



Unit 2:

Rights in a Democracy



Unit Themes

Unit 2 builds on the knowledge that learners developed in the first unit, and looks at the role that rights and responsibilities play in a democracy.

Chapter 3 looks at constitutions, majority rule and minority rights, active citizenship and civil society. It explains why these are important in a democracy.

Chapter 4 looks at the relationship between human rights and democracy. Unit 2 helps learners to understand the importance that citizens' rights and responsibilities play in creating a healthy democracy.

This knowledge will be important in Unit 3, when learners evaluate citizens' roles in democratic and non-democratic government.



Unit 2: Learning Goals

Knowledge

(Exercises)

By the end of this unit you will have increased your understanding of:

- the importance of rights;
- the importance of constitutions;
- the importance of majority rule and minority rights;
- the importance of responsibilities;
- the importance of active citizenship;
- the importance of civil society;
- the idea of human rights;
- how human rights relate to basic needs and freedoms;
- why human rights are important in a community;
- why human rights are important in a democracy;
- the importance of freedom of speech;
- the importance of freedoms of association and assembly;
- the importance of rights to equality.

Skills

(Activities)

By the end of this unit you will have developed your ability to:

- use a values pyramid to analyse rights;
- create a community constitution;
- create rules to protect minority rights in an organisation;
- compare the responsibilities of citizens and leaders;
- use a responsibility matrix to analyse a problem;
- make an action plan to address a local issue;
- match needs and freedoms with the rights in the UDHR;
- use community mapping to analyse human rights;
- use posters to discuss human rights;
- discuss the limits of freedom of speech;
- discuss the limits of freedom;
- debate the limits of the right to equality.

Values

(Reflections)

By the end of this unit you will have reflected on:

- your experience of rights;
- the relationship between rules and rights;
- conflicts between minorities and the majority;
- the consequences of ignoring responsibilities;
- the values of active citizens;
- your experience of civil society;
- your most important needs and freedoms;
- your contribution to human rights in your community;
- your experience of empowerment;
- abusive or hateful speech;
- your experience of freedom of association and assembly;
- your experience of discrimination.

3.1 RIGHTS IN A DEMOCRACY

3.1.1 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PREVIEW

1. List the rights that people have in a democracy.
2. List the responsibilities that people have in a democracy.

Why are rights and responsibilities so important for democracy?

In an authoritarian system, citizens have less rights and less responsibilities. They are just the pieces in the chess game of politics.

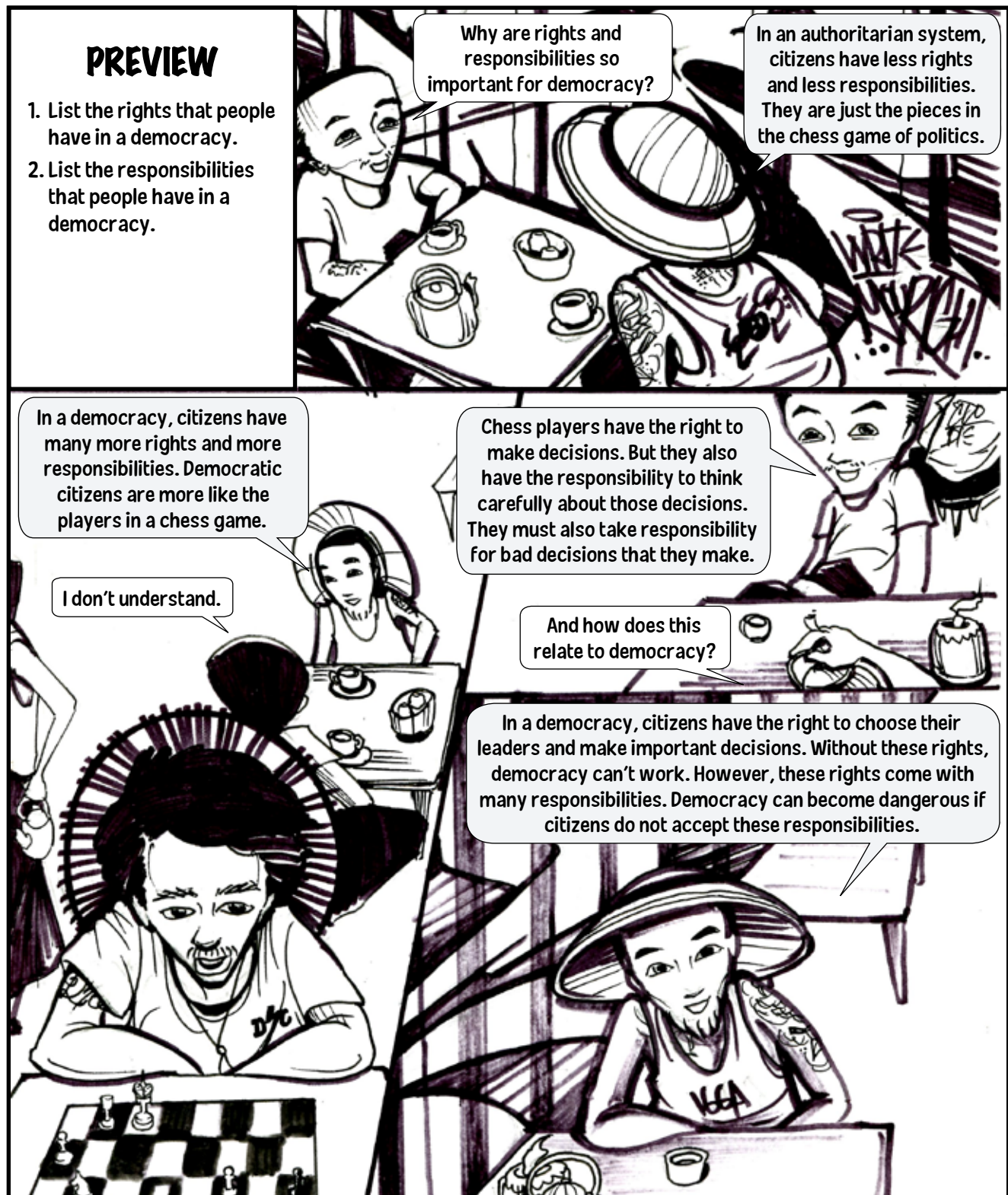
In a democracy, citizens have many more rights and more responsibilities. Democratic citizens are more like the players in a chess game.

Chess players have the right to make decisions. But they also have the responsibility to think carefully about those decisions. They must also take responsibility for bad decisions that they make.

I don't understand.

And how does this relate to democracy?

In a democracy, citizens have the right to choose their leaders and make important decisions. Without these rights, democracy can't work. However, these rights come with many responsibilities. Democracy can become dangerous if citizens do not accept these responsibilities.



All people deserve to live happily, without fear, violence or cruel treatment. For this to happen, it is necessary for people to behave in a way that does not harm or hurt other people.

Rights are like rules. They show us how people should be treated in a community. They also show us how an individual should be treated by other individuals, their community and/or their government.

Rights give people:

- permission to do/have something;
- protection from something or someone;
- **entitlement** to do/have something.

Responsibilities are obligations or promises to do something. Civic responsibilities require citizens to actively contribute to their communities. The quality of a community affects all of its members. If citizens want to benefit from a community, they need to help develop it.

Exercise

Classify these into rights and responsibilities.

- to be safe
- to respect other people
- to choose the person who you marry
- to keep your environment clean
- to help those who are in need
- to live where you want



1. EQUALITY

In a democracy, everyone has an equal right to take part in the decisions that affect them. In a society where people are not equal, some people might not have the right to participate. This is very bad for democracy.

2. FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

The right to vote and stand in regular elections is probably the most important right in a democracy. This right guarantees that all citizens can directly take part in deciding who their leaders are and what happens in their community. Some other specific rights related to elections include:

- voters have the right to vote in secret;
- voters have the right to vote for the party or candidate of their choice, without fear of intimidation or violence.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

In a democracy, elected representatives are accountable to the people. If they make decisions that are not good for their community, or if they fail to perform their duties according to the wishes of the people, then people have the right to vote them out of power in the next election.

Citizens also have the right to ask their representatives – and the government – to explain their actions and decisions. Accountability cannot work if citizens and political parties do not have the right to question or criticise the government.

4. TRANSPARENCY

Freedom of information laws give people the right to know about what the government is doing. In a democracy, the people have the right to access information about the decisions and actions of the government.

Freedom of the press gives journalists the right to seek and publish information about the government. Citizens can use this information to evaluate how well the government is doing its job. This is an important part of making sure that the government is accountable to the people.

5. PARTICIPATION

A strong democracy needs its citizens to effectively take part in political decision-making. Therefore, they must be informed, active and responsible.

Civic participation takes many forms. It includes running for office, voting in elections, joining and forming citizens' groups, attending community meetings, volunteering, and even protesting against the government. In a democracy, all of these ways of participating are protected by specific rights.

Citizens must have the right to be free from fear, violence and unjust actions that stop them from participating. Having these rights gives citizens the confidence to participate in democracy .



6. COMPROMISE AND TOLERANCE

Democracy is based on the free exchange of ideas. If citizens want the right to express their ideas freely, then they must accept the right of others to do the same.

Democratic governments are made up of representatives from many different communities. Representatives need the right to promote their communities' beliefs, ideas and values. If they cannot do this, representative democracy will not work.

Limiting minorities' rights to take part in democracy can lead to marginalisation and even violent conflict.

7. THE RULE OF LAW

In a democracy, the government cannot deny or abuse citizens' legal rights. The rule of law makes sure that all citizens can challenge rights violations and punish abusers.

It is important that there is a fair and independent justice system. This means judges follow and enforce the law, not the wishes of powerful people or the government. A democracy needs this to decide whether citizens' rights have been abused, and punish abusers.

Important rights related to the rule of law include:

- the right to a fair **trial**;
- the right to be told the charges against you;
- the right to a lawyer;
- the right for citizens to be considered innocent until there is proof they are guilty.



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

- a. The right to vote is not very important in a democracy.
- b. In a democracy, it is important that all citizens have the right to freely express their opinions.
- c. Democratic rights make sure that citizens can freely gather and form groups.
- d. Elections are the only way that leaders are accountable in a democracy.
- e. Freedom of information laws give citizens the rights to access documents and information from the government.
- f. In a democracy, some citizens are given more rights than others.
- g. The rule of law makes it harder for rights abuses to happen.

Exercise



Focus on Myanmar

About Rights – From *Civics for High Schools*, 1953

In a democracy, the power of the government comes from the people. We can say that 'the people' make laws. Therefore, citizens have responsibility to protect and follow these laws. However, if a law goes against the citizens' interests, the citizens have the right to change or cancel that law through parliament.

Voting is very important in a democracy. If citizens use their right to vote effectively, they will get a civilized and responsible government. If they don't, they will get bad representatives. This will not lead to a good government.

The role of each citizen is very important in building a democratic society. Democracy cannot succeed unless citizens have democratic values, right behaviour and active participation.

To get the changes we need in Burma, a revolution must take place in each individual life, heart and mind. Those revolutions should be started by individuals before being started in associations, political parties and other organisations.



Ba Pe (1953), 'Civics for High Schools', KEM Burma Pg 18-20 (Myanmar Version)

Exercise

1. What rights does U Ba Pe refer to in this text?
2. What responsibilities does he refer to in this text?
3. What does he think is important in a democracy?
4. What does he think needs to happen first?

Match these seven rights with the elements of democracy on pages 67-69.

From the South African Bill of Rights:

- a. Every citizen has the right to free, fair and regular elections for any **legislative** body.
Example answer: 2. free and fair elections
- b. Everyone is equal before the law and may not be unfairly **discriminated** against.
- c. For the protection of your rights, you may access any information held by the state.
- d. You have the right to peacefully assemble, demonstrate and protest.
- e. You have the right to say, read and study whatever you choose but **hate speech** [speech that causes violence or hatred] is not allowed.
- f. You have the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair [due process].
- g. If a **provincial** [state or regional] government votes to fire the premier [chief minister], the premier and the other members of the Executive Council [Cabinet] must resign.

Exercise

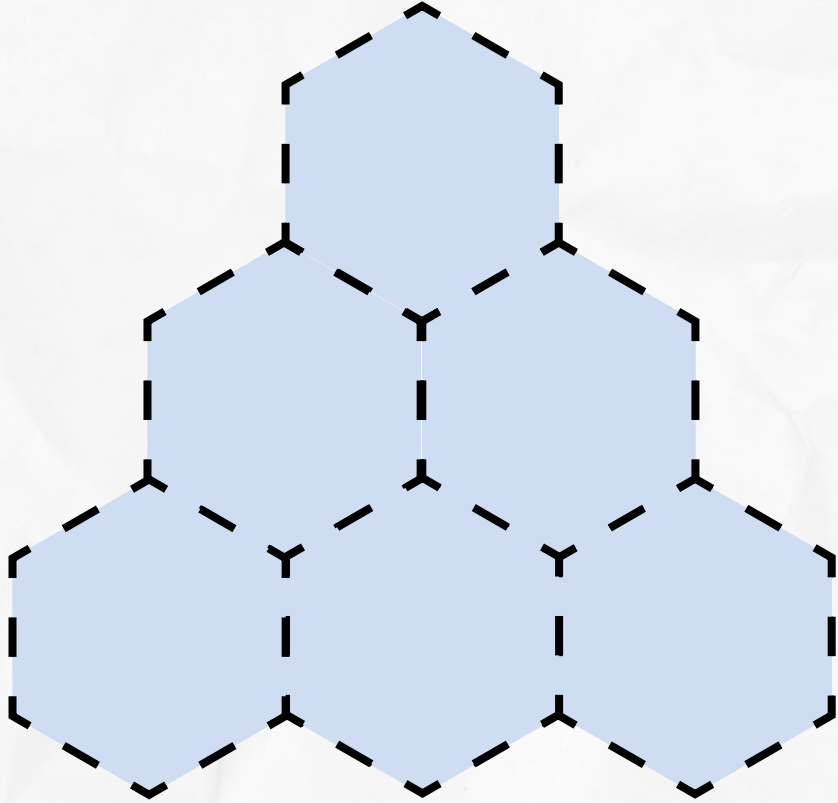


1. equality
2. free and fair elections
3. accountability
4. transparency
5. participation
6. tolerance and compromise
7. rule of law



Activity**Rights Pyramid**

1. Rank the rights that citizens have in a democracy. Put the most important right at the top, and the less important rights at the bottom.
2. In pairs, decide on a rights pyramid.
3. Join another group, and agree on a rights pyramid.
4. Agree on a class rights pyramid.

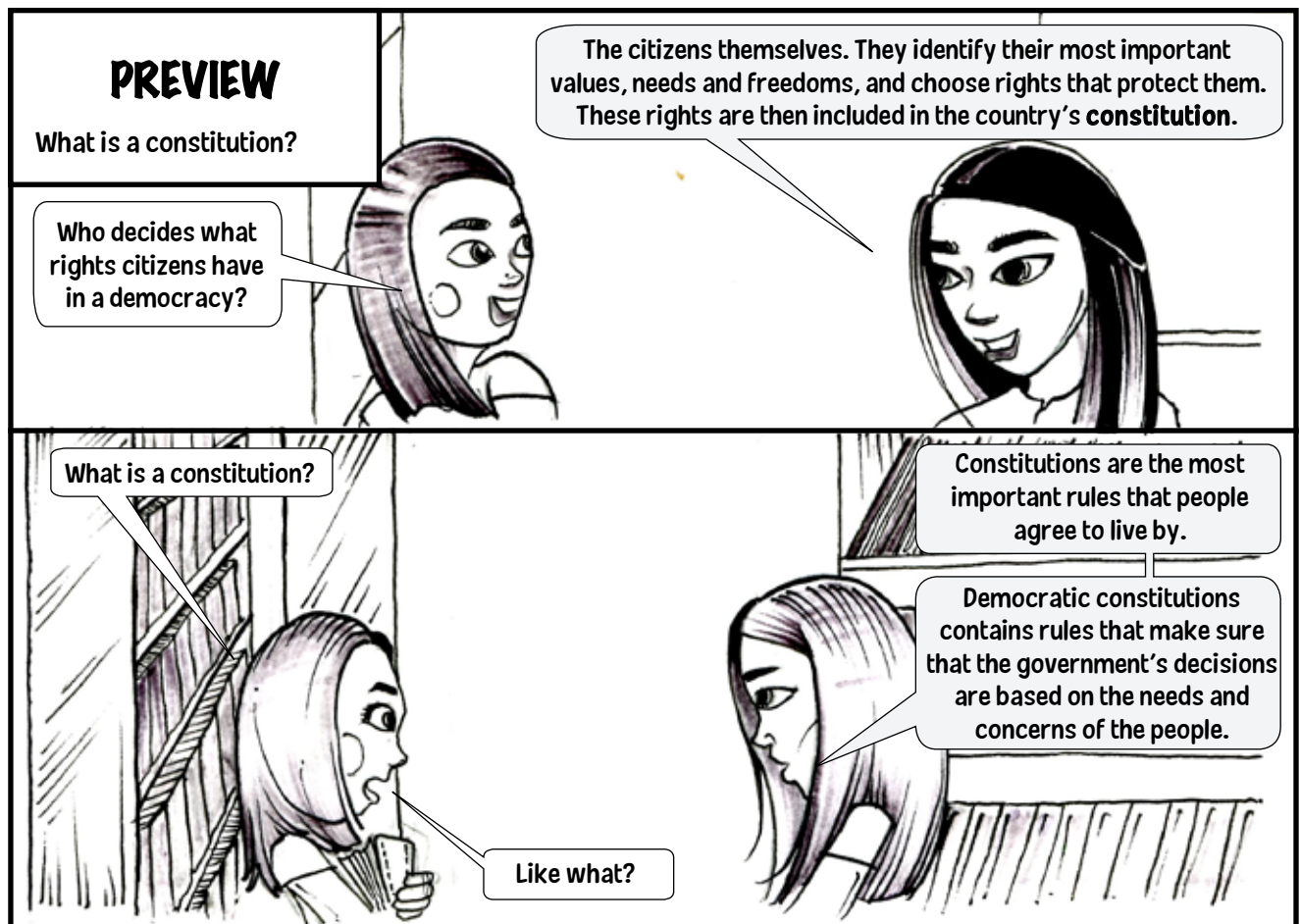
**Discussion**

1. Why are rights so important in a democracy?
2. Which rights do you have as a member of your community?
3. Does everyone in your community have the same rights?

Reflection

Has anyone ever violated or limited your rights? How did that make you feel? Give examples.

3.1.2 CONSTITUTIONS



A. WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION?

A constitution is the basic law of a country. It is a set of written laws that are the foundation of the legal and political system. The constitution describes the relationship between the people and government. Important functions of constitutions include:

1. promoting trust and **stability**;
2. putting limits on the powers of the government;
3. listing the rights of the citizens;
4. describing the rights of minorities;
5. outlining the roles and responsibilities of the different parts of the government.

B. WHY DO WE NEED CONSTITUTIONS?

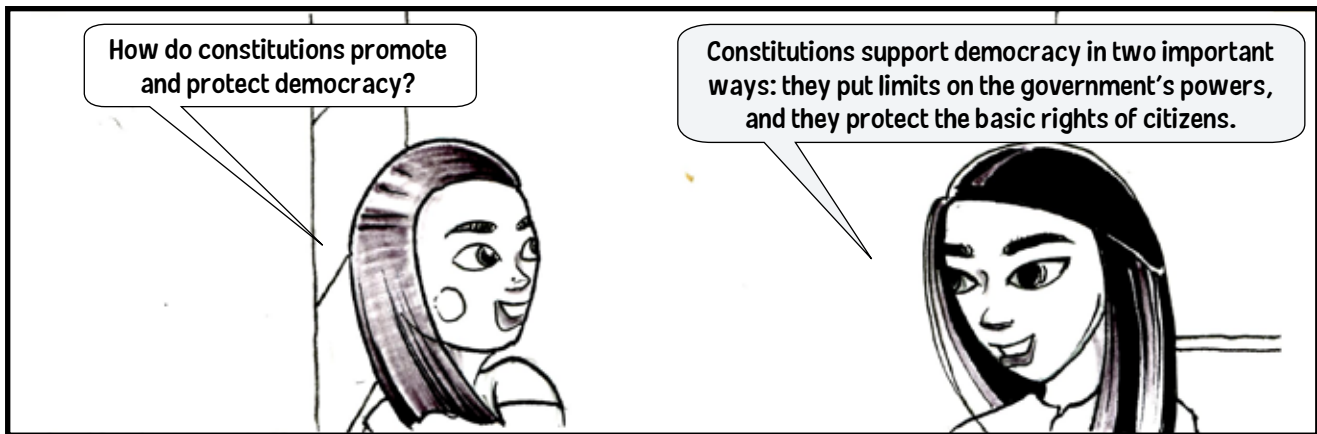
Constitutions establish the country's most basic laws and all other laws are based on these. These laws outline the relationship between citizens, as well as the relationship between citizens and the government.

No other laws can go against the constitution. For example, if the constitution says that everyone has the right to basic education, the government cannot make laws that stops some groups from attending



government schools. When citizens know that there are some basic laws that must always be respected, this can increase trust.

These rules only work if they cannot be changed easily. This is why it is very hard for constitutions to be changed. This stops new governments from making very big changes every time they come into power. Constitutions promote stability by limiting the size and speed of changes that new governments can make.



Exercise

Which of the following is NOT a function of constitutions in a democracy?

- a. Constitutions set out the relationship between citizens and the government.
- b. Constitutions set the most important laws in a country.
- c. Constitutions decide which children are allowed to go to school.
- d. Constitutions stop governments from making big changes too quickly.

C. CONSTITUTIONS ENSURE LIMITED GOVERNMENT

Constitutions put limits on government power. They clearly outline the powers that a government has and does not have.

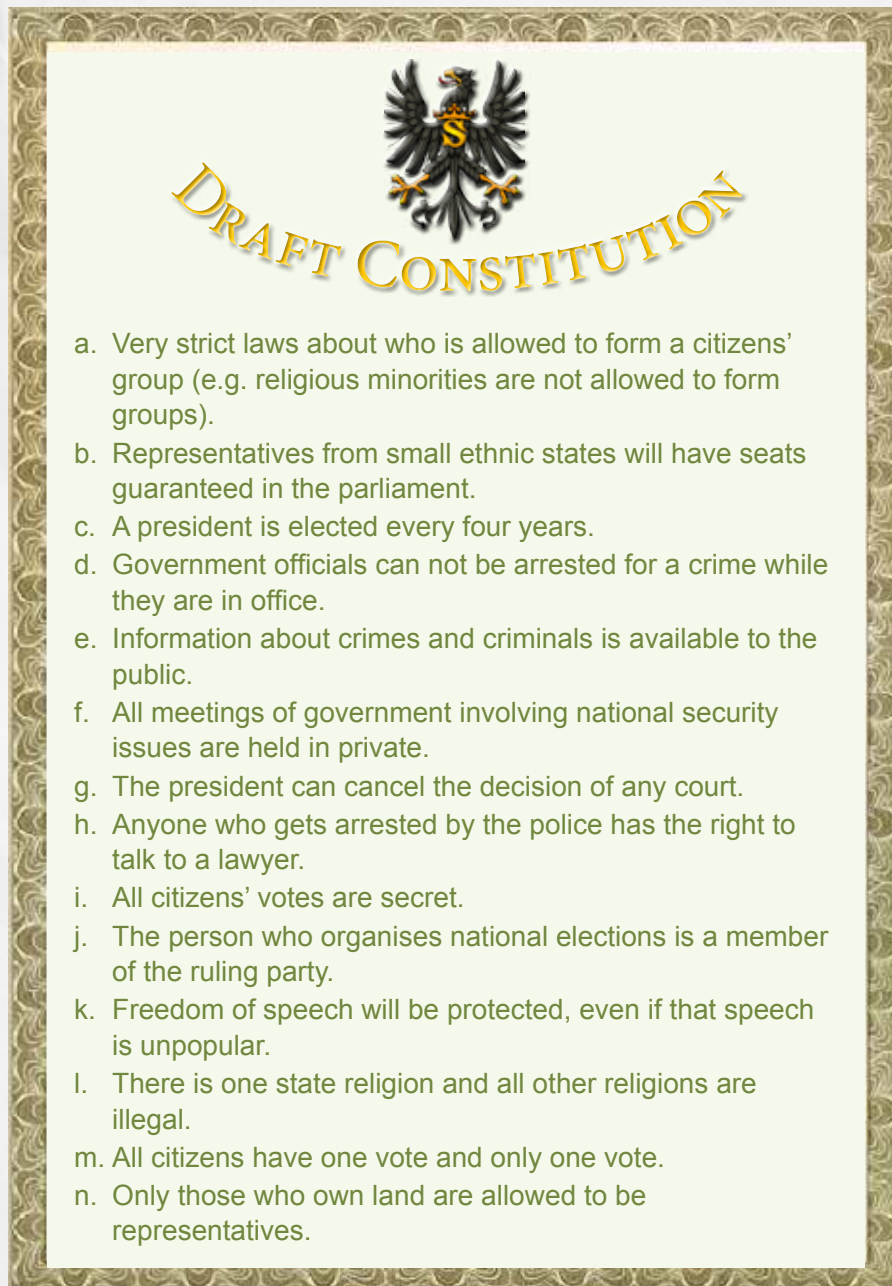
A democratic government cannot do everything it wants, even if it wins power through a free and fair election. It has to respect some basic rules. These rules usually include:

- rules that protect the rights of minorities;
- rules that make sure every major decision has to go through a series of steps (votes, meetings, reviews etc.);
- rules about the rights and responsibilities of representatives and other members of the government;
- rules about who is accountable to who.

Which of the following is NOT an examples of the kind of limits that constitutions put on government power?

- a. Constitutions stop government from ignoring the needs of minorities.
- b. Constitutions stop representatives from abusing their power.
- c. Constitutions make sure that important decisions don't get made without following the correct process.
- d. Constitutions make sure that elections always lead to strong governments.

Exercise



DRAFT CONSTITUTION

- a. Very strict laws about who is allowed to form a citizens' group (e.g. religious minorities are not allowed to form groups).
- b. Representatives from small ethnic states will have seats guaranteed in the parliament.
- c. A president is elected every four years.
- d. Government officials can not be arrested for a crime while they are in office.
- e. Information about crimes and criminals is available to the public.
- f. All meetings of government involving national security issues are held in private.
- g. The president can cancel the decision of any court.
- h. Anyone who gets arrested by the police has the right to talk to a lawyer.
- i. All citizens' votes are secret.
- j. The person who organises national elections is a member of the ruling party.
- k. Freedom of speech will be protected, even if that speech is unpopular.
- l. There is one state religion and all other religions are illegal.
- m. All citizens have one vote and only one vote.
- n. Only those who own land are allowed to be representatives.

Exercise

A new country is writing their first democratic constitution. They want to include laws to make the country more democratic.

1. Read the draft constitution and decide which constitutional laws support or work against democracy.
2. Look at the seven elements of democracy in 3.1.1:
 - equality
 - free and fair elections
 - accountability
 - transparency
 - participation
 - compromise and tolerance
 - rule of law

Which element (or elements) do each of the laws relate to?

Example answers:

A – 1. against
2. equality,
participation

D. CONSTITUTIONS PROTECT FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Democratic constitutions set out the basic laws that protect people's rights and the elements of democracy. These include laws that prevent the government from abusing its power and the human rights of its citizens.

In order to protect citizens' rights, constitutions usually include a **bill of rights**. A bill of rights is a document that sets out citizens' rights and freedoms. It lists the most basic rights that must be respected and protected.

Democratic constitutions protect the basic rights that democracy needs to survive. They contain very strong laws that stop the government from abusing its power (e.g. ignoring the results of an election) and abusing citizens' rights (e.g. **banning** peaceful demonstration or limiting the right to a fair trial).

Exercise

Which of the following is NOT an example of how democratic constitutions protect fundamental rights?

- a. Constitutions can include a list of the basic rights that citizens have.
- b. Constitutions make sure that citizens can challenge rights violations through the courts.
- c. Constitutions stop governments from making laws that go against the basic laws in the constitution.
- d. Constitutions create peace by banning demonstrations.



Rights are not useful if people or governments don't respect them. They are also not useful if there is nothing that citizens can do if their rights are abused. The basic rights in the constitution are important because they are enforceable.

If a citizen's rights are violated by other citizens, businesses or by the government, they can seek justice through the **courts**. The courts have the power to enforce citizen's rights. They can also assist the victims (e.g. making sure they get paid back for any damages or loss), and punish the people who violated those rights.

The constitution also protects citizens from unfair actions of the government. No law or action of government can violate the laws in the constitution. If the government does anything that takes away or limits those rights, the courts can declare it to be illegal.

Read the list of rights in Myanmar's 2008 constitution and match them with the seven elements of democracy. There can be more than one answer for each right.

Exercise

- | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| - free and fair elections | - accountability | - tolerance and compromise |
| - equality | - transparency | - the rule of law |
| | - participation | |

Example answer:

347. *equality before the law* – equality, accountability, rule of law



Focus on Myanmar

Rights in Myanmar

- | | |
|---|---|
| 347. equality before the law; | correspondence and other communication; |
| 348. non-discrimination (based on race, birth, religion, status, official culture, sex and wealth); | 358. prohibition on enslaving and trafficking in persons; |
| 349. equal opportunity (in public employment, occupation, trade, business, etc.); | 359. prohibition on forced labour (except hard labour for convicts and public-interest duties); |
| 350. equality of salary and rights at work for women and men; | 360-64. freedom of conscience and religion (subject to public order, morality, and health; the "abuse of religion for political purposes" is forbidden); |
| 351. equal rights for mothers, children and pregnant women; | 365. right to develop literature, arts, customs and traditions; |
| 352. non-discrimination in the civil service (except for "positions that are suitable for men only"); | 366. right to education and to receive free compulsory basic education; |
| 353. right to life and personal freedom ("unless the person has broken other laws"); | 367. right to health care ("in accord with health policy laid down by the Union"); |
| 354. every citizen has the right to do the following, unless their action goes against other laws related to Union security, law and order, community peace or public order and morality: | 369. right to elect and be elected to Hluttaws (subject to the Constitution and relevant laws); |
| (a) freedom to express and publish their beliefs and opinions freely; | 370. right to freely conduct business; the right to private invention and patent ; |
| (b) freedom to assemble and march peacefully without arms; | 373. right to only be punished according to the law; |
| (c) freedom to form associations and organisations; | 375. right of an accused to a defence; |
| (d) freedom to develop their language, literature, culture, religion, and traditions without discrimination; | 376. prohibition on any person being held in custody for more than 24 hours without permission of a court (except " precautionary measures taken for the security of the Union or prevalence of law and order..."); |
| 355. freedom to settle and live anywhere; | 380. right to seek protection of the Union in relations with foreign countries; |
| 356. protection of property; | 381. right to a fair trial (except in time of foreign invasion, insurrection or emergency). |
| 357. privacy and security of home, property, | |

Constitution of The Republic of The Union of Myanmar, (2008), Pg 149-156

Activity**Community Constitution**

1. If you had to write a constitution for your community, what rights would you include? Are there any rights that you would not include? Why?
2. Would you include rules to limit the power of leaders? What limitations would you include in a constitution for your community?

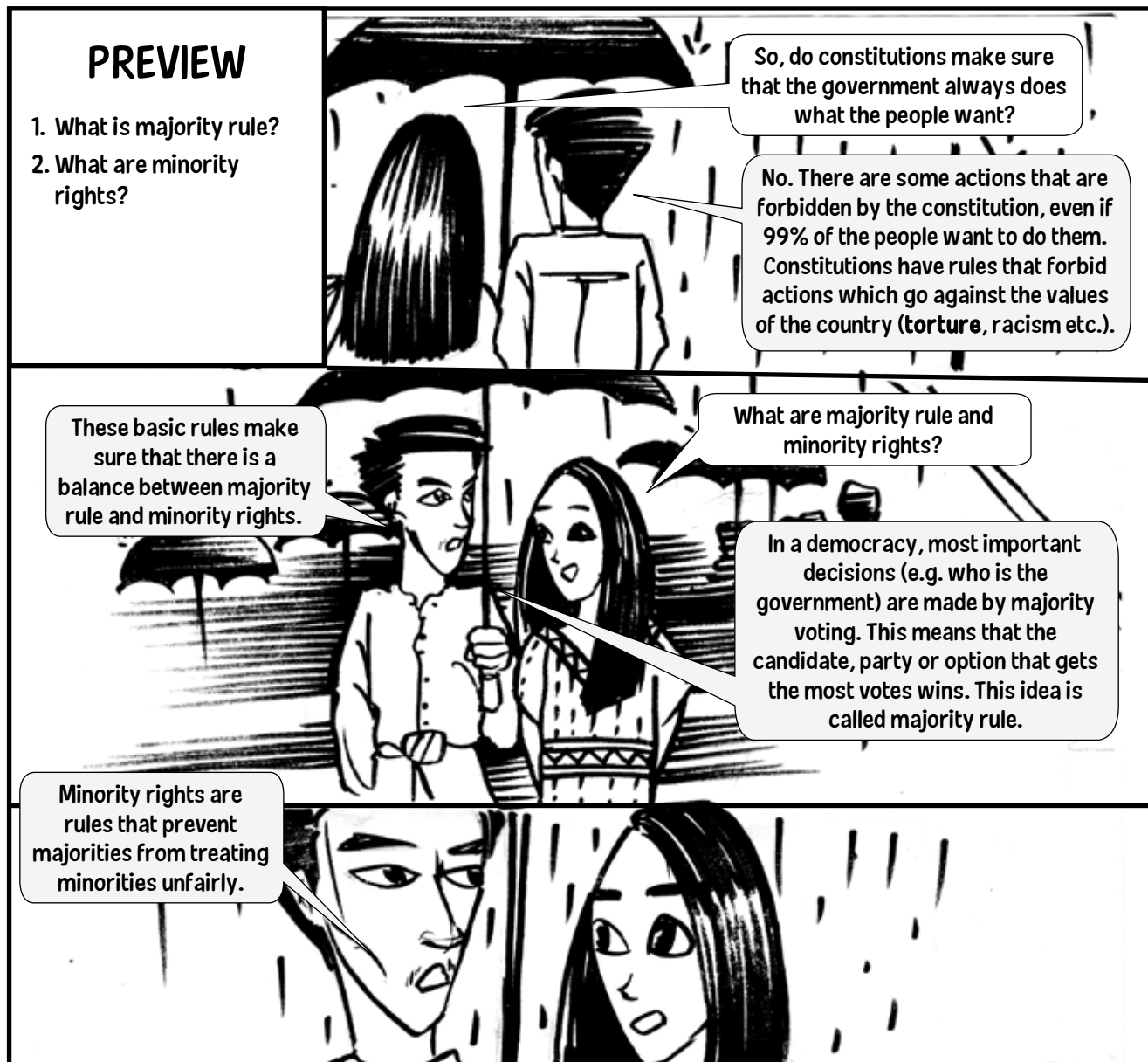
Discussion

1. Do you think that constitutions are necessary? Why or why not?
2. Are there any limits on leaders' power in your community? If so, what are they?
3. Are people aware of their constitutional rights in your community?
4. What kind of problems might happen if people are not aware of their constitutional rights?

Reflection

1. Think of a time when rules or laws have protected your rights. How did you feel?
2. Think of a time when rules or laws have failed to protect your rights. How did you feel?
3. Have you ever experienced a time when rules or laws have stopped you from doing what you wanted to do? What happened? How did you feel?

3.1.3 MAJORITY RULE AND MINORITY RIGHTS



Democracies put limits on what the majority can do. For example, if the majority of the population wants to violate the human rights of a minority, this would not be allowed. The rights that protect minorities from the abuse of the majority are called minority rights.

Minority rights make sure that the majority cannot make decisions that:

- cannot be changed in future (e.g. creating a **dictatorship**);
- deny minorities the right to take part in the decision-making process;
- lead to discrimination or human rights abuses against minority groups.

All individuals in a minority group have the same human rights as everyone else. It does not matter if they are a minority because of their ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, or their sexuality.

One of the most important ways that minority rights are protected is by making them a part of the constitution. Constitutions are very difficult to change. Therefore, it is hard for a government to take away the rights of minorities, even if the majority want this.

Minority rights are often included in a country's constitution. Some of the most common forms that these rights take are:

1. **AUTONOMY:** Rules that allow minorities to make decisions for their own community. For example, a national government allows local governments to make decisions about hospitals and schools in their area.
2. **POWER-SHARING:** Rules that make sure that minorities are represented in government. For example, a government makes a rule that 50% of MPs must be from one ethnic group and 50% from another.
3. **CULTURAL DIVERSITY:** Rules that protect minorities' cultural identity, language and culture. For example, a government allows schools in ethnic areas to teach in their ethnic language.
4. **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION:** Rules that give minorities more opportunities (than majority people) to be in government, or access employment and educational opportunities. For example, a government makes a rule that at least 30% of all new government workers must be from a religious minority.



Exercise

Match the examples with the four kinds of minority rights.

- a. In the Northern Ireland government, there are two First Ministers, one from Northern Ireland's Catholic community and one from its Protestant community. They both have equal powers. One cannot be in position without the other.

Example answer: 1. *Autonomy*

- b. In India, the Tamil Nadu government gives 3.5% of the seats in parliament to Muslims and 3.5% of the seats to Christians.
- c. The Åland Islands is a region in Finland. The Åland Islands' government makes its own health, education, job, housing and security policies.
- d. Belgium has 'community governments'. Each language community (Dutch, French and German-speaking) elect their own community government. These governments make decisions about cultural, educational and language issues.



Focus on Myanmar

Shalom Foundation



Shalom Foundation is a local NGO in Myanmar with the vision of creating a **just** and peaceful society for all people in Myanmar.

Shalom Foundation was founded in May 2000. They are committed to “peace and harmony between the many ethnic races and the Bamar”. Shalom believes that “only with peace and mutual respect and understanding between the races living in the Union of Myanmar, our nation can grow and develop for the benefit of all citizens”.

Main Activities

Stopping Violence

Promoting dialogue at all levels in society as an alternative to violence. Dialogue builds trust among government and ethnic leaders. This trust allows diverse communities to find a way to balance their needs and interests and live together peacefully.

Building Trust

Working with groups both within society (e.g. within ethnic and religious groups) and across society (at the **grassroots**, middle and top leadership levels). Building trust between the majority group and minorities helps them to better understand each other and find solutions.

Empowering People

Providing knowledge and skills for people at community and regional leadership levels to exercise their constitutional rights. This helps minorities to be aware of their rights and what they can do to defend them.

Promoting inclusive decision-making

Working with decision-makers to create systems that promote equality and participation. This helps minorities and marginalised groups to take part in decision making so that their needs and concerns are considered.



Answer the questions.

1. What are the goals of the Shalom Foundation?
2. What does the Shalom Foundation do to try and achieve its goals?
3. How do these activities help to balance majority rule and minority rights?

Exercise

Activity

The Sports Club

Read the text then follow the instructions.

In the Central Sports Club, 75% of members are football players and 25% are chinlone players. Football and chinlone teams participate in competitions, and new members join the teams each year. Each member pays 20,000 kyat per year to the club.

Once a year, the club has a budget meeting. All members decide by majority vote how to spend the club's money.



The football players want to buy uniforms, new equipment and to improve the club's football field. The chinlone players also need uniforms, equipment, and to improve the club's chinlone courts.

Every year, the chinlone group loses the vote, so all the money goes to the football players. Now the chinlone players are getting angry. Their money is being spent on football and they get nothing. They feel that the system is unfair, and some chinlone players are talking about forming a separate chinlone club.



Most footballers don't understand these concerns. They say that majority rule is democratic. However, some of the football players feel that this is not fair. They argue that if the chinlone players' needs are not considered, then it is not a real democracy.

1. Work in groups. You are the Sports Club Committee. Discuss these issues:
 - a. How should the funds be distributed between the groups?
 - b. Who should decide how the funds will be distributed?
 - c. How should decisions be made?
 - d. Should the groups be given rights of **autonomy** (i.e. the right to form their own group or raise their own money)?
 - e. What rules are necessary to protect the rights and interests of the majority and the minority?
2. Write a set of rules that address these issues.
3. Present your rules to the class.

Discussion

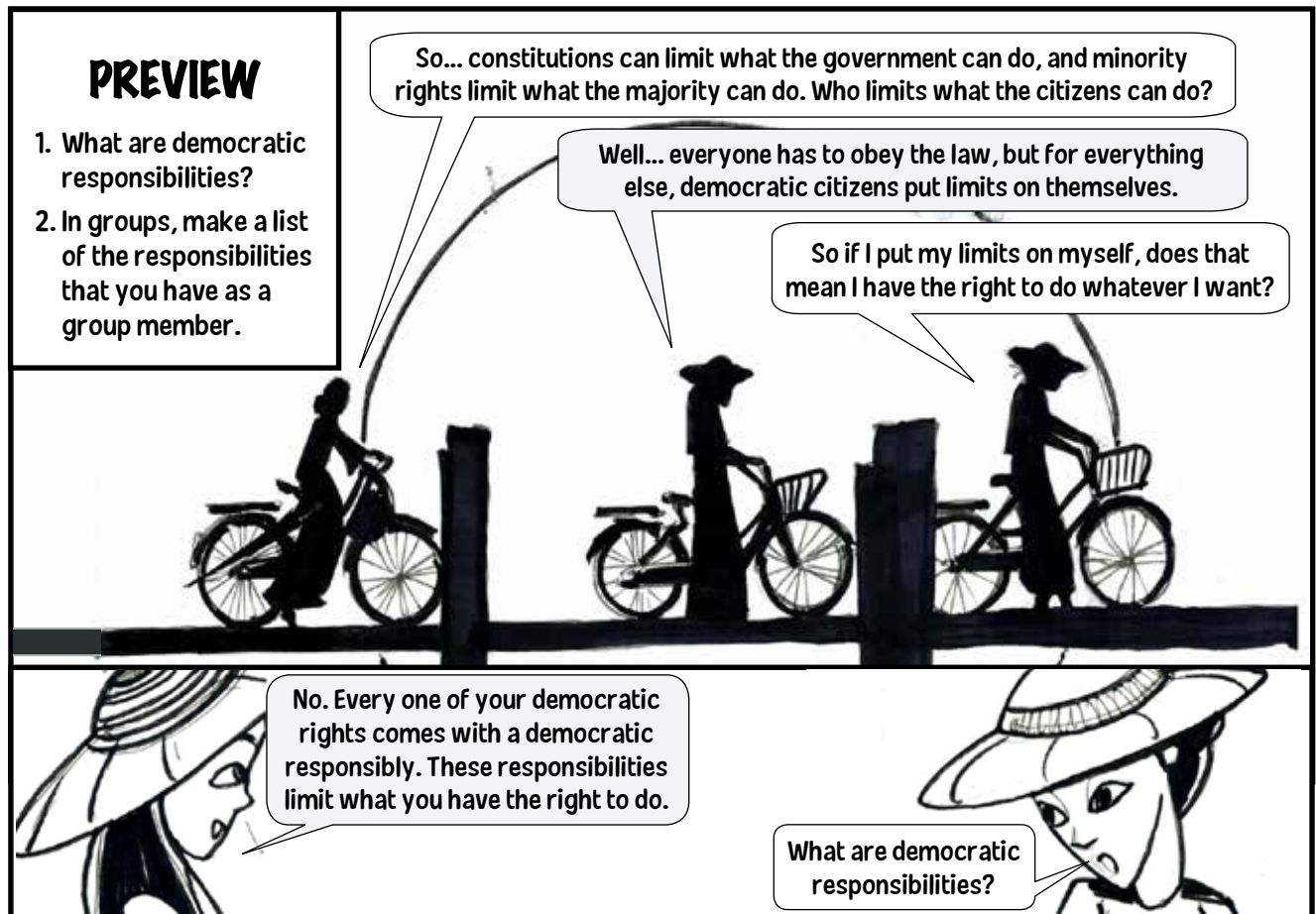
1. Why is majority rule important in a democracy?
2. Why are minority rights important in a democracy?
3. Are there any limitations on majority rule in your community?
4. Can you think of any conflicts between the decisions of the majority and the rights of minorities in your community? How were those conflicts resolved?

Reflection

1. Think of a time you were involved in a conflict between a minority and the majority. What happened? Give examples.
2. Is there anything you would have done differently if you had another chance?

3.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND DEMOCRACY

3.2.1 RESPONSIBILITIES IN A DEMOCRACY



Rights and responsibilities cannot exist without each other. If someone has a right, they also have a responsibility to respect other people's rights.

Democratic rights are a benefit of being a member of a democratic community. If citizens want to receive these benefits, they have a responsibility to actively participate in their community. This includes:

- contributing to the development of the community;
- taking part in decision-making about issues that affect the community;
- respecting the rules and laws of that community.

A community is shaped by the decisions that its members make. Democratic citizens have a responsibility to make good choices and think about the other members of their community.

Exercise

Match the elements of democracy with the responsibilities.
There can be more than one element of democracy for each responsibility.



a. Vote and encourage others to vote.

Example answer: 1, 3

- b. Respect the opinions and beliefs of other people.
- c. Take part in democracy through forming and joining organisations, associations and other groups.
- d. Be informed about different candidates in an election.
- e. express your opinions and ideas.
- f. Be informed and think critically about social and political issues.
- g. Take part in activities that develop and improve the community.
- h. Volunteer to support a candidate in their campaign.
- i. Accept that there are political ideas that you disagree with.
- j. Do not break the law.
- k. Seek information and express your concerns to keep the government accountable.
- l. Run for office.
- m. Don't limit the political rights of others through violence, intimidation or threats.
- n. Don't discriminate against people because of race, ethnic background, sex, religion, sexual orientation or disability.
- o. Be aware of your legal rights and responsibilities.
- p. Speak out against corruption when you see it.
- q. Make sure that elections are carried out in a free and fair way.
- r. Treat others with respect, regardless of their views.

Rank the Responsibilities

Activity

1. Choose the ten most important activities from the list and rank order of importance for:
 - all citizens
 - leaders
 - you
2. Compare the three lists (all citizens, leaders, and you). Which items are the same and which are different?
3. Compare your list with the list of responsibilities you made at the start of 3.2.1. Which are the same and which are different?

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES IN A DEMOCRACY



20 of the most important responsibilities of citizens



- | | |
|---|--|
| a. Become informed by learning about issues and leaders. | k. Promote unity. |
| b. Protect and respect public property. | l. Vote in elections. |
| c. Educate others about issues and leaders. | m. Stand to be a representative for your community. |
| d. Debate issues. | n. Pay taxes. |
| e. Volunteer in your community. | o. Become educated. |
| f. Work in the community in support of a cause. | p. Take care of the environment. |
| g. Form or join political parties or community organisations. | q. Serve in the military. |
| h. Preserve your culture and traditions. | r. Protest against the government by demonstrations, strikes, etc. |
| i. Promote peace. | s. Respect the rights of other citizens. |
| j. Attend political or community meetings. | t. Obey the law. |



Focus on Myanmar

Myanmar Citizens' Responsibilities – Two Views

Text 1: *Civics for High Schools, 1953*, talks about five main responsibilities of citizens:

1. **Respect the nation's laws.** An important responsibility for democratic citizens is to obey the laws... The duty of citizens is not only to follow the laws of the country. They must also persuade other citizens to follow the laws.
2. **Pay tax.** Elected governments have a lot of work to do for citizens' **welfare**. To do all these tasks the government needs a lot of money. Therefore, government has responsibility to take tax from citizens. Citizens have a responsibility to pay both state tax and local **municipal** taxes.
3. **Citizens and Voting.** In a democratic country the basic responsibility of a citizen is voting. We should value this voting power and use it effectively... People who do not vote are not fulfilling their duties as citizens.
4. **Basic education.** Every citizen has the responsibility to get good education... One objective of education is to participate and grow peacefully with other citizens. Education is not only for career development.
5. **Civil service.** There are two different kinds of **civil service**. The first is 'the civil service', and the second is volunteering. If civil servants do their work generously, honestly and dutifully, people will see them as good workers with honour. Volunteers will also have this honour.

Text 2: The 2008 Constitution states that citizens of Myanmar have the following duties to their country:

- to keep the country whole and independent and to keep a spirit of unity in the country
- to follow the laws of the constitution
- to participate in military training and military service to defend the country
- to increase unity and promote peace
- to help to develop the country
- to pay taxes
- to preserve and keep safe national culture
- to keep the environment safe
- to develop human resources
- to protect public property

Exercise

Compare these texts with the ten responsibilities that you chose in the activity on page 85.

1. What is the same?
2. What is different?

Discussion

1. What are the most important responsibilities that people have in your community?
2. What stops people from fulfilling their responsibilities in your community?
3. What happens when people do not fulfill these responsibilities?
4. What can be done to encourage people to accept their responsibilities more in your community?

1. Have you ever neglected or ignored a responsibility? What happened?
2. Have you ever been negatively affected by someone else neglecting or ignoring a responsibility? How did you feel?

Reflection

3.2.2 RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

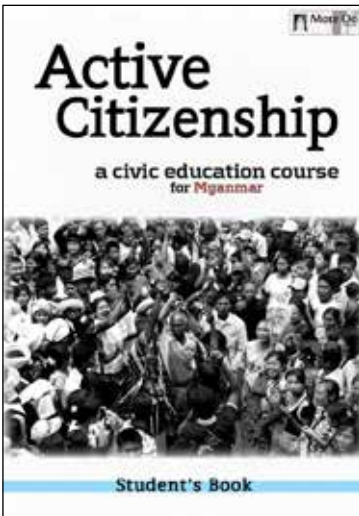


In a democracy, governments exist to serve and protect their citizens. However, if citizens only vote, and then do nothing until the next election, democracy will get weaker. This can lead to many problems including corruption, mismanagement and abuses of power.

Democracy needs active citizens to work with the government to make sure it knows about the people's needs. Democracy also needs citizens to criticise the government if it is not meeting those needs. This requires citizens to be aware of the social and political situation and accept their civic responsibilities.

We can identify some key characteristics of active citizenship:

1. Citizens volunteer their time and effort to develop their community;
2. Citizens actively take part in the decisions that affect them;
3. Citizens are aware of social and political issues that affect their community;
4. Citizens challenge unjust decisions, actions or situations.



Exercise

Match the activities below with the four characteristics of active citizens, above. Answers can be more than one characteristic.

What can I do to be an ACTIVE CITIZEN?



Here are seven things you can do...

- a. Attend a community meeting to decide where a new road will be built.
- b. Work together with local government to find a solution to a problem in your community.
- c. Express your concerns about a new factory to your representative.
- d. Be informed about new laws that affect your community.
- e. Join together with other people to **raise awareness** about the effects of pollution.
- f. Organise a protest against a decision you disagree with.
- g. Vote in a local election.



Focus on Myanmar

An Interview with Khin Hnin Kyi Thar

Khin Hnin Kyi Thar is the 28-year-old founder of the Individual Philanthropic Network, based in Yangon. The network focuses on helping poor people in Myaing, an area between Sagaing and Magwe regions.



Q: How did you start your **network**?

A: In September 2012, I made a trip to the mountain range to write an article about people suffering from illnesses there. I found many social problems in that community. After I wrote the article, some donors sent money to me so I could buy the things that people needed. So I started this organisation.

Q: How do you raise funds?

A: I have used Facebook to collect money since starting the network – both my personal account and the network's page. I talk with donors and new volunteers on Facebook. Sometimes I never even meet them in person. About 98 percent of donors from here and from other countries donate via Facebook

Q: How do you help the people in Myaing?

A: We started with education. The government says primary school is supposed to be free. However, the children in the mountain were studying in tents and they had to pay the teachers themselves. When they could not pay, the teachers stopped teaching. So we built seven schools for them and asked the Myaing local government to recognise these schools as government schools. We asked them to offer free education at the primary level. We also bring doctors to treat the people about eight times per year.

Q: Why did you start your network?

A: When we do development work, we can make a difference by ourselves. We don't need to wait for the government. I wanted to start making a difference. I wanted to change what needs to be changed.

Adapted from The Irrawaddy, <http://www.irrawaddy.org/interview/region-forgotten.html>

1. Why did Khin Hnin Kyi Thar start the Individual Philanthropic Network?
2. What activities does her network carry out?
3. How did she raise funds for those networks?
4. Which characteristics of an active citizen does Khin Hnin Kyi Thar have?

Exercise

Activity



Troubletown's school is located at the edge of the town next to a big field. The students like to play on the field. The school is surrounded by farms. The farmers all have dogs to scare away animals and protect their crops.

The school kitchen throws out all of its rubbish and left-over food into a pile in the field. This attracts the dogs, who come to eat the left over food in the rubbish pile.

Some of the students have been throwing stones at the dogs. Recently, some students have been bitten by the dogs and became very sick. The parents of these children are very angry and are demanding that something is done about this situation.

1. Work in groups. Each group has ten 'responsibility points' to give to the four groups in the responsibility matrix (below). Each point represents an amount of responsibility.
 - For example, if you think one group is total responsible, give it ten points.
 - If you think two groups are equally responsible, give them five points each.
 - Distribute your ten points according to how you see the situation.

Responsibility Points



Responsibility Matrix

Farmers	School Management
Students	Parents

2. Present your results to the class. Explain your reasons for dividing the points.
3. Think of another issue in your community. Design a responsibility matrix, and present the results to the class.

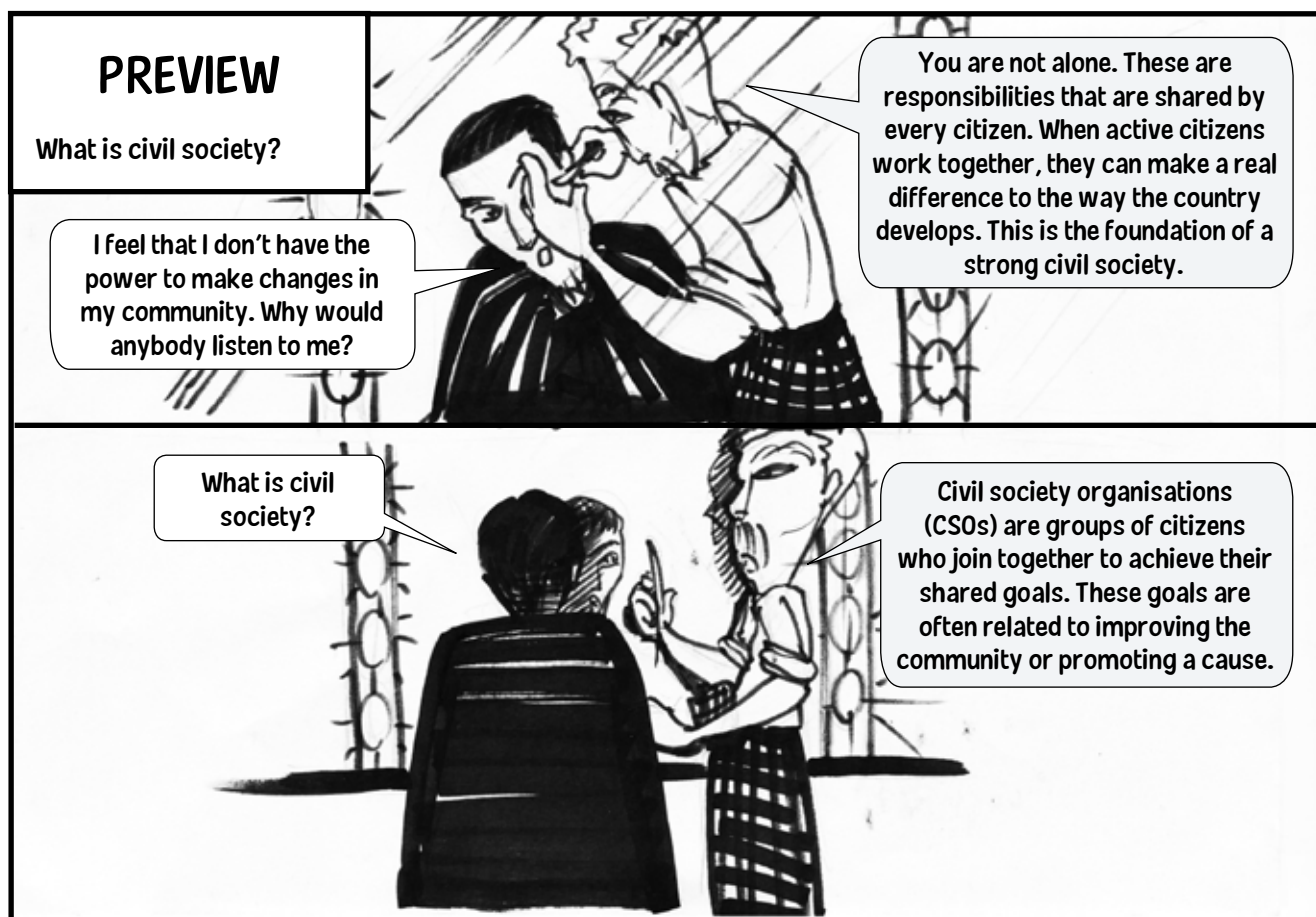
Discussion

1. Identify some active citizens in your community.
2. Which of their achievements do you think are most important? Why?
3. What can be done to encourage active citizenship in your community?

Reflection

1. Think of an active citizen in your community. What values do they have?
2. Which values do you share with them?
3. Which of their values do you admire and want to develop in yourself?

3.2.3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY



Common goals of CSOs include:

1. protecting the environment;
2. **empowering** marginalised groups;
3. improving access to health or education;
4. promoting social development.

Civil society is very important for democracy. It allows citizens to participate independently of the government. This independence is important for several reasons. Firstly, it allows CSOs to be critical of the government. Secondly, it allows them to meet needs that the government does not.

On the other hand, many CSOs work very closely with the government to achieve their goals. In this way, they act as a bridge between the people and the government.

Strong civil society organisations and active citizens are important for promoting participation. They make sure that the government is more accountable and respects citizens' rights.

Exercise

Match the CSOs with the four goals from the text on page 91.
Some CSOs might have more than one goal.

a. Action for Public

Main Activities:

- vocational training and income generation for women living with HIV
- **microfinance** programme
- development and capacity building training for youth

<https://www.facebook.com/actionforpublicAFP>

Example Answer:

2 – empowering
marginalised groups

b. Shan Women's Action Network

Main Activities:

- promoting women's rights and the rights of children
- opposing violence against women and children
- working together for peace and freedom
- women's empowerment
- environmental awareness

<http://www.shanwomen.org/>



c. Karuna Myanmar Social Services

Main Activities:

- health care & HIV/AIDS awareness training programme
- water and sanitation programme
- early childhood care
- scholarship programme
- disaster risk reduction awareness programme

<http://www.kmss-caritasmyanmar.org/>



d. Rakhine Coastal Region Conservation Association

Main Activities:

- forest conservation
- establishment of community forests
- natural disaster prevention work
- protect wild elephants from illegal wildlife poaching and killing

<http://www.rakhineconservation.org/>



e. Kyaunghtarmikhin Local Development Organization

Main Activities:

- capacity building for local organisations and communities
- microfinance activities to build community-led finances
- reforestation program
- leadership training programmes for citizens

f. Burmese Migrant Teachers Association

Main Activities:

- ensure all children in migrant communities have access to education
- improve capacity of migrant teachers in Thailand
- create a curriculum recognised by Thailand and Myanmar
- advocacy for rights of migrant teachers and students

<https://bmta05.wordpress.com/>



Pollution in the Community

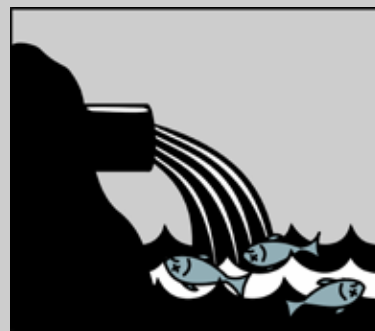
Read the text then follow the instructions.

Activity

In the area around a village, there are lots of factories. These factories produce a lot of pollution and waste. In the last few years, more and more people have got sick. Recently, an environmental NGO came to the village to measure the amount of pollution. They found that the amount of pollution was very dangerous for the health of the local people.

When the local community found out this information, they decided to do something about it. Now they are having a meeting to discuss their plan. The items on the agenda are:

- What possible actions can the community take?
- Which actions would be the most effective?
- Who should be responsible for carrying out these actions?



1. You are at this community meeting. In groups, prepare a presentation about your solutions.
2. Have a similar meeting about an issue that affects your community.
 - What are the problems that your community wants to address?
 - What possible actions can citizens in your area take to address this problem?
 - Which is the most effective type of action that citizens can take?
 - Who should be responsible for carrying out these actions?
3. Prepare a presentation outlining the problem and possible solutions.
4. Design a plan of action – a list of the actions you will take – to change the situation.

1. Why is civil society important in a democracy?
2. Which CSOs are active in your community? What do they do?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a strong civil society?

Discussion

1. Have you ever volunteered for a CSO? What was your experience?
2. Have you ever personally benefitted from the work of a CSO? What happened?
3. Have you ever been negatively affected by the work of a CSO? What happened?

Reflection