village gathering).

The Grama Sabha

The grama sabha is the place where all the voters in a village come together, discuss and make decisions for their village. Anyone who is 18 years or older and who has the right to vote is a member of the grama sabha. The grama sabha meets up to four times per year. The grama sabha is responsible for electing the grama panchayat.

The Grama Panchayat

Grama panchayats are responsible for economic development and social justice in their village. A grama panchayat has between seven and 17 members. One third of these people must be women (although there are plans to make this 50% soon). There are also rules to make sure that ethnic minorities are represented.

The Responsibilities of the Grama Sabha and the Grama Panchayat

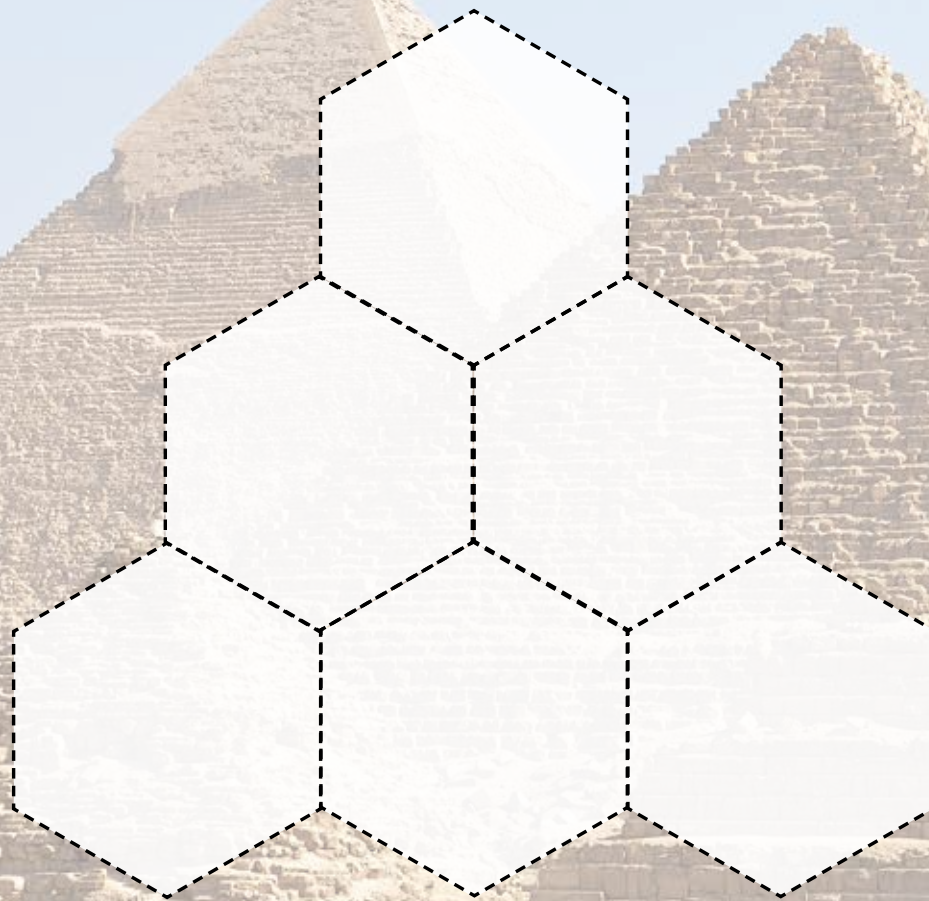
Grama panchayats are responsible for building and repairing water resources, roads, school buildings and other public facilities (libraries, playgrounds, street lights etc.) and collecting local taxes.

The grama panchayat is accountable to the grama sabha for all of its activities. grama sabhas take part in planning of local development activities. They also check that the grama panchayat is spending money in a responsible way. Grama sabhas are responsible for making sure that the village level panchayats are doing their jobs correctly and keeping their promises.

Values Pyramid

Activity

1. In pairs, make a 'values pyramid' that ranks elements of democracy (equality, free and fair elections, accountability, transparency, participation, tolerance and compromise, the rule of law) in importance.
2. Join with another pair. As a group, make a values pyramid that you all agree on.
3. Join with another group and make a values pyramid. Continue joining groups and making pyramids until there is only one (class) group. Make a values pyramid that the whole class agrees on.
4. Discuss:
 - a. What does your class pyramid tell you about the values of the class?
 - b. What difficulties did you experience in this exercise?
 - c. How did you overcome them?



1. How democratic is your community?
2. What could be done to make your community more democratic?

Discussion

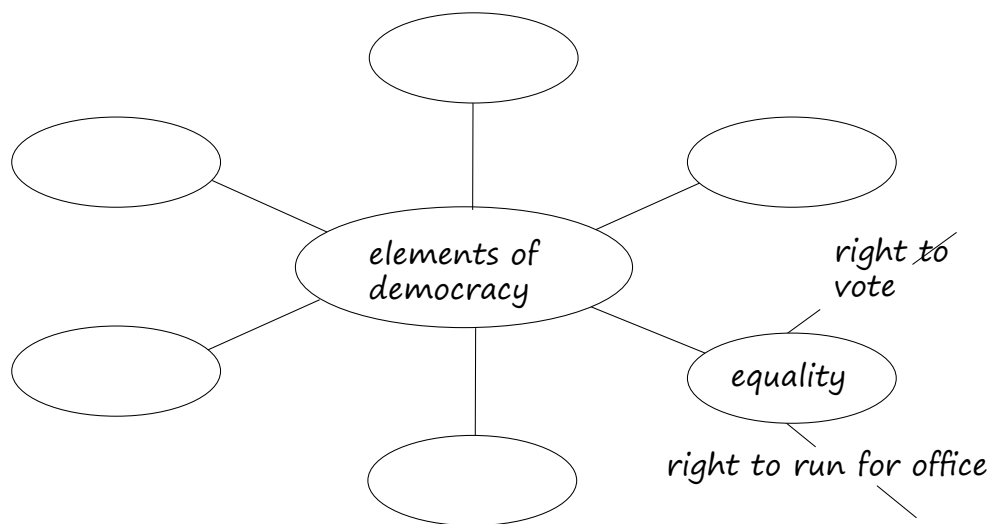
Which elements of democracy do you consider to be most important? Why?

Reflection

Unit 1 Review

Unit 1 Mind Map

Complete the mind map with important ideas you have learned in Unit 1.



Comprehension

1. What does the word 'democracy' mean?
2. What is a democracy?
3. What are the four kinds of decision-making mentioned in this unit?
4. What is democratic decision-making?
5. What is the difference between direct and indirect democracy?
6. What is a representative and how are they chosen?
7. In what way are citizens equal in a democracy?
8. Are there any reasons why someone should not be allowed to vote?
9. Why are elections important in a democracy?
10. What is a political party?
11. What does it mean that an election is 'free'?
12. What does it mean that an election is 'fair'?
13. Why is accountability important in a democracy?
14. In which ways are leaders accountable in a democracy?
15. Why is transparency important in a democracy?
16. Are there any reasons why transparency should be limited?
17. Why is participation important in a democracy?
18. In which ways can citizens participate in a democracy?
19. Why is tolerance and compromise important in a democracy?
20. What is 'the common good'?
21. What is the rule of law?
22. Why is the rule of law important in a democracy?

Unit 1 Glossary

abuse (v, n) – အလွဲသုံးစားလုပ်သည်။ လွဲမှားစွာ သုံးစွဲခြင်း ဆောင်ရွက်ခြင်း။

abuse of power (n) – အာဏာအလွဲသုံးစားပြုမှု။

accountability (adj) – တာဝန်ခံမှု။

accurate (adj) – မှန်ကန်သော။

authority (n) – လုပ်ပိုင်ခွင့်အာဏာ (တစ်စုံတစ်ရာ လုပ်ဆောင်ရန် အခွင့်အာဏာရှိခြင်း။)

autocratic (adj) – သက်ဦးဆံပိုင်ဖြစ်သော၊ အာဏာပိုင် ဖြစ်သော။

bankrupt (adj) – လူမွဲဖြစ်သွားသော။

bribe (n, v) – လာဘ်ပေးလာဘ်ယူပြုခြင်း။ လာဘ်ပေးလာဘ်ယူပြုသည်။

budget (n) – ရသုံးမှန်း ခြေငွေစာရင်း။

citizen (n) – နိုင်ငံသား။

communal violence (n) – လူအုပ်စုလိုက် အကြမ်းဖက်မှုများ။

compromise (n) – အလျော့အတင်းပြုလုပ်ခြင်း၊ ညှိနှိုင်းမှု။

concern (n, v) – စိုးရိမ်ပူပန်မှုများ။ စိုးရိမ်ပူပန်သည်။

consensus (n) – အားလုံးအကြွင်းမဲ့သဘောတူခြင်း။

consent (n) – သဘောတူညီမှု။

consult (v) – ဆွေးနွေးတိုင်ပင်သည်။

cooperate (v) – ပူးပေါင်းဆောင်ရွက်သည်။

corrupt (adj) – အကျင့်ပျက်ခြစားသည်။

dam (n) – ရေကာတာ၊ ဆည်။

diverse (adj) – ကွဲပြားစုံလင်သော။

drought (n) – မိုးခေါင်ရေရှားမှု။

due process (n) – မဖြစ်မနေ ဆောင်ရွက်ရမည့် လုပ်ငန်းစဉ်။

enforce (v) – အသက်ဝင်စေသည်။

eligible (adj) – တရားဝင်သော၊ စံနှုန်းမီသော။

exclude (v) – ဖယ်ထုတ်ထားသည်။

interim (adj) – ကြားဖြတ်ယာယီဖြစ်သော။

interim government (n) – ကြားဖြတ်အစိုးရ။

intimidation (n) – ခြိမ်းခြောက် ခိုင်းစေခြင်း။

investigate (v) – စုံစမ်းစစ်ဆေးသည်။

majority (n, adj) – အများစု။ အများစုဖြစ်သော။

marginalised (adj) – ပစ်ပယ်ခံထားရသော။

minority (n, adj) – အနည်းစု။ အနည်းစုဖြစ်သော။

opposition (n, adj) – အတိုက်အခံ၊ အတိုက်အခံ ဖြစ်သော။

parliament (n) – လွှတ်တော်။

participate (v) – ပါဝင်ဆောင်ရွက်သည်။

party (n) – နိုင်ငံရေးပါတီ။

patriotic (adj, n) – မျိုးချစ်စိတ်ရှိသော။ မျိုးချစ်စိတ်။

policy (n) – မူဝါဒ။

privilege (n) – အခွင့်ထူး၊ ခံစားခွင့်။

referendum (n) – ပြည်သူ့ဆန္ဒခံယူပွဲ။

(voter) registration (n) – မဲစာရင်း။

regulation (n) – စည်းမျဉ်းဥပဒေ။

representative (n) – ကိုယ်စားလှယ်။

rule (v, n) – အုပ်ချုပ်သည်။ စည်းမျဉ်း။

rule of law (n) – တရားဥပဒေ စိုးမိုးမှု။

run for office (v) – ရွေးကောက်ပွဲများတွင် ဝင်ရောက် ယှဉ်ပြိုင်ခြင်း။

running water (n) – သောက်သုံးရေ ရရှိခြင်း။

tolerance (n) – နားလည်သည့်ခံမှု။ မတူကွဲပြားမှုအား လက်ခံနိုင်မှု။

transparency (adj) – ပွင့်လင်းမြင်သာမှုရှိသော။

union (n) – သမဂ္ဂ။ အဖွဲ့အစည်း။

vote-buying (n) – မဲဝယ်ခြင်း။