

UNIT 10

Active Community Participation

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

- understand the importance of active participation locally and nationally.
- identify the roles of civil societies.
- explain the importance of taking part in civic societies.

10.1 Active Participation in Local Affairs

10.1.1 Active Participation in a Local Development Campaign



Picture 10.1. People planting trees

- Describe how the people in the picture do their activities.

The visit to Mendera

Gelmole is supposed to be producing a surplus because it is naturally endowed with fertile soil suitable for all crop types. The woreda is also gifted with rivers such as the Dache, which flow throughout the year. It is also gifted with forests like Mangore, which are inhabited by wide variety of animal and bird species. However, the people of the woreda used

to lead a hand to mouth life by producing cereals such as teff and wheat only once in a year. There was also no infrastructure and no social services in the woreda. Hence, children lead their lives as cattle keepers and many people got infected and die from diseases that could easily be prevented. There was also a high rate of maternal mortality during child birth. In general, the problems of the woreda were even greater than those mentioned and the people blamed the government because they believed that only the government can fill all these gaps in the woreda. Moreover, they strictly oppose whoever initiates them for developmental activities.

Today, delegates of the woreda composed of elders, famous people, and members of youth and womens associations are visiting Mendera woreda. The delegates crossed their woreda proudly looking at its greenness and fertility.

Mendera was known for frequent drought and its people were dependent on food aid. The youths of the woreda went as migrants to different towns and abroad in the past. The hills in the woreda were barren and the rocks exposed, but, in their visit, the delegates of Gelmole noticed that all these images of Mendera have become history.

Mendera changed as a result of the initiative and active participation of its people. The stone in the woreda has been used to decorate buildings in the nearby towns. The hills and plains of Mendera are found covered with flowers, grasses and other plants because they have been protected from animal and human contact. The people have also

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became cattle and leather producers by modernizing their traditional agricultural systems. To expand all these development the people inside and outside like woreda worked hand in hand. The government and other developmental actors supported their initiatives and efforts.

The government established road and other communication infrastructure. They opened veterinary and farmers training centres in the woreda and they staffed them with professionals. It also supported school and health centre constructions started for the people. Investors attracted by the development by the woreda, built two leather factories and meat and honey processing factories.

The delegates of Gelmole were surprised by the change they saw in Mendera woreda. They were sorry about the time they had wasted waiting for development to come from the government. They returned home inspired and in hurry initiate active community participation in their own woreda.

Activity 1

Organize yourselves into four groups and answer the following questions taken the above passage. Report the results of the discussion to the class.

1. Do you agree to the statement that the major problem of the Gelmole people was the feeling of dependency? Why?
2. Considering your group as the visiting delegates, what would you do after the visit if you were members of the delegate of Gelmole? Report your discussion to the class.
3. What were the results of active community participation in Mendera? Explain how they were achieved.

Active participation in development campaigns is a self-motivated and voluntary activity of citizens for common, local and national benefits. The contribution of individual citizens is the base for active community participation. Community participation can take place

in the form of contributing money, knowledge, ideas labour etc.

Active community participation manifests itself not only in the success of the actors but also in respecting the place, time and rules of working together.

Activity 2

Answer the following questions:

1. What could people contribute to active community participation?
2. Write about four examples that demonstrate active community participation.

10.1.2 Consolidating Democratic Systems



Picture 10.2. Development committee leaders meeting



Picture 10.3. Democratic Election

- Describe what you are understanding from the above pictures.
- How could we know that a given election is democratic or non-democratic?

The town of Muchale

Muchale is a populous old town suffering from lack of clean water. Recently it was hoped that the problem

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of clean water would be solved. This was because the town's developmental committee, which had been elected three years previously, was working on the problem. Particularly the chairman of the committee Ato Wachiso, was able to get a significant amount of funding on the water supply project document. When the chairman came up with the funds and the project to the committee for decision, a member of the committee strongly opposed him.

The man argued that the place where the ground water is found is a family grave yard and digging a water hole there would result in resistance from the local people. Ato Wachiso convinced the rest of the committee members that this was idolatry and backward thinking which should have no acceptance among the people today. He got angry and told that they must not lose this opportunity of using the project document and the fund. Then the issue was supported by a majority vote and the project was given to a contractor. The construction was started two years ago and it is about to be finished.

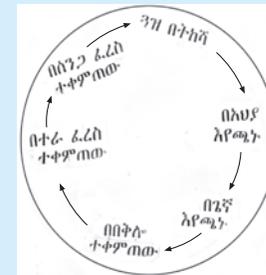
However, the opposition of the people was deep-noted and became a hindrance to the project. This opposition also made Ato Wachiso accountable before a public forum and caused him to be deposed. Eventually, the project was discontinued and the hole is now closed. Water storage is still a problem in the town.

Activity 3

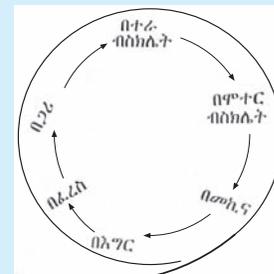
Answer the following questions based on the above case:

1. Who should be accountable for the losses incurred?
2. Do you agree with the statement "Ato Wachiso was unsuccessful in his developmental effort because of his failure to ensure active community participation?" Why?
3. What lesson can be learned about the role of active community participation in the process of building a democratic system?

10.1.3 Community Participation for Ensuring Fast Development in Ethiopia



Picture 10.4. The vicious circle of poverty



Picture 10.5. Coming out of the vicious circle

- Describe the message of the pictures briefly.
- It is obvious that even though there is development in both cases above, the level of development differs. Explain the difference in the level of development.

Awel's family

Awel has recently come back to his home town after completing his education. This night all his family members are gathered together and are having a heated discussion in the light of the lamp. Awel's father and the rest of the family argued that significant change has occurred in the family this year.

Awel opposes this argument, but the family members disagree with him by providing the following evidence for the changes that have happened in the family. They say that their father has been able to harvest increased yields which the family has been consuming throughout the year. The extra produce is sold and the money can be spent on buying soap, salt, and cloth for every member of the family. Also, all male children were enrolled

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in school. These all show development. Moreover, they hope that Awel will lead an urban life. So they argue that Awel has to give due consideration to these developments.

Awel insists in his argument that, it is true that there are relative changes in the household. However, the family is still not out of the circle of poverty. For him basic change has not taken place in the family. He supports this argument by taking the family of Anjulo who learns with him as an example. He said Anjulo's family was at the same level of poverty that we are in today, but, besides producing is enough for their own consumption, they specialized in the types of products which are in great demand in the market. Moreover, produce three crops a year.

By selling their products at a higher price, they have been able to build a new house in the town and arranged for one of their daughters to trade there. In addition, they enrolled all male and female children in school. They also bought a lorry for the elder brother of Anjulo. This shows you that they have broken the circle of poverty. Aren't they investors? You see it is only by bringing about such basic change that we can break the circle of poverty once and for all. All the family members then went to their beds appreciating Awel's maturity.

Activity 4

Answer the following questions based on the above story:

1. If the difference in standard of living of the two families were between two countries, how could it be expressed?
2. Do you agree with the suggestion that 'the vicious circle' of poverty can be broken with fast development? Why?

Our country is found at the highest level of poverty and backwardness. This situation can be changed by the commitment and hardwork of all the people. Nonetheless, small scale development cannot bring the country out of its backwardness once and for all. Rather it is fast and basic development that will bring Ethiopia out of poverty. This means that

there must be significant, tangible and basic change in the life of the people within a relatively short time. Active and continuous community participation is a must to realize fast development and bring the country out of poverty.

Activity 5

Discuss the following questions:

1. Discuss why we say that Ethiopia is found at the highest level of poverty.
2. Do you agree to the suggestion that it is only fast development through active community participation that will bring the country out of poverty?

10.2 The Roles of Civic Societies

10.2.1 The Importance of Strengthening Civic Societies for Active Community Participation



Picture 10.6. Annual Red Cross and Red Crescent Day

- What are the functions of the Red Cross and Crescent societies?
- Mention the activities that the Red cross society can conduct through active community participation.

Voluntary HIV/AIDS blood test

Awareness about HIV/AIDS in our zone has increased. Consequently, the number of people who take part in voluntary blood tests has also shown a tremendous increase. Last year the organization for HIV/AIDS prevention and the social service zonal branch opened a free blood test laboratory service.

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In the first six months more than 300 people used the service and in the second six months the number increased to 700. The reason for this was the awareness creation effort by the organization.

Many people received awareness training in the churches and monasteries in the zone. Centres for 'youth peer teaching' were also established in collaboration with the youth association. These centres provide support and care for people living with the virus.

The organization opened many mini-media clubs in the schools of the zone. Its effort of awareness creation about the disease was appreciable. Material and stationery support was also given to the centres established outside schools. Moreover, short training courses were given to mini-media club organizers, local elders and teachers. A 150 birr subsidy was given, after *Hidar* to 25 helpless people living with the virus.

These all cumulatively resulted in remarkable changes. Significant numbers of students are organized in clubs and are using the mini-media. The young people in different centres started voluntary services by taking care of patients and the vulnerable. In general, observable changes have been seen in the awareness of the people who now know how to protect themselves from the disease, and avoid discrimination. Patients are encouraged by all these changes and start to live more hopefully on the fruits of their own labours.

(Source: Adapted from Addis Zemene Ginbot 7, 1995)

Activity 6

Answer the following questions based on the above information:

1. Mention the civic societies in the article with the contributions of each.
2. Give an example from the article about the role of civic societies in bringing active community participation.
3. In which of the civic societies mentioned in the story would you want to take part? What type of participation would you like?

Group Work

From a group of six and organize each of the groups into two sub-groups. Then choose one of the following topics and debate them. Finally a representative from each group will present the results of the debate to the class.

Topics for debate:

1. Do civic societies benefit society, themselves or their members?
2. Is it appropriate to participate in civic societies?

Civic societies are organizations established by people's voluntary membership. They are association established by the giving of time, knowledge, money and labour of their members. Civic societies are neutral in terms of religion, politics and military activity. They have to be also freed from the influence of these bodies. Even though they get financial support for their social, economic and political activities to satisfy the needs of the people, their purpose is not profit-making. Strong civic societies develop active community participation because they carry out their activities based on the public interest.

The development of active community participation contributes to the construction of the democratic system and the prevalence of good governance.

Activity 7

Answer the following questions:

1. What sort of relations shall civic societies have with the society which they serve?
2. What is the role of civic societies in creating and developing active community participation?

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Summary

Active community participation is a movement of people in which they voluntarily and together contribute to local and national development. Doing it together and in an organized form is a must for the success of active community participation. Such active community participation shall be self-motivated, voluntary and free from religious, political and military influences. Moreover, its purpose has to be not for profit, but for public service. Civic societies develop with the people who hold their interests.

Thus, mobilizing them for their own interest, they teach and motivate active community participation.

Fast development is a guarantee for our country to come out of poverty and backwardness. Active community participation in turn is a must for fast development. Therefore, we have to contribute to our local development and construction of democratic system which will give our society other benefits, if we actively participate in civic societies.

Key Words

Local Development:	The result of activities that improve the social and economic conditions of a village and Kebele
Plan:	A design in which people properly coordinate and implement their labour, time, information, material resources and money to carry out a certain activity in better way
Evaluation:	A process of assessment to know if the planned objectives of an activity are achieved or not and to learn lessons for the next plan

Unit Review Exercises

Do these review exercises in your exercise book.

I. Write "True" if the statement is correct and write "False" if the statement is incorrect

1. For local development to be fruitful, it has to be supported by active community participation.
2. Government is the only owner and actor of developmental activities at different levels in a country.
3. Active community participation will be hindered if the participants involve themselves at any time they wish rather than planned time for local development.
4. Since civic societies are free from the influence of government they shall not be registered and recognized by any governmental authority.
5. The development of active community participation contributes to build democratic system.

II. Match words or phrases under column 'A' with correct items of column 'B'

- | A | B |
|----------------------|---|
| 1. Trade union | A. Coming together under an association for common objectives |
| 2. Youth Association | B. Social and economic activity in a village |
| 3. Being organized | C. Contributing knowledge |
| 4. Local development | D. A collection under a profession |

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5. A manifestation of active community participation
- E. Not a civic society
 - F. An example of civic society
 - G. Any activity of a collection of people, which they carry out by deciding together

III. Choose the correct answer for the following questions

- Since civic societies are free from governmental influence
 - they are not obliged to obey the constitution
 - they have to be registered and licensed according to an appropriate law
 - they can undertake political and religious activities together with local development
 - they are not governed by rule of law.
- Why is it that local development activity shall not be left to the government only?
 - It is to inculcate a sense of ownership of development and its results among the people
 - It is to develop a sense of dependency among the people
 - The sustainability (continuity) of local development is ensured when it is only done by the government
 - All are correct.
- Active community participation in a given society can be expressed in one of the following ways:
 - By being present in local developmental activities
 - By contributing labour in local developmental activities
 - Giving encouragement
 - All are correct.
- At which level shall active community participation of the people be shown in a social development activity?
 - During planning
 - During implementation of the plan
 - During evaluation of the implementation of the plan
 - All of the above.
- _____ is one of the criteria to consider a given local developmental activity to be based on active community participation.
 - Doing it individually rather than in an organized form
 - The number of people involved in it
 - Not only doing the task but also its success
 - Profit making.

IV. Copy the following questions on your exercise book and fill the correct answer on the space provided

- An organization which is free from governmental influence and develops active community participation is called _____.
- Since ensuring sustainability of local development requires active community participation the tasks shall not be left only to _____.

V. Give short answers for the following questions

- Mention the three criteria to consider a given developmental activity to be based on active community participation.
- Mention four of the activities that an individual member of a society can do to ensure his active participation in local development.