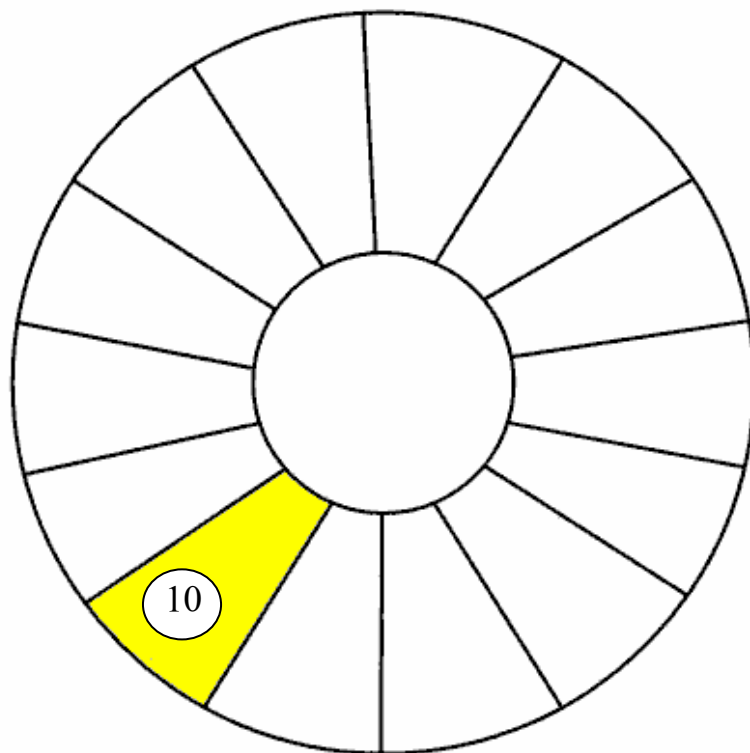


**Gemidiriya Community Development and Livelihood Improvement
Project**

Community Operations Manual

Chapter 10 – Social Accountability



September 2007

Gemidiriya Foundation

Ministry of Nation Building and Estate Infrastructure Development
No. 40, High Level Road,
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 GEMIDIRIYA is Special

We all know that GEMIDIRIYA Project is different from many other Projects. What are the important differences?

- By analysing our own problems, we together plan and implement village development activities ourselves.
- Our Village Organization directly gets money from GEMIDIRIYA Foundation.
- We take all decisions in our Maha Sabha including how to use money for village development.
- We elect / select our leaders as Board of Directors (BOD) and other committees and they do various activities on behalf of all of us.
- We contribute our own money, time and materials for our development.
- We maintain all assets of our village ourselves and pay money to meet these expenses.

1.2 We Have Responsibility (Wagakeema)

Every one of us and our committee members have various duties and responsibilities to perform. When we do things ourselves, we cannot blame others for not getting what we want. We will be able to improve our village condition only if the duties and responsibilities are performed in accordance with our Community Manual. When our BOD or Sub Committees fail to do activities in accordance with approved and agreed plans, we face many difficulties in the village. There are many reasons for this:

- Some members give more importance to their own development than the development of the village
- Some members are fully committed but some others are not
- There is change in the leadership every year
- Human beings can commit mistakes

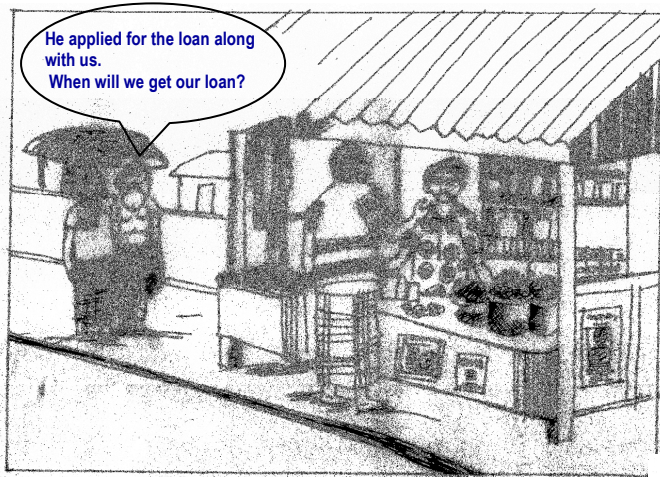
1.3 We Also have Accountability (Wagaveema)

When we join the Village Organization, we have agreed to fulfil our duties and responsibilities. Similarly our BOD members and Sub Committee members also have agreed to perform their responsibilities as agreed in our Community Operational Manual. When there are shortfalls, deviations etc. we can bring this to their attention and they are bound to correct the mistakes.

1.4 Some Examples of Failures

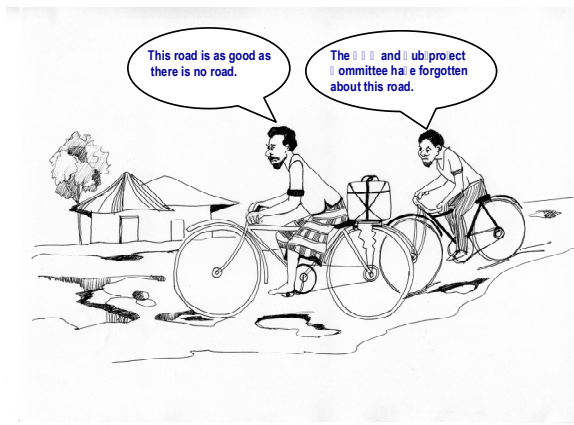
We have seen many problems due to the failure on the part of BOD and other committee members. Some of these have happened in our own village. Some other instances happened in our neighbouring villages.

Let us see the following examples:



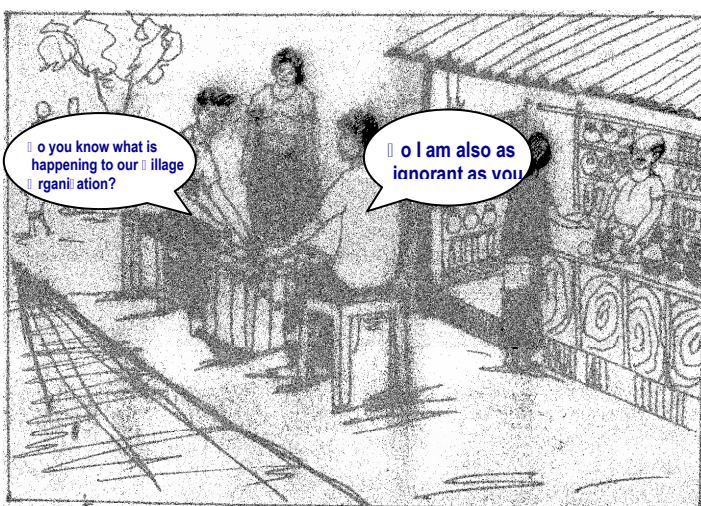
In this village, though the poor women applied for a loan to start a boutique, the loan was sanctioned to a well to do person. The women are still waiting.

Though this village completed a Water Supply Sub Project, poor Rukmani has to still carry water from the public tap. Water is not reaching her house, which is at the tail end.



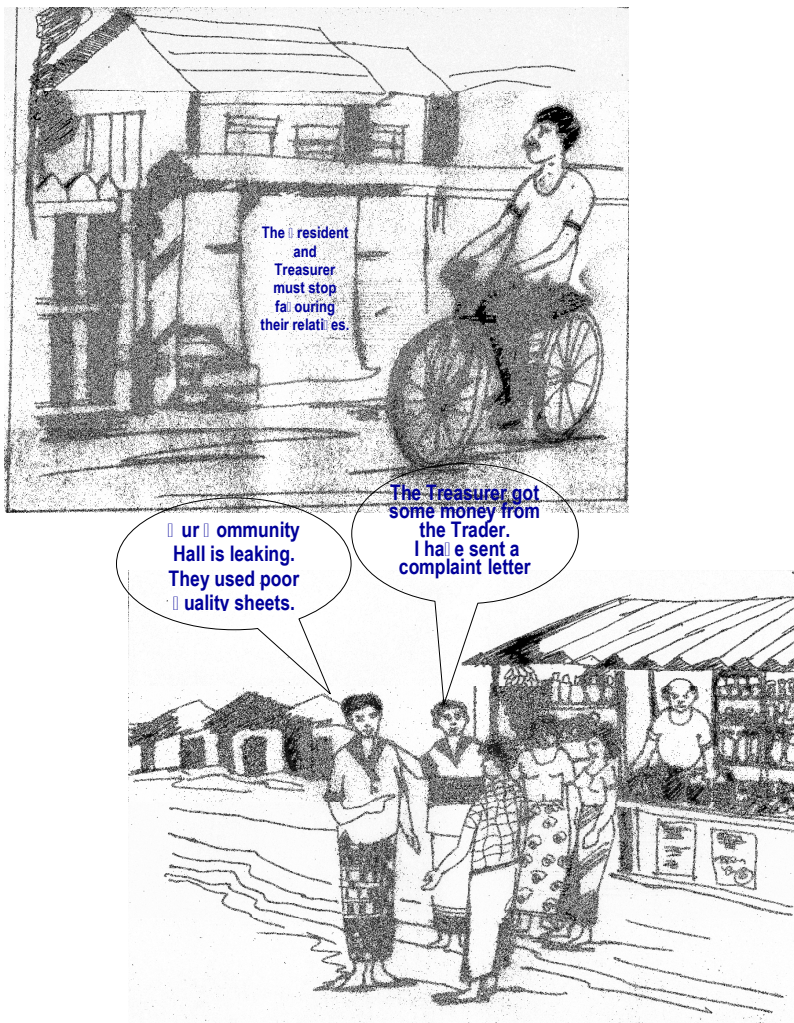
The Sub-project Committee or the BOD members are now not interested in maintenance of the completed Road Sub Project.

1.5 Our Reaction



Many of us in the village do not know how to deal with such failures on the part of BOD members or committee members. We normally do any of the following:

We complain about our dissatisfaction only with our friends.



We murmur about this in the village gatherings. Some may even send anonymous complaints to GEMIDIRIYA Foundation.

1.6 A Good Solution

These types of actions will not correct the wrong doings. Our efforts and our money will definitely go waste. Is there a way out? We want solutions and not further problems.

GEMIDIRIYA Foundation worked with some of our experienced community professionals, and village leaders to find an answer to the above questions. They have found out that there are different ways of correcting our BOD and committee members when they do something wrong. Our community professionals and resource persons in GEMIDIRIYA Foundation together wrote a simple book, which will explain to us what are these methods and how we can implement these in our villages. This book is called "GEMIDIRIYA Community Manual on Social Accountability".



Chapter 2 - Understanding Social Accountability

2.1 Social Accountability

When we elect our BOD members and Sub-project Committee members, we give them powers to do a set of jobs on our behalf. We require them to do the jobs in the following manner:

- All actions are beneficial to everyone in the village.
- The poor, the disabled and the helpless in the village get maximum benefits.
- There are no wastages or misuse of money.
- Everyone in our village knows about the activities.
- All activities are in accordance with approved and agreed plans.
- All activities are completed as per agreed timetable.
- They act in a reasonable and impartial manner, which help the development of the village.
- There is no violation of GEMIDIRIYA Golden Rules.

Social accountability is a set of participatory activities by which all of us join hands in the community to make sure that the BOD members and Sub-project Committee work for the greater good of the community. It will also help us to continuously provide our opinions and suggestions to them so as to help them improve their performance. This will help them efficiently undertake their activities. On the whole this will lead to development of our village.

2.2 Key Steps in Social Accountability

Social accountability is simple to practice. It is part of our village development. It consists of some simple activities like:

- BOD and committee members shall undertake activities as approved by Maha Sabha
- They must inform the details of all the actions to the Maha Sabha
- We inform our opinions and point out short falls or errors in their functioning
- We, and the committee members must agree on actions to rectify the irregularities and shortcomings
- Implement actions to correct mistakes pointed out by us

2.3 Benefits in Implementing Social Accountability

There are many benefits if we implement social accountability. The most important ones are:

- Making sure that we are progressing in the right direction
- Improve the functioning of our Village Organization
- Learn from our experience and mistakes
- Open discussion of issues and their impartial correction

- Promote participation and full involvement of all community members in the activities of the Village Organization
- Build trust, unity and co-operation among all of us
- The improvements and success we have achieved in our village will last longer

2.4 Many Methods of Social Accountability

Our Community Operational Manual contains different methods to ensure that all of us in the village are able to continuously watch the actions of our BOD and committee members. These are:

- Maha Sabha meetings
- Social Audit Committee
- Village Information and Display Boards
- Golden Rules
- Minute Books, Books of Accounts

We are familiar with the above methods. In addition to these, we can also use a new method called:

- Community Assessment Process

Let us now see how we can use the above methods in keeping an eye on all the activities of our BOD and committee members.

2.5 Maha Sabha Meetings

Maha Sabha appoints all BOD and committee members. Hence they are answerable first to the Maha Sabha regarding all their actions.

The BOD and committee members have to:

- Regularly call Maha Sabha meetings
- Inform us details of all the activities undertaken
- Place before us details of all spending, procurement details etc. for our approval
- Seek approval from us for all the rules, plans etc.

As members of Maha Sabha, our responsibilities are:

- Attend Maha Sabha and be informed about all activities
- Raise all questions, clarifications and doubts in the meetings

We know that if majority of the members in our village are not satisfied with the BOD or committee members, we can even remove them from the position.

2.6 Social Audit Committee

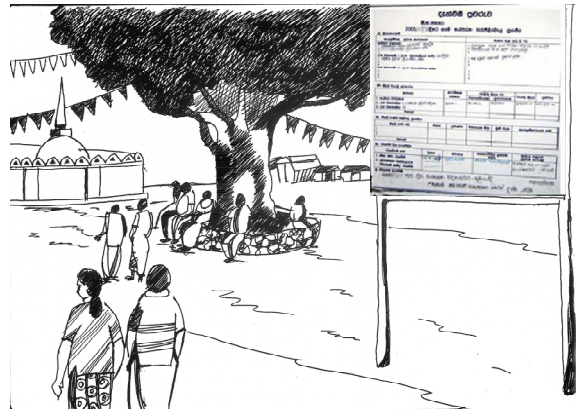
We will not be able to meet in Maha Sabha very often. Hence Maha Sabha will appoint a Social Audit Committee whose responsibility will be to continuously watch all the activities of BOD and other committee members. The Social Audit Committee can successfully function only if:

- Social Audit Committee members are not related to BOD and other committee members
- Social Audit Committee members are knowledgeable, experienced and keep their eyes and ears always open
- Select Social Audit Committee members who satisfy the eligibility criteria as noted in Community Operational Manual
- Present their reports in Maha Sabha regularly
- BOD and committee members implement the recommendations of Social Audit Committee and rectify the defects pointed out
- Maha Sabha must remove Social Audit Committee members who are not able to do their functions as given in Community Operational Manual

2.7 Village Information and Display Boards

Everyone in the village will know about the activities through the Village Information and Display Boards. We can improve the use of Display Boards by:

- Locating the Board in noticeable places like, market, temple, public water stand post etc.
- Displaying all important information
- Revising and rewriting new information



The format for a Display Board is given below:

Format for Display Board Spending

| Name of Village Development Fund | | Major activities in progress | Number of Beneficiaries covered | Amount spending | Remarks | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|--|-----------------|---------|-------|---------------------|-------------------|
| | | | | | | | | |
| Meeting Calendar | | | Last month we had the following meetings | | | | | |
| Date & time | Name of Meeting | Venue | Name of meeting | Attendance | | | Important decisions | Follow up actions |
| | | | | Men | Women | Youth | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

2.8 Golden Rules

The Golden Rules are useful in helping both the BOD members and community members to ascertain whether activities are beneficial to the village as a whole.

In order to use the Golden Rules effectively:

- Memorize all the Golden Rules as given in Box below:
- Think before every decision or action and make sure that we are not violating any of the rules
- Any violation of Golden Rules must be immediately brought to the notice of the Maha Sabha and action taken to correct the same

| GEMIDIRIYA Golden Rules | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|-----------|----------------|-------------|
| • Unity | • Accountability | • Realism | • Transparency | • Consensus |
| • Self Esteem | • Trust | • Thrift | • Equility | • Sincerity |

2.9 Minutes Book, Books of Accounts

Any of us in the village community can clarify our doubts by checking the Minutes Book, Books of Accounts or other records. The points to be remembered are:



- The BOD and committee members must write the books in a just, fair and correct manner
- The books must be available to any of the community members for inspection
- The BOD and committee members must be ready to provide clarifications asked by the members
- Any mistakes or shortcoming must be brought to the notice of Maha Sabha
- The BOD and committee members must rectify or correct the records as recommended by Maha Sabha

2.10 Community Assessment Process

Community Assessment Process method is an additional method for social accountability. The Community Assessment Process adds to the other methods. The other methods are part of our day-to-day village development activities. The Community Assessment Process has the following set of activities, which we can undertake within a day or two:

- We will evaluate the functioning of BOD or other committees
- We agree on the results of evaluation with BOD and committee members
- We immediately prepare an Action Plan for correcting the mistakes
- We can do this any time we want or can undertake at regular intervals say once a year.

The remaining chapters of this Manual will provide the detailed description of the Community Assessment Process.

Chapter 3 - Introducing Community Assessment Process

Community Assessment Process is a step-by-step activity during which the community members assess and keep track the actions undertaken by the BOD, Sub-project Committee members, VSCO members etc. We not only assess them but also prepare an Action Plan to correct deficiencies if any, revealed during the assessment.

3.1 Who Assess Whom?

The Community Assessment Process is to assess whether the actions of BOD and other committee members provide maximum results and benefits for all of us in the village. They must perform their activities in accordance with what was planned and our Community Operations Manual. Those who are the beneficiaries or at the receiving end of the service, assess those who are responsible for the implementation. We must know who are to be assessed and who will undertake the assessment. The following table will guide us.

Who Assess Whom

| Who is being assessed | Who will assess |
|------------------------------|--|
| BOD members | All members of the community preferably the Maha Sabha |
| Water Supply Sub Committee | All members who use the service |
| VSCO Committee | Members of Small Group and Cluster Committee |
| Village Road Sub Committee | Maha Sabha |
| Community Hall Sub Committee | Maha Sabha |
| Youth Sub-project Committee | Youth in the village |
| Service Provider | Sub Project Committee members, BOD members and users |

Initially we will use Community Assessment Process to assess our BOD members, Sub Committee members etc. Later on we will use Community Assessment Process for evaluating our various Service Providers whom we employ. As we get good experience in using Community Assessment Process, we will be able to assess the usefulness of services provided by NGOs, Government Departments, Pradeshiya Sabha etc.

Those who are being assessed will also do a self-evaluation by evaluating their own activity by themselves. When both the users and providers meet, the results of the evaluation are shared and discussed. This will help build harmony and consensus between both the parties on the results of the evaluation.

3.2 Opportunity for Poor

This will be a good opportunity for the poorest among us to come forward and talk about their opinions and raise. The poorest must participate in the community assessment activity.

3.3 A Comparison

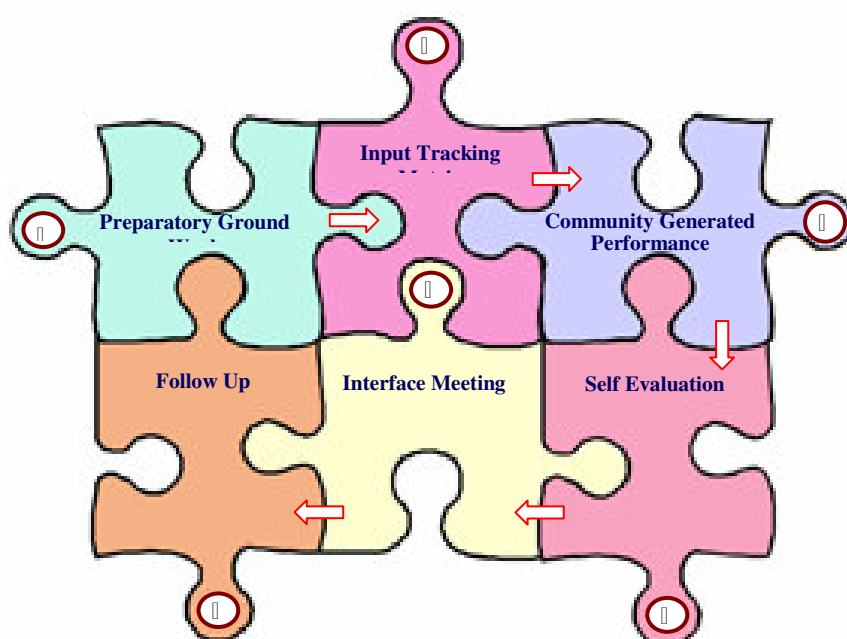
Let us see a comparison of Community Assessment Process with the other social accountability methods we are using.

Comparison of Social Accountability Methods

| Name of Social Accountability Method | When Undertaken | Suitability in Improving the Situation |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Maha Sabha | Once in 3 months | High |
| 2. Social Audit Committee | Once in 1 month | High |
| 3. Village Information and Display Boards | Always | Low |
| 4. Golden Rules | Always | High |
| 5. Books and Records | Always | Low |
| 6. Community Assessment Process | When we want/ Every six months | Very High |

3.4 Steps in Community Assessment Process

The Community Assessment Process consists of six steps as given in the following diagram.



As we see from the diagram, we will be able to complete the Community Assessment Process when we undertake all the six steps. Let us now see the activities involved in each of the steps and how to implement them.

Chapter 4 - The Preparation and Background Work



4.1 Need for Preparation

Before starting the Community Assessment Process, we have to do certain preliminary activities. These preparatory activities will help us in undertaking the assessment activities in a smooth and useful manner. We will be able to assign responsibilities. Also we will be able to get maximum participation and involvement from all related persons. We will be able to do all the necessary arrangements beforehand.

4.2 Key Steps in Preparation

| Step Number | Key Activity | Responsibility |
|-------------|---|----------------|
| Step – 1 | Deciding on focus areas and services | Maha Sabha |
| Step – 2 | Identifying trained Facilitators | BOD |
| Step – 3 | Providing basic Village information to | BOD |
| Step – 4 | Informing community members | BOD |
| Step – 5 | Meeting with those who assess performance | Facilitator |
| Step – 6 | Meeting with those who are being assessed | Facilitator |
| Step – 7 | Preparing a Program | Facilitator |
| Step – 8 | Arranging Facilities needed | BOD |
| Step - 9 | Involving every one | BOD |

4.3 Step – 1: Deciding on Focus Areas and Services

The Maha Sabha need to decide which aspects of our village development activities will be assessed. This may include the activities of the BOD, any of the sub project activities like, Water Supply Sub Project, Road Sub Project, Village Savings and Credit Activities etc. We can take up for assessment some of the areas where we have noted deficiencies through our traditional social accountability methods.

In extreme cases where the BOD members are not interested in the assessment process, the Maha Sabha may need special support. In such cases the Maha Sabha can request the