

Learning about “Decide by Ourselves”

- Independent management by community people -



Japan Association of Drainage and Environment

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Preface

“This communal toilet is built for your community, so independent management of the community is required. You have to form ‘Community-Based Organizations’ (CBOs) for management”.

You may have heard of this before. Then you probably may have thought, *“But somebody came to build a toilet and tell us to manage it. We did not decide anything about that. Or even we did not have a chance to tell our opinion.”*

We have believed that these shared facilities, or communal facilities should be under independent management by the user groups and the communities. Communities should be involved from the decision-making stage. If a facility is abandoned, the reason must be poor management due to a lack of decision-making by the community.

Is it true?

Is it difficult for community people to make decisions?

Well, looking back at your daily lives, you are all making decisions on a regular basis.

For example, who decides what you buy for this evening?

You may think you will buy something special for this evening, because your child is not so well, she might be sick. Yes, she needs more nutritious foods. You may ask your husband what you should buy for her. How about egg or fish? Well, that could be good, too. Any other better one? You may ask your mother-in-law, or sister-in-law. They may give you some suggestions. Eggs may be better for a weak child. Or chicken may be better because it has more nutrition. Wait, chicken is expensive. Should I buy eggs? Because it is a bit cheaper? You may ask your mother-in-law again, then she encourages you to buy chicken. Now you decide you will buy chicken.

You might consider a variety of options before you buy a chicken. You collect many options from many information resources. Unconsciously, you are

doing this before reaching a single answer. Furthermore, this kind of decisions are not only for yourself, but also your child, your friends, or even other people. Yes, you gather and consider different options, and you decide one option independently.

Furthermore, from the extensive interviews we conducted, we found that community members are by no means lacking in decision-making capacity. This pamphlet is based on a variety of cases obtained from community people.

This pamphlet is made for providing hints for the community leaders to organize “CBOs” to manage their shared facilities independently.

It is our great pleasure that this pamphlet will be read and utilized not only by the local community, but also by many people involved in community development.



Introduction

*"Your community should manage the shared facilities independently".
"Independent management is important for the shared facilities".*

You may have heard this before.
What is "independent management"?

Many NGOs asked you to form Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) for "independent management" of the facilities, but why?
Some facilities are not used now because they are broken, but is it our fault?

You may also say, *"We are managing facilities by ourselves".*

Then, let's ask, *"who said that your community needed "toilet", "water pump", "more electricity" at first? And "who said that your community should form organization for facilities management at first?"*

"Independent management" includes the above actions. Determining what facilities are needed for the community, deciding how the facilities will be managed by the community, and deciding how to deal with possible problems.

Now, why is "Independent Management" important?
What does "Independent Management" help you?

Because Independent Management enables shared facilities last long. Shared facilities are community's "common pool resources (CPRs).

Now what is "CPRs"? CPRs are any resources that people share, including the environment, man-made infrastructure, etc. CPRs are subject to the "tragedy of the commons", and if everyone acts in their own interests, i.e., free-riders, the CPRs will be become depleted and degraded.

Because Independent Management helps prevent "free-riders¹" who may spoil the function of facilities.

Because Independent Management enables your community to change the life better way.

Because Independent Management can make your community "strong"

In this book, let's learn how "Independent Management" can be achieved, and how "Independent Management" can make your "Shared facilities" last long.



¹ "Free-riders" are people who skip paying for management, ignore cleaning the facilities. Those people think that he or she alone would not have to cooperate. Some communities have penalties to discourage free-riders.

1. How are your community's "shared facilities" now?

Let's answer the questions below.

- ✧ *Are you using them regularly?*
- ✧ *Are there any facilities that are abandoned?*

Let's go back to the time when it was installed...

- ✧ *Do you remember when, by whom the facility was decided to be installed?*
- ✧ *Did your community have a chance to decide?*
- ✧ *Did your community have a chance to discuss with supporters?*
- ✧ *Did your community have a chance to choose any options?*

Can you remember?

The important thing is,

*to try to remember what you did at that time,
to try to remember what other options could be,
to try to find out how much your community tried to decide by yourselves*

What your community did for decision making seems to be not "Decide by Ourselves".





2. What is “Decide by Ourselves”?

In this section, let's focus on “Decide by Ourselves”.

■ ***What is “Decide by Ourselves”? (community-driven decision-making)?***

“Decide by Ourselves” is a process which communities make any decisions regarding their shared facilities.

When a community people gather, talk, discuss, sometimes with some advice or options offered by somebody from outside, then finally reach one solution about shared facilities, you can say “Decide by Ourselves”.

■ ***What is “Decide by Ourselves” different from “decision-making” so far?***

You may think that “that is what we’ve always done. What’s the difference?”

“Decide by Ourselves” requires community’s participation from the beginning of the projects. For example, if any projects come to your community, such as installing tubewell, hand-washing facility, community leaders join any discussion to decide whether it is really necessary, where to be installed, what kind of materials should be used, etc. This process may help the community have responsibility and ownership of the facilities. You may say “hand-washing facility is good for our hygiene environment, but it may need more electricity. Furthermore, still less people may be aware of hygiene behavior. We need more time to discuss this”. This kind of concern should be respected.

Another example is that the community leaders find out the community problem by listening to the voices from the community members and examine what kind of solutions can be possible. When the community leaders identify what they should do, they will share the plan with the members or consult NGOs or city cooperation if necessary.

■ ***Why is “Decide by Ourselves” important for management of shared facilities?***

Because “shared facilities” are the commons for your community. They are not other communities’ property. Each household or user in the community is the owner of shared facilities. Here, you have the right to use this as your property, but at the same time, you have responsibility to manage them. You decide how to manage them for yourselves.

Only when the community has opportunities to decide by themselves, independent management can be achieved.

Column 1 – Movie “What do we do”

JADE has presented a movie in 2024, “What do we do”.

This movie was made for the community people to learn what “Decide by Ourselves” is.

The movie was not made by professional actors or actresses, and the movie producers are not professional.

But you will find you can easily understand and feel comfortable with the message of this movie. Why? Because the actor, actresses, and product team are experts in supporting the communities.

Please watch this movie and share your thought with others, discuss what this movie is trying to tell you.

Your feedback will surely be of great help to us.

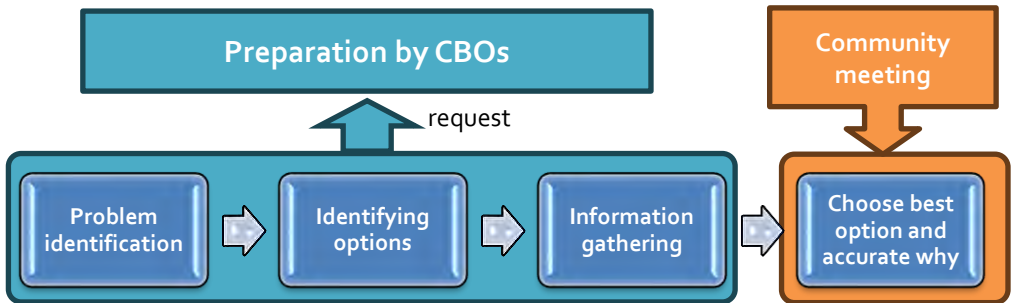


Access from here! 



3. Process of “Decide by Ourselves”

Let's focus on the process of preparing meeting, and let's see how your community usually does.



Let's take a closer look at each of these one by one. Note how it differs from what you have done in the past.

Problem identification

This is the most important part in the process. At first, community leaders should find out what the problem is.

[Voice]

"The water tank capacity is not enough"

What is the problem?

Community leaders might hear **[Voice]** from the community members or might find problems by observation.

This stage will be better done with supporters which have been working for your community for a long time.

- You will go and check the situation.
- You will check how many households are using this water tank and how many liters are extracted per a day.
- You will ask the users their opinions.
- Some might say that it is a good idea to replace a bigger tank
- Others might say that it is not a good idea to replace it because there are not enough supply hours for electricity, and during dry season the water will soon run out if a water tank is bigger.
- Others might say they do not want to pay extra money for the new tank.

Identifying options

Communities identify other options to be discussed. The community can also consult the supporters for ideas. Possible options for your community are;

- 1) To install a new, bigger water tank
- 2) To add another water tank
- 3) To maintain the current water tank and to increase the water supply hours

Information gathering

Community gathers useful information for decision making regarding the target facilities from experts, NGOs, City cooperation, mechanics living near the community.

- 1) What kind of materials? How much? Where to get?
- 2) Which is the cheapest option?
- 3) Who to ask advices and support? NGO? Councilor? Expert? Or neighbor communities which have replaced water tanks before?
- 4) How long will the facilities' life be?
- 5) If the community choose installing, to whom the community ask construction?
- 6) If the community cannot afford the cost, to whom the community ask for help?
- 7) What should you do after construction? What should you do if it is broken down?
- 8) If that facility is installed, what kind of regular checkups would the community need?
- 9) Some people will oppose that choice. How will the CBOs deal with this?

Choose best option and accurate why

Community will choose one option and accurate why your community choose that option. Here is the example. The community choose installing new, bigger water tank because;

- 1) The amount of water needed per a day is increasing due to new comers.
- 2) The current water tank has deteriorated after a long time.
- 3) According to experts and mechanics the material of the water tank has been improved and is strong.

Attention!

- CBOs should finish “Information gathering” before holding a meeting
- Your community must be centered during decision-making process.
- People who support communities are encouraging you to “Decide by Ourselves”. For example, NGOs, UN organizations, or City Cooperation, etc. They are not decision makers. They are only supporters.

Column 2 – “To fix, or not fix, that is the question”

If a community stop using a shared facility after installing it, what does it mean?

For example, if your community introduced a hand washing point which was installed by a NGO a year ago, but soon became broken down and nobody use anymore.

Why did this happen? We can try to go back to when this facility was installed to find out the reason. Did the community participate when this facility was decided to be installed? Did the community understand the advantage from that facility? Did the community agree with the location as a right place? Did the community know who would use that? Had the community ever discussed what they would do if the facility breaks down? These reviews may help the community for the next decision-making.

The question is, did you understand why the hand washing point was installed?

Now let's compare to fix or not fix.

If your community choose “not to fix”, what is the demerit, prone to infectious diseases, for example?

If your community choose “to fix”, what are the merit and how much it takes?

4. The role of CBOs

When CBOs conduct meetings, CBOs should be aware of some points. What should CBOs do before and during the meeting so that every participant will be able to speak out without hesitation.

■ [BEFORE] Preparation – CBOs should;

- Decide which problem should be discussed, Installing a new facility? Repairing the old one? Cleaning up the surroundings?
- Be prepared possible options
- Be prepared how to respond opposite ideas or objections from community members
- Appointing the place, time, participants

■ [DURING] Facilitation –CBOs should;

- Be aware that all the participants can speak out freely.
- Encourage all the participants respect each other and listen to each other.
- Try to respect all the participants' ideas and encourage more ideas and opinions for better ideas.
- Consider all ideas and options and carefully determine when is the best time to make a final decision for the community.



Let's learn from the movie "*What do we do?*" What is the message of the movie?

■ Let's focus on contents

- ✧ What does the Narrator Bhai say to you at the beginning of the movie?
- ✧ In the introduction scene, who said "risky environment"?
- ✧ Why it is "risky"?
- ✧ How many communities are holding meetings after introduction?
- ✧ Where does Selim Bhai seat in community A?
- ✧ Where does Selim Bhai seat in community B?
- ✧ Where does Selim Bhai seat in community C?
- ✧ In community A, who speaks most?
- ✧ In community B, who speaks most?
- ✧ In community C, who speaks most?
- ✧ After one month, what happens to community A?
- ✧ Which community shows more people speaking?
- ✧ Which community is close to your community's meeting?
- ✧ Which community will be close to "Decide by Ourselves"? and why?

■ Let's focus on "talk" in the movie, then think more

- ✧ In community C, when someone starts to speak, what do the others do? Did anyone interrupt when someone was speaking?
- ✧ If somebody interrupt you when you are speaking, how do you feel?
- ✧ If nobody listens to you, how do you feel?
- ✧ When, or what kind of situation can everyone speak freely?
- ✧ Let's discuss how to create an atmosphere that allows people to speak out without hesitation during the meeting
- ✧ Let's discuss how to create an atmosphere that allows people to listen to the speakers during the meeting

■ Now let's focus on your community, who seems to be a member of CBOs?

- ✧ A person who has active voice and constructive opinions can be included in leader team or CBOs
- ✧ Who would be a suitable member of the CBO?

■ What about NGOs / external supporters? What should they do for you?

5. Next step

■ CBO reform

1. It would be a good idea to review the existing organizations
2. How many organizations does your community have? Is it necessary to keep all the organizations?
3. Try to consider integration of the organizations so that your community can have more resilient and tough for management and be ready for the process "Decide by Ourselves" (page.9)
4. Review the committee members and consider involving new members who have will to contribute for the community
5. Assign role and responsibility of each member
6. Make new rules for management of shared facilities; For example, rules to discourage free-riders such as imposing penalties

■ Further step – by practicing "Decide by Ourselves"

1. CBOs may try to think about "preparation" or saving money by community members in case of a breakdown.
2. CBOs may try to make rules of collecting money; how much money? for which facilities? how often? monthly, quarterly, or yearly?

■ Suggestions for preparation of possible damage

1. Facilities have risks to be broken down, be fallen into a malfunction, and be damaged by disasters.
2. A proper management and use are required to make the facilities long-lasting.
3. However, the preparation for the above-mentioned accidents is also necessary to make the losses minimum.
4. Community people should know what kinds of troubles will be brought about by such accidents.
5. "Saving" is a way of the preparation. However, it is not easy to get agreement among the community people.
6. It is better to consult NGOs or experts to propose proper type of saving and how much burden for each household.
7. Community people should compare the amounts of loss and burden.

■ Capacity development

1. If CBOs have such ability, your community can be strong enough to discuss and negotiate with external stakeholders such as Councilor, City cooperation, or NGOs.
2. If CBOs have such ability, the community can improve their quality of life (QOL)

Message for community's future

You are the owner of your community.

Imagine independent, not isolated, living together for better future of the community, building a new relationship with stakeholders

It may not be hard to do.

If community people change, any projects can be changed

If community people change, you can gradually change the environment.

If community people change, then this "change" will bring "sustainability"

From suggestive to supportive

From dependent to independent

From more advice to more respect

From "Social Development led by NGOs"

to "Social Development with Community Independent"

Here we have one message to the supporters such as NGOs, city cooperations, UN organization.

Supporters, including us, may also need to be more conscious of the fact that people in the community are making decisions on their own initiative.



This book could not have been completed without the tremendous efforts of our friends in Bangladesh.

And now, what we proposed in this book must be implemented by our friends. We strongly believe the power of our friendship.

This book was dedicated to community leaders, people who are struggling for better community, and people who support those people.

We hope that this book will be of some help to the independence of local communities and the creation of a new era for the next generation.

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