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How to use *Democracy*

Before you use this book, read the information on these pages. It will help you find your way around the book more easily, and help you to understand the goals and learning strategies used in the book. The aim of this book is to help you develop the knowledge, skills and values that are important for democratic citizenship. To help you practice these, there are four kinds of questions:

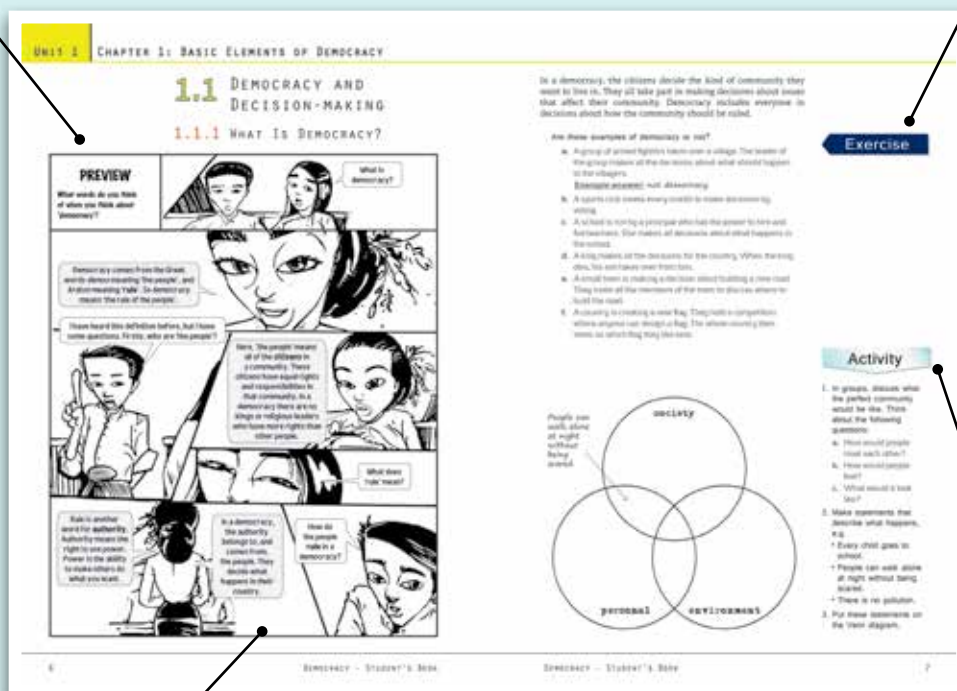
- **Exercises** focus on increasing your *knowledge* about democracy.
- **Activities** focus on developing and practicing important *skills* such as problem solving, teamwork, compromise, presenting, debating, planning and critical thinking.
- **Discussions** focus on how the issues and ideas in the book relate to your community. They encourage you to develop your understanding by expressing your opinion and listening to the views of others.
- **Reflections** focus on reflecting on and evaluating your own *values* and how they relate to the ideas and issues in the book.

Structure

This book is divided into three themed units. Unit 1 focuses on the basic elements of democracy, Unit 2 on the role of rights and responsibilities in a democracy and Unit 3 on the role of government in a democracy. Each unit has two chapters which explore the theme. Each chapter is subdivided six subsections. Each subsection contains exercises, an activity, discussion and reflection questions.

Every subsection starts with a *Preview*. These encourage you to think about the topic you are going to study. They focus on what you already know and think about the topic.

Exercises develop your ability to work with information. They ask you to find and think about information in texts by answering questions about them.



Dialogues are conversations between different Myanmar people. These conversations focus on key questions about democracy, and introduce the main ideas in a section.

Activities are designed to help you practice the skills you need for civic participation. These include teamwork, problem solving, debate and critical thinking.

Discussions encourage you discuss the ideas in the text and how they relate to important or controversial issues affecting your community.

Reflections ask you to think about your feelings about the ideas in the text and how these relate to your personal values.



Before and After Each Unit:



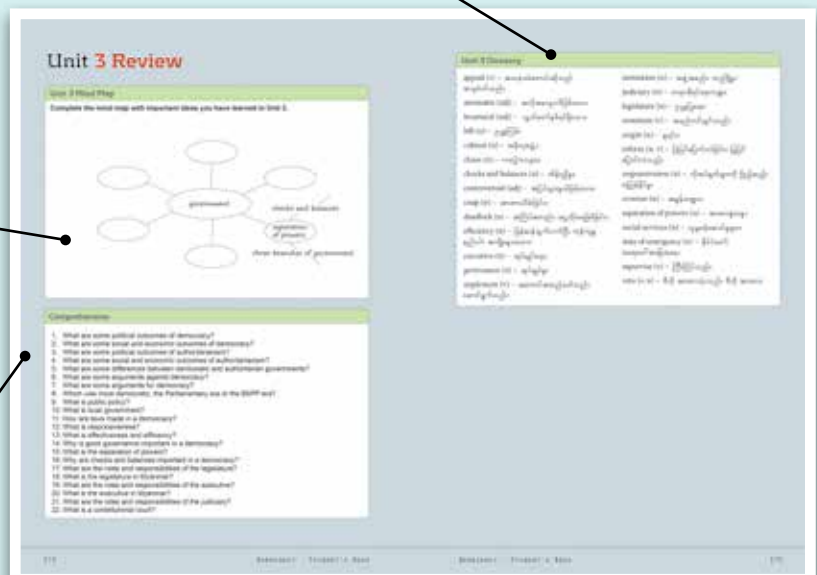
Look at the *Learning Goals*. These will help you to identify the most important knowledge, skills and values covered in the unit. These will also help you to evaluate your progress through the course.

Read the *Unit Themes* to prepare you for the main ideas in each chapter.

Each *Review* section has a blank mind map. Use this to remember and revise the most important information from the unit. Write down everything you can remember about the chapter without looking back.

When you see a word in **bold** in the text, there will be a translation of the word or idea in the *Glossary*.

Comprehension Questions help you revise the information in each unit. Try to answer all the questions from memory. After writing the answers, go back through the unit and check them.





Unit 1:

Elements of Democracy

Unit Themes

Unit 1 introduces democracy and democratic decision-making.

Chapter One looks at the most basic requirements for a democracy: *political equality* and *free and fair elections*.

Chapter Two looks at five other elements that are necessary for a full democracy (accountability, transparency, participation, tolerance and compromise and the rule of law).

These seven elements of democracy will be revisited throughout the book to help learners analyse the role of rights in a democracy (Unit 2) and the nature of democratic government (Unit 3).



Unit 1: Learning Goals

Knowledge

[Exercises]

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

- the idea of democracy;
- the role of decision-making in a democracy.
- the difference between direct and indirect democracy.
- the importance of equality;
- the importance of elections;
- the characteristics of a free and fair election;
- the importance of accountability;
- the importance of transparency;
- the importance of participation;
- the importance of tolerance and compromise;
- the importance of the rule of law.

Skills

[Activities]

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

- use a Venn diagram to envision your perfect society;
- compare and contrast different decision-making systems;
- create a list of criteria for a candidate;
- plan and carry out a debate about who should be allowed to vote;
- identify the values of an ideal political candidate;
- role-play a political debate;
- analyse accountability in local institutions;
- discuss the pros and cons of limiting transparency;
- evaluate the class's views on participation;
- use a win-win quadrant to resolve a conflict;
- role-play a mock trial;
- use pyramid ranking.

Values

[Reflections]

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

- the idea of the *rule of the people*;
- whether all decisions should be made democratically or not;
- the decisions you allow others to make for you;
- taking money from the rich to end poverty;
- the importance of voting;
- whether elections lead to the best government;
- the importance of personal accountability;
- the importance of being honest and open;
- ways to participate in your community;
- views and beliefs that should not be tolerated;
- reasons why people do and do not obey the law;
- the most important elements of democracy.

1.1 DEMOCRACY AND DECISION-MAKING

1.1.1 WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

PREVIEW

What words do you think of when you think about 'democracy'?

What is democracy?

Democracy comes from the Greek words *demos* meaning 'the people', and *kratos* meaning 'rule'. So democracy means 'the rule of the people'.

I have heard this definition before, but I have some questions. Firstly, who are 'the people'?

Here, 'the people' means all of the **citizens** in a community. These citizens have equal rights and responsibilities in that community. In a democracy there are no kings or religious leaders who have more rights than other people.

What does 'rule' mean?

Rule is another word for **authority**. Authority means the right to use power. Power is the ability to make others do what you want.

In a democracy, the authority belongs to, and comes from, the people. They decide what happens in their country.

How do the people **rule** in a democracy?

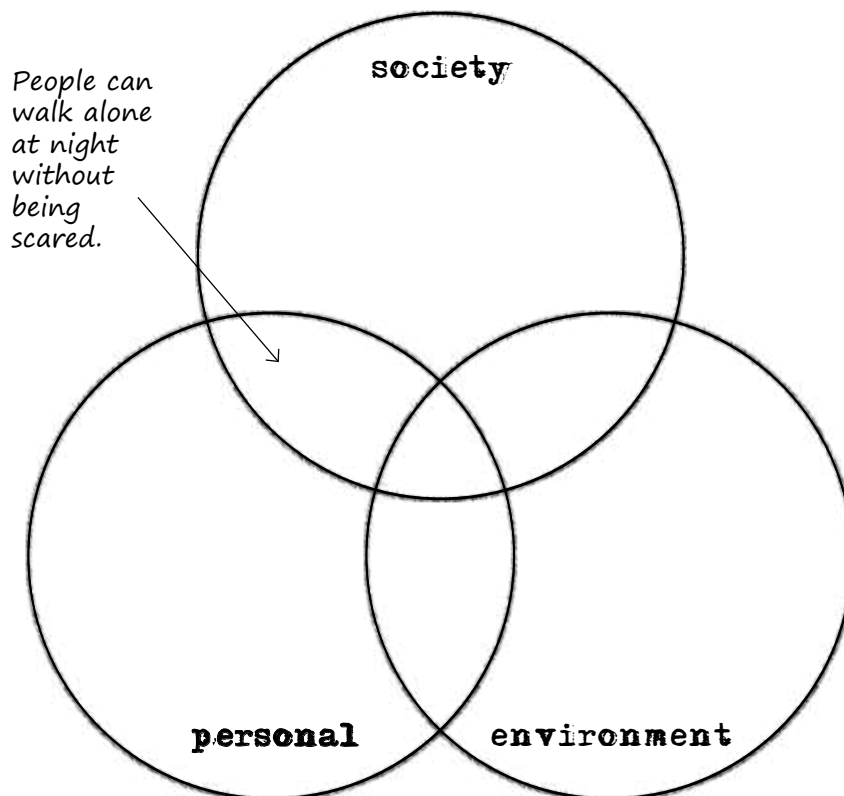
In a democracy, the citizens decide the kind of community they want to live in. They all take part in making decisions about issues that affect their community. Democracy includes everyone in decisions about how the community should be ruled.

Are these examples of democracy or not?

- a. A group of armed fighters takes over a village. The leader of the group makes all the decisions about what should happen to the villagers.
Example answer: *not democracy*
- b. A sports club meets every month to make decisions by voting.
- c. A school is run by a principal who has the power to hire and fire teachers. She makes all decisions about what happens in the school.
- d. A king makes all the decisions for the country. When the king dies, his son takes over from him.
- e. A small town is making a decision about building a new road. They invite all the members of the town to discuss where to build the road.
- f. A country is creating a new flag. They hold a competition where anyone can design a flag. The whole country then votes on which flag they like best.

Exercise

Activity



1. In groups, discuss what the perfect community would be like. Think about the following questions:
 - a. How would people treat each other?
 - b. How would people feel?
 - c. What would it look like?
2. Make statements that describe what happens, e.g.
 - Every child goes to school.
 - People can walk alone at night without being scared.
 - There is no pollution.
3. Put these statements on the Venn diagram.

Discussion

1. Who has the power to make decisions in your community?
2. Choose one of the statements in your Venn diagram. What kinds of decision need to be made for this to happen?

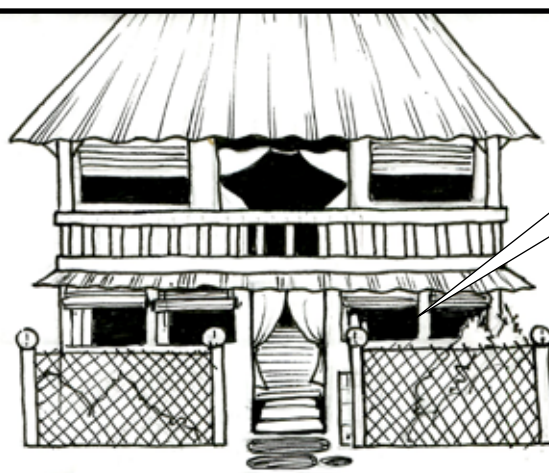
Reflection

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the idea of 'rule by the people'?
2. Do you think it is a good idea for everyone to **participate** in decision-making in their community?

1.1.2 DEMOCRATIC DECISION-MAKING

PREVIEW

What is democratic decision-making?

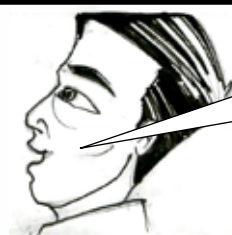


Why are you talking about decision-making so much? Isn't democracy all about governments and presidents?

No, democracy starts at the community level. In any community, decisions have to be made for the whole group.



So what is the relationship between democracy and decision-making?



The most basic questions that communities face are:

- How should decisions be made?
- What **rules** should be followed?
- What should our goals be?
- How should we distribute work and resources?

Almost all group decisions have one thing in common: people disagree about them. People have different needs and ideas, so there will always be some conflict when making group decisions.

Every group decision involves winners and losers. When communities make decisions about how to share resources and opportunities, some groups benefit more than others.

For example, there is a community that has a lot of sick people and a lot of uneducated people. However, this community only has enough money to build a school or a clinic. If the community builds a school, the uneducated people will benefit but the sick people will not. If they build a clinic, the sick people will benefit but the uneducated people will not.

The decision-making process affects which groups benefit. Including a group in decision-making makes them more likely to benefit. Excluding a group makes them less likely to benefit.

There are four kinds of decision-making.

1. **AUTOCRATIC:** One person makes group decisions alone.
2. **PARTICIPATORY:** The leader of a group collects ideas and suggestions from everyone. The group discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each idea. The leader then makes a decision after considering everyone's input.
3. **MAJORITY VOTE:** Everyone gets the chance to express their ideas about what to do. Everyone then votes. The idea that gets the most votes wins.
4. **CONSENSUS:** The group tries to find a decision that everyone can support. Everyone has a chance to express their ideas and opinions before a decision is made. **Consensus** happens when all group members agree with the decision.



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

- a. Group decisions usually involve some disagreement.
- b. The type of decision-making process can affect which groups benefit from a decision.
- c. **Participatory** decision-making requires leaders to talk to other people before they make a decision.
- d. Consensus decision-making is the same as **majority** voting.
- e. To reach consensus, it is necessary to discuss until everyone agrees with the decision.
- f. **Autocratic** decision-making includes more people than consensus decision-making.

Exercise

Exercise

Match the statements to the four kinds of decision-making.

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1. autocratic | 3. majority vote |
| 2. participatory | 4. consensus |
- a. A doctor decides the best treatment for an injury.
Example answer: *autocratic*
 - b. All the teachers in a school meet to decide where they will go for a school trip. They discuss all the options until they reach an agreement.
 - c. A teacher decides what to teach to her fourth grade maths class.
 - d. Students vote on whether to spend their class budget on new chairs or new fans.
 - e. The local governor invites all community members to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of building a new bridge before he makes a decision.
 - f. A country votes to decide which of two people will become the leader of the country.
 - g. All members of a band decide which songs they will play at a concert. Each band member suggests three songs and then they discuss until they have a final list.



Democracy is a way of resolving conflicting interests, ideas and opinions in a group without using force or violence. There are two important features of democratic decision-making that support this:

1. All members have an equal right to express their opinions. Those who are not powerful have the same input in the decision as those who are powerful. This avoids the situation where the interests, ideas and opinions of weaker or smaller groups are ignored.
2. All members have an equal right to participate in decision-making. A democratic decision involves the people who are affected by that decision. People are not then negatively affected by decisions that they could not take part in.

Desert Island Role Play

Read the text then follow the instructions.

You were on a boat journey. Your boat sank, but you all swam to a nearby island. Now you need to decide how and where you are going to live. You need to find water, food and shelter very quickly. However, you also need to agree on the rules about how you are all going to live together.

Someone suggests that as the first step, the whole group needs to agree on a way to make decisions.



Activity

1. Get into one of these four groups:
 - majority vote for all decisions (majority vote);
 - one leader makes all decisions alone (autocratic);
 - one leader makes all decisions after **consulting** with others (participatory);
 - decision-making requires everyone to agree (consensus).
2. Make a presentation that argues for your group's decision-making process. Outline the advantages of this decision-making process to the rest of the class.
3. Discuss the disadvantages of the other decision-making processes. Decide which is the best decision-making process.
4. Which decision-making process would you choose? Why?

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of democratic decision-making?
2. How are decisions made in your community? Do you think they should be made more or less democratically? Why?

Discussion

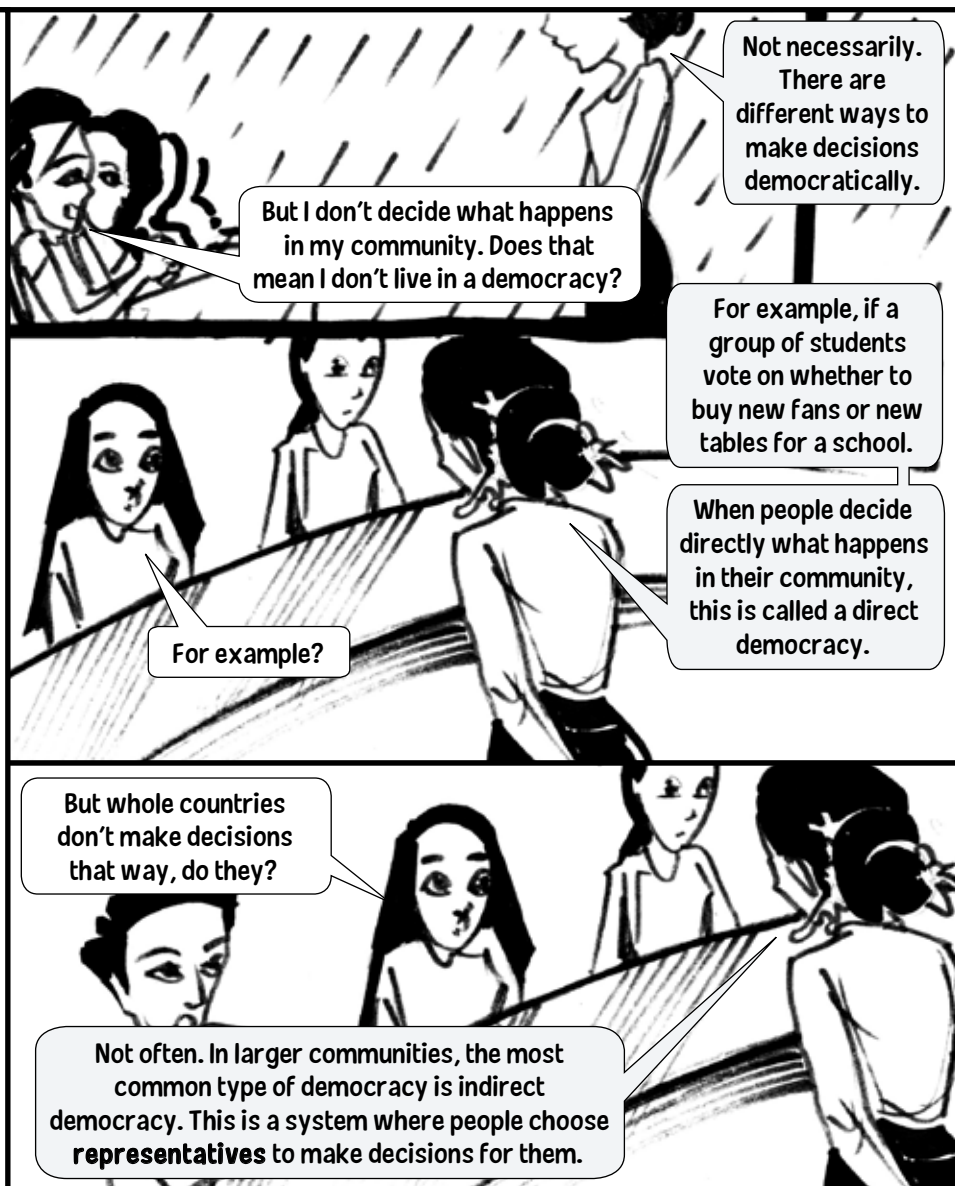
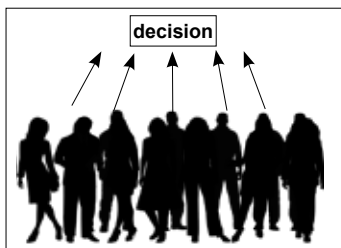
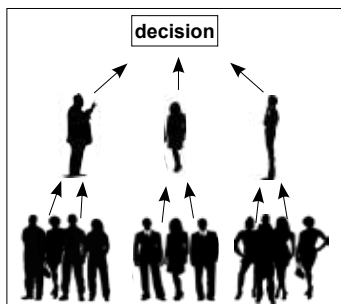
1. Do you think there are some decisions that should not be made democratically? Why?
2. Think of a time when you were part of a group that made a really good decision. Was this decision made democratically? If not, how was the decision made?
3. Think of a time when you were part of a group that made a really bad decision. Was this decision made democratically? If not, how was the decision made?

Reflection

1.1.3 DIRECT AND INDIRECT DEMOCRACY

PREVIEW

Look at the diagrams. Which is direct democracy and which is representative democracy?



In a direct democracy, decisions are made by all the members of a community. However, direct democracy is not practical in communities with millions of people (like a country). This is because:

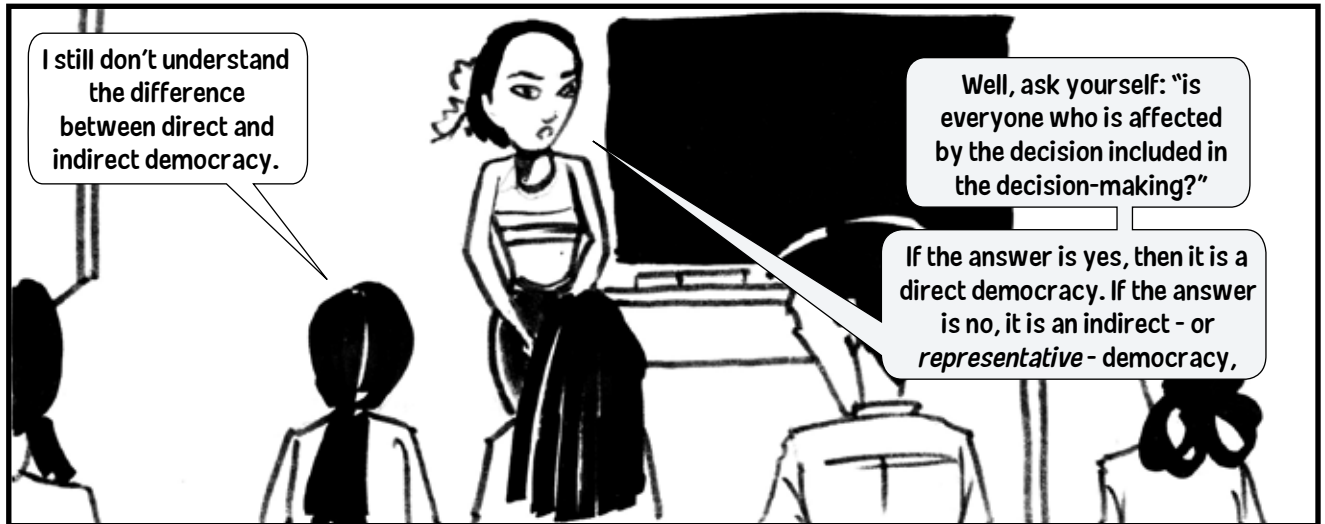
1. modern democracies involve such a large number of people that it is impossible for them to gather together to make decisions;
2. most citizens do not have the time, the interest or the knowledge to take part in every decision made in a community.

For these reasons, indirect democracy is the most common form of democracy in the world today.

Which of the following are reasons why indirect democracy is used in large communities?

Exercise

- a. Direct democracy is hard to do with large numbers of people.
- b. Citizens don't have the time or knowledge to take part in all decisions.
- c. Direct democracy is unfamiliar to most people.



Read these situations. Are they direct or indirect forms of democracy?

Exercise

In a community...

- a. decisions are made by a community council. They have a meeting once a month to decide on issues that affect the community. Any member of the community can join the council;
Example answer: *direct*
- b. the people elect representatives to make laws for the country. There is one elected person for every 100,000 people;
- c. any community member can call a vote on any issue. When they do, all other members of the community have the responsibility to vote;
- d. all important decisions are made by a president who is elected by the people in a vote every five years;
- e. there is a group of people who are responsible for dealing with community issues. However, they cannot make any decisions without consulting the rest of the community. They call a meeting every time they need to make a decision. All community members have the right to attend these meetings;
- f. important decisions are made by the leader of a group of elected representatives. The leader is chosen by all the representatives in a vote. Representatives are elected by the people every five years.



Exercise

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

In a representative democracy...

- the government is made up of citizens;
- the government chooses the representatives;
- citizens give the government the authority to make decisions on their behalf;
- the government's authority comes from the people;
- any citizen can be a representative;
- the requirements to be a representative only apply to some citizens.

The government is the group of people who lead the country and make decisions about national issues. Governments have the authority to make decisions about laws, **budgets** and the way that society functions. In a democracy, this authority comes from the people. They give the government permission to make decisions for them. In a representative democracy, governments are made up of representatives chosen by the people.

To become a representative, first a citizen must satisfy the country's requirements for being a representative (e.g. a representative must be at least 25 years old). These requirements apply to all citizens equally.

The next step is to explain why they want to be a representative, and why they would do a good job. Citizens then choose representatives based on who they think will be the best.

This group of representatives (often called a **parliament**) then form the government. These representatives are known as 'members of parliament'.



Focus on Myanmar

How is the Government Formed in Myanmar?



Parliament buildings, Naypyidaw

There are three steps to forming the government in Myanmar.

Step 1

Citizens vote for candidates to represent their community in government. In each township, the candidate with the largest number of votes will be chosen to join the parliament. This means that that candidate wins a seat in the parliament. They can then take part in decision-making on national issues.

The Myanmar parliament has two 'houses' (groups of representatives): the Pyithu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw. Together they are known as the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. The voters choose 75% of the representatives in the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw. The military appoints the other 25%.

Step 2

After the representatives have been elected, all the members of parliament vote to choose the president. They choose one of three candidates – one chosen by the Pyithu Hluttaw, one chosen by the Amyotha Hluttaw and one chosen by the military. The candidate with the highest number of votes becomes the president.

Step 3

After the president is elected, he or she forms the government. He or she chooses the ministers who will be responsible for making decisions in specific areas (health, education etc.) and other important positions. The new government is then given authority to rule the country.

1. What percentage of the members of parliament are chosen by the military?
2. How is the president chosen in Myanmar?
3. Who chooses the ministers in the Myanmar government?

Exercise

Activity

1. You are part of a group of experts who are deciding who should have the right to be a representative. Read the list of criteria, Do you agree with them all? Cross off the criteria you disagree with.
2. Add other criteria to the list.
3. What are the requirements for people to be a representative in your country?
4. What are the differences between the criteria that you chose and the criteria for people to be a representative in your country?

Criteria for Being a Representative

Criteria

- a. Only high school graduates will be allowed to be a representative.
- b. Only experts will be allowed to be representatives for positions that they know about (economists on economic matters, doctors on medical matters, etc.).
- c. Representatives must be at least 18 years of age.
- d. Representatives must be at least 40 years of age.
- e. Only people who have never committed a crime will be allowed to be a representative.
- f. Only those with democratic values will be allowed to be a representative.
- g. Only those of the majority ethnic group will be allowed to be a representative.
- h. Only people who are not religious leaders (e.g. monks, nuns, priests, imams etc.) are allowed to be a representative.
- i. Only women will be allowed to be a representative.
- j. Only persons who own property will be allowed to be a representative.
- k. Only the mentally healthy will be allowed to be a representative.
- l. Only the physically healthy will be allowed to be a representative.
- m. Only people who have never been **bankrupt** will be allowed to be a representative.

Discussion

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct democracy?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of representative democracy?
3. What examples of direct democracy can you see in your community?
4. What examples of representative democracy can you see in your community?

Reflection

1. Is there anyone to whom you give permission to make decisions for you?
2. What things do they make decisions about?
3. Why do you give them permission to decide for you?
4. How do you feel when they make decisions that you do not agree with?

1.2 ELEMENTS OF DEMOCRACY: EQUALITY AND ELECTIONS

1.2.1 EQUALITY



Exercise

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

In a democracy...

- only highly educated people are allowed to make decisions;
- there are no good reasons for stop someone from voting;
- the 'rule of the people' means that **minority** groups can be excluded from decision-making.

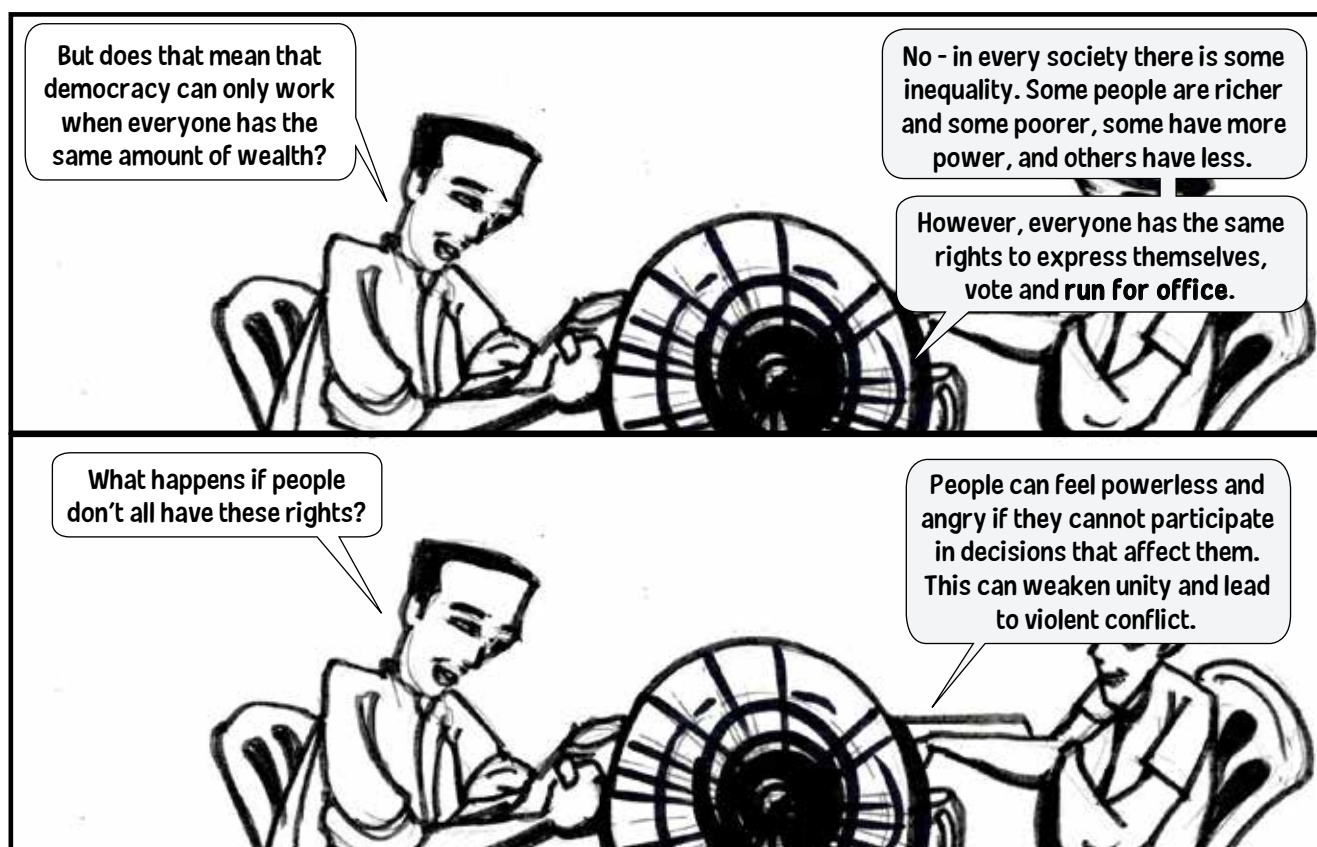
Equality is necessary for a representative democracy. Democracy cannot work if people with good ideas and commitment are **excluded** from decision-making, and people with bad ideas and little commitment have special decision-making powers.

In a democracy, each adult citizen has one vote, and each vote has equal value. This right should only be limited for a very good reason, such as if someone has a serious mental illness that prevents them from making decisions.

If some citizens are given less chance to choose their representatives, then the government will not reflect the whole community. For example:

- In Saudi Arabia women do not have the right to vote.
- Until 1994, black South Africans were not allowed to vote.
- In the 1980s, the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo didn't allow citizens from the Banyarwanda ethnic group to be representatives.

These cases are not examples of 'the rule of the people', because many of 'the people' are excluded from decision-making.



Debate – Choosing a Ruler

Read the text then follow the instructions.



A suggestion has been made to only allow 5,000 of the wisest, most educated people to vote. These people would be chosen based on their age, intelligence, and professional experience. There is now a debate between supporters and opponents of this new idea.



1. Work in groups of three. In each group:
 - one person represents the supporters of this idea;
 - one person represents the opponents of this idea;
 - one person is a journalist. They ask questions to the two representatives at the end of the debate.
2. Have the debate and question session.
3. As a class, discuss the main points for and against the suggestion.
4. Have a class vote on whether to support this suggestion or not.

Activity



Focus on Myanmar

Equality and Representation



Phyu Phyu Thin is a Member of Parliament (MP). She is also a well-known supporter of people with HIV/AIDS. She is one of only 20 women in the Myanmar parliament.

Q: You are rare as a young female MP. Do you have any difficulties in parliament because of your age?

A: In the Myanmar Parliament, there are more older MPs. Their age shows you that they are experienced. On the other hand, we need more strength from the youth as well. Myanmar needs both elders' experience and the young people's force for the country's development.

Q: How do male MPs behave around women?

A: I've seen that all are acting equally, like siblings. But some people do not take female politicians very seriously. I feel that men are still disrespectful towards women in politics. This can make it difficult for female MPs to participate as equals.

Q: What are the challenges that women face?

A: Some women have less chance to be successful in business or politics. Myanmar culture can limit them. For example married women have to do jobs around the house. It's the same with political jobs — many women are limited by their families and environment. So there are challenges that stop female representatives from achieving everything that they could.

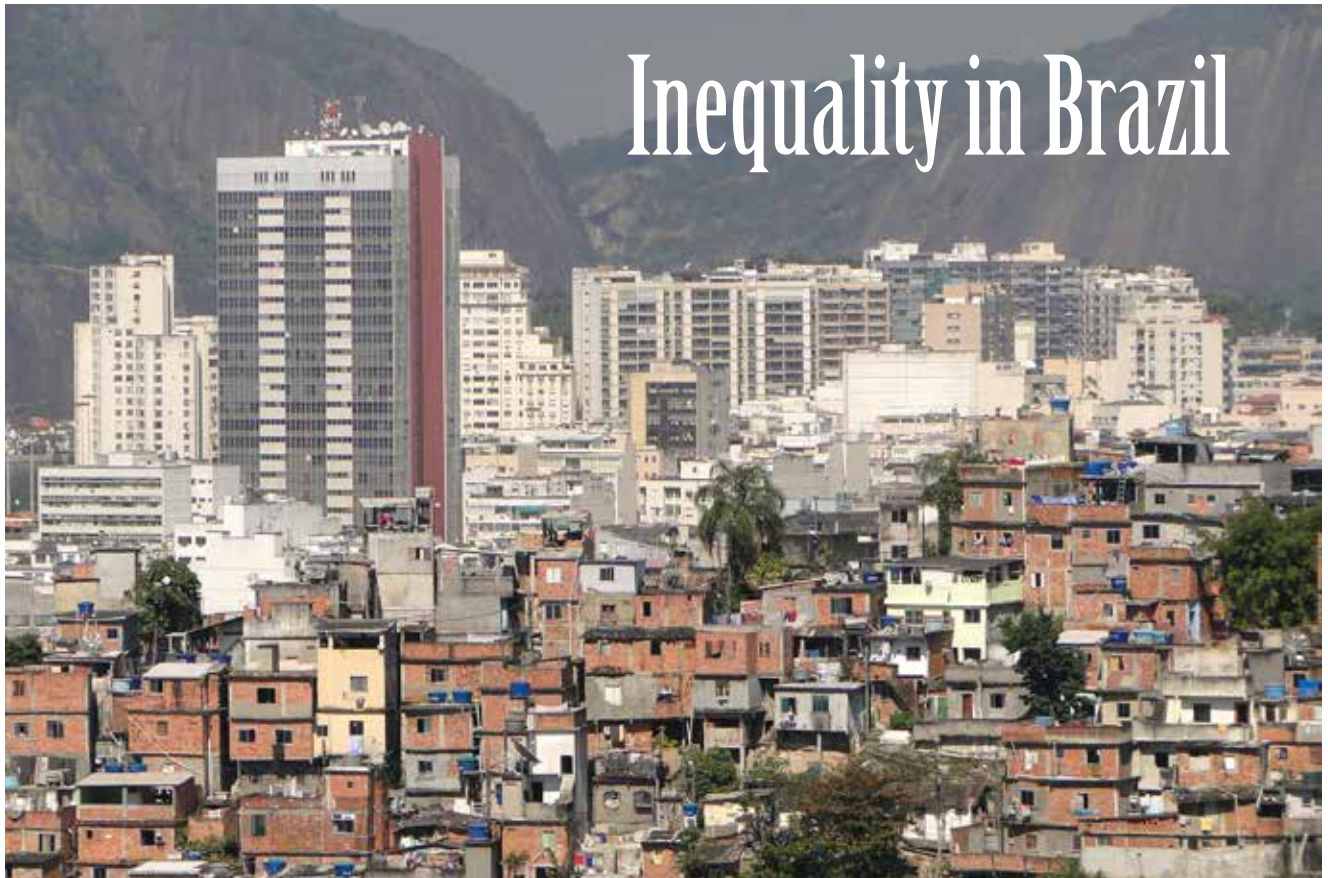
Adapted from: <http://www.irrawaddy.org/interview/pushing-limits-burmese-women-politics.html>

Exercise

1. Why is Phyu Phyu Thin unusual for an MP?
2. What problems does she face as an MP?
3. According to Phyu Phyu Thin, why can it be difficult for women in politics?

Discussion

1. Why is equality important for democracy?
2. What are the challenges of making sure that citizens are equal in a democracy?
3. Are people equal in your community? Why or why not?
4. What kinds of inequality are there in your community?
5. How does inequality affect your community?



1. How do you feel about inequality in your community?
2. If you could end poverty in your community by taking from the rich and giving to the poor, would you do it?

Reflection

1.2.2 ELECTIONS

PREVIEW

What is an election?

If everyone has the right to express their needs and **concerns**, and everyone needs to listen to them, doesn't this take a very long time?

Yes, it can take a long time. That is why most democracies rely on elections to make decisions. Elections allow large groups to make difficult decisions quickly.

Exercise

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

- Referenda are a way to include citizens in decision-making.
- Referenda are used to choose representatives.
- When people choose a representative in an election, this is an example of direct democracy.

A. WHY VOTE?

Elections provide people with the opportunity to decide what happens in their communities. Sometimes people vote for or against specific issues. This kind of vote is called a **referendum**. For example, if a community was deciding whether to build a new road in their town, the people might vote yes or no. This is an example of direct democracy.

Most elections are an example of indirect democracy. Members of a community usually choose representatives who will be responsible for making decisions for that community. In Myanmar, this is done by majority vote – the person who gets the most votes becomes the representative for their community.

The individuals who want to represent their community in government are called candidates. Before elections, people have an opportunity to learn about the views and values of different candidates. They think about which candidate best represents their own views and values. They then can vote for that candidate.





B. WHO TO VOTE FOR?

Most candidates in an election are members of a political party. Political parties are groups of people who have similar opinions about politics. They often share interests, identity or values, and work together to achieve their political goals.

Political parties try to gain power by having their party members elected to the government. They aim to be the party with the most representatives in the parliament. If they succeed, they become the *ruling party* and control the government. All the other parties are called **opposition** parties.

Political parties usually present promises about the actions and decisions that they will make if they get into power. They explain how these actions and decisions will benefit the people they are speaking to. Voters should think carefully about these promises and the values of a party before deciding who to vote for.

There are two important reasons why people choose to vote for a candidate or party.

- The promises that the candidate or party makes about what they will do if they win the election. Examples include improving security (e.g. making people feel safer), development (improving facilities or creating jobs) or equality (improving the conditions of **marginalised** groups).
- The values and character of the candidate. For example, honesty, commitment or fairness.

Exercise

Here are some promises made by a candidate in a recent election. Put them on the Venn diagram.

My Election Promises

I, A. Candidate, promise that if you vote for me:

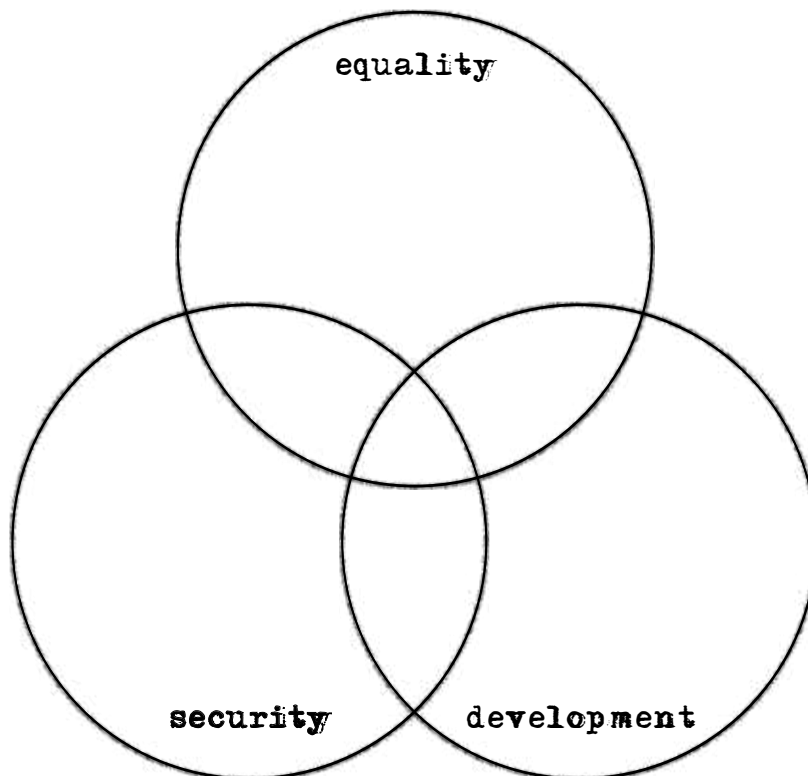
1. People will have access to cheaper electricity.
2. I will recruit more police.
3. Everyone will be able to see a doctor if they are sick.
4. Everyone will have access to safe, clean drinking water.
5. I will make longer sentences for criminals.
6. I will do everything that I can to end violent conflict.
7. There will be more street lights.
8. I will reduce unemployment by building new factories.
9. I will provide scholarships for poor students.
10. I will improve the bad roads.
11. I will improve the economy by inviting more foreign businesses.
12. Poverty is our biggest problem. We will give more support to the poor.



A. CANDIDATE

16

X

Name: A. CandidateDate: 1/12/15Signed: [Signature]

Your Perfect Political Candidate

1. What qualities would you like to see in a candidate for public office?

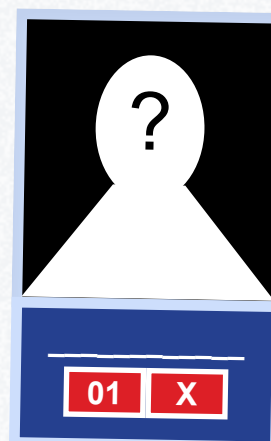
Activity

The Perfect Political Candidate

What qualities do you want to see in a politician?

Tick ☒ the boxes that you agree with and add some of your own.

1. ☐ honest
2. ☐ good at public speaking
3. ☐ fairness/justice
4. ☐ hard working
5. ☐ strong/powerful
6. ☐ experienced
7. ☐ brave
8. ☐ kind
9. ☐ **patriotic**
10. ☐ **cooperative**/inclusive
11. ☐ decisive
12. ☐ committed to the community



2. Add any other important qualities that are not on the list.
3. In groups, agree on six qualities that the candidate should have.
4. Groups present the qualities of their perfect candidate for office, and explain why they think these qualities are important.

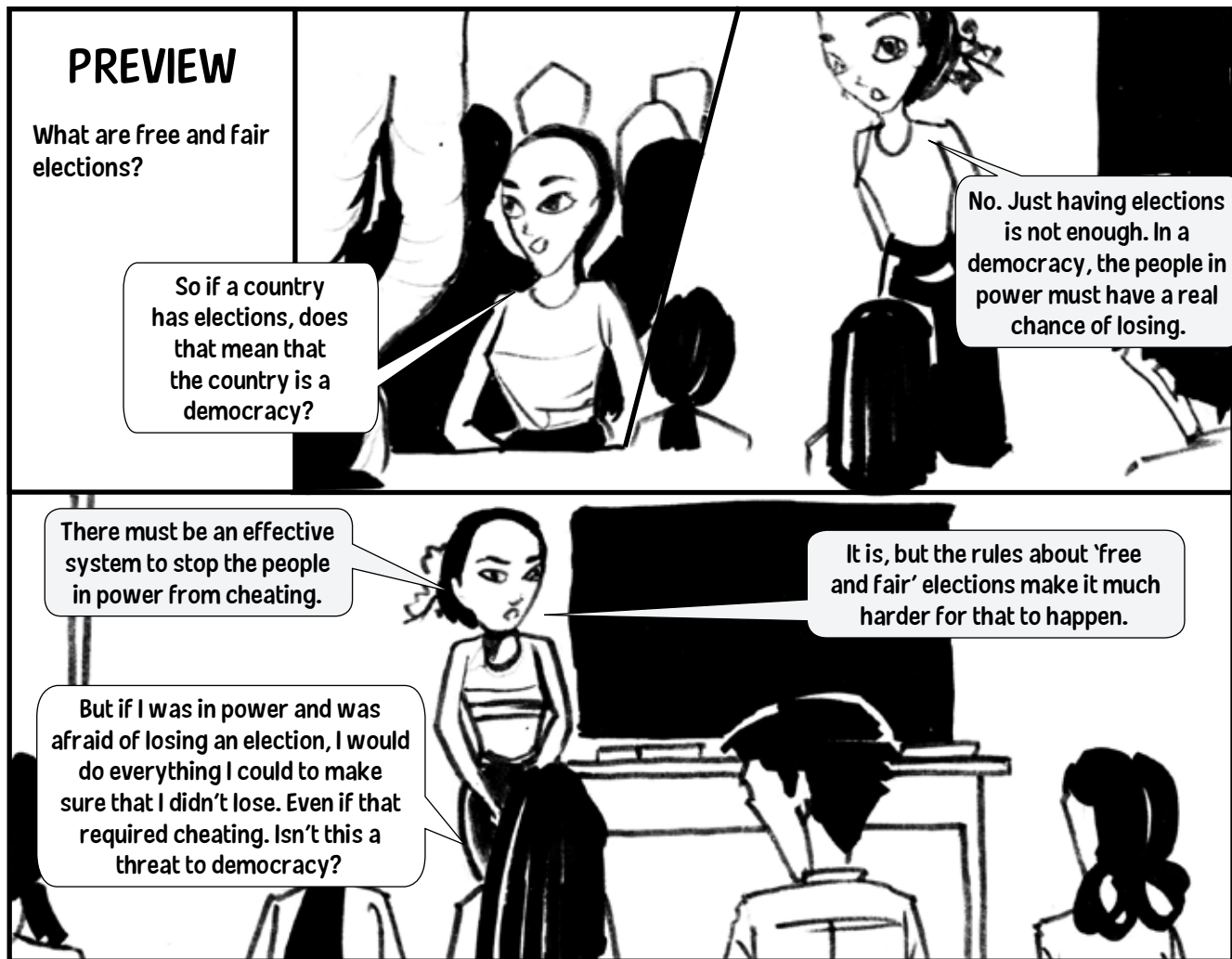
1. How are leaders or representatives chosen in your community?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of elections?
3. Which political parties are there in your community? What are their values? What promises do they make?

Discussion

1. Have you ever voted?
2. Do you think that voting makes a difference? Why or why not?
3. Is it important to you? Why?

Reflection

1.2.3 FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS



In a democracy, representatives need to have the **consent** of the people. If they lose it, the people can replace them in the next election. On the other hand, if representatives make good decisions for their community, the people will vote for them again.

This is why elections are so important in a democracy. Elections give citizens the chance to express their consent. They also make sure that representatives can be replaced if they ignore the needs and concerns of the people.

However, if elections are not carried out properly, then people will lose their ability to remove bad leaders and choose good ones. This is why it is important that democratic elections are free and fair.

In a *free* election, there are no threats to citizens during or before an election.

In a *fair* election, there is no cheating (such as **vote-buying** or bribing officials) and votes are counted in a systematic way.

Free and fair elections mean that:

- all citizens have one vote, and every vote has equal value;
- all candidates are free to stand in an election;
- all candidates have the same opportunities to inform voters about their ideas and suggestions;
- the candidate or party who gets the most votes in an election actually gains power;
- citizens are free to vote for the candidate they want without fear of violence or **intimidation**;
- elections take place regularly (e.g. every four or five years) so that leaders or representatives cannot stay in power for too long.



In a community...

- a village headman does not like the views of one of the candidates. He stops that candidate from making any speeches in his village;
Example answer: *The candidate is not free to express their ideas and suggestions.*
- a candidate gets the most votes in an election, but the previous representative refuses to leave his position;
- an unpopular government cancels several elections because the country "is not ready for an election";
- supporters of the current representative steal and destroy all the pamphlets and posters of an opposition candidate;
- a man tells his wife "I want you to vote for my brother, he will help us most. Vote that way or you will be in trouble";
- the votes of some people were not counted because the vote counters didn't like them;
- an employer says "This candidate is best for the company. I want you to vote for them or go and work somewhere else";
- citizens from an ethnic minority can't vote because they can't read the voting paper.

Exercise

Why are these examples of elections that are not free and fair? Give reasons for your answers.

Activity

Read the text and follow the instructions.

1. Work in groups of four to six. Two people are the party leaders at a village meeting. The others are members of the audience.
 - The leader of the Equality Party explains why free education and healthcare should be paid for by taxing the rich.
 - The leader of the Freedom Party explains why free education and healthcare should not be paid for by taxing the rich.
 - Members of the audience ask questions to the two leaders.
2. In groups, discuss. Which party do you agree with? Why?

Election Debate Role Play

A country is having an election. It is a country with two very strong political parties, the Equality Party and the Freedom Party. They are currently debating whether there should be free healthcare and education for all citizens.

The Equality party says that these services should be paid for with high taxes on rich people.

The Freedom Party argues that it is unfair if rich people have to give up money that they worked for.

Equality Party

we promise

FREE HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

We will make all healthcare free. We will make rich people pay lots of tax to pay for it.

If you want free healthcare, vote for the Equality Party on election day.



Be free...

Freedom Party



If we win the election, we will not tax some people more than others. We are the Freedom Party. Vote for us. Be free.



Focus on Myanmar

The New Myanmar Foundation and Voter Registration



One of the first steps in an election is preparing a voters list. This is a list of all of the citizens who are **eligible** to vote in a township. Citizens are responsible for checking the list to make sure their name is on it.

However, there can be many challenges to make sure that voter lists are **accurate**. Sometimes, dead people and people who moved to other townships are included on lists. Sometimes, people who have just had their eighteenth birthdays are not included. It is very important that lists are accurate, or some citizens will not be able to vote on election day.

The New Myanmar Foundation organises voter awareness programs. They run workshops, give out pamphlets and put up posters to inform people about the **registration** process.

The aim of these projects is to inform citizens about their responsibility to check the voters list, and to give advice on what they can do if their name is not on the list.

1. Why is it important for voters to check that their name is on the voters list?
2. What is the aim of the New Myanmar Foundation's project?
3. What are some of the activities that they carry out?

Exercise

1. Why are free and fair elections important for democracy?
2. What problems are there if elections are not free and fair?
3. What can be done to make sure that elections are more free and fair in your community?

Discussion

1. In your experience, do elections always lead to the best decisions?
2. Have you ever voted for something and later discovered that you made the wrong choice? What would have helped you to make a better decision at the time?

Reflection