

LET'S TALK ABOUT **CONSTITUTIONS!**



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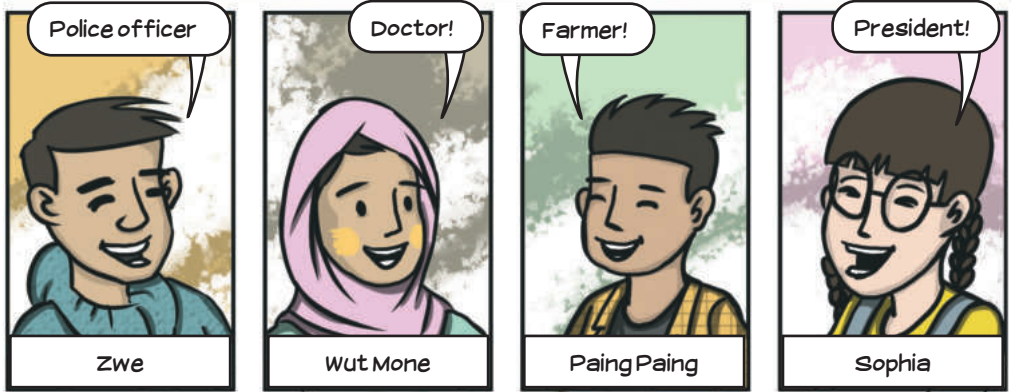
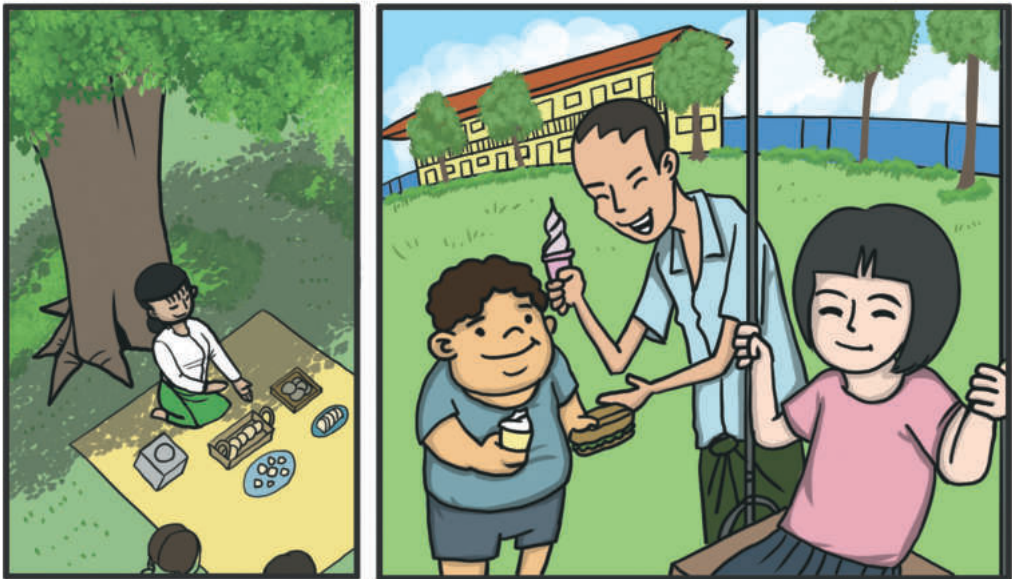
Thanks especially go to the script writer Charmaine Rodrigues for her amazing effort to tell a constitutional story in an entertaining and informative way. We also would like to thank the illustrator Kar Gyi for his tireless creative work to develop and fine tune the characters to Myanmar’s complex cultural context. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of May Htut Pan Moe and Ei Pwint Rhi Zan to the overall design and layout of ‘Let’s talk about constitutions!’, as well as their patience and significant inputs and consultations throughout the production process.

A special thanks to everyone on the MyConstitution Programme team for their enormous involvement in the drafting process, especially in developing collaboratively the core ideas, contributing to the script and reviewing the booklet countless times to make sure ‘Let’s talk about constitutions!’ reflects the dynamics and background of local culture and context and ensure it is useful for young audiences. The role of the team and teamwork was critical in shaping and producing the booklet into its current form.

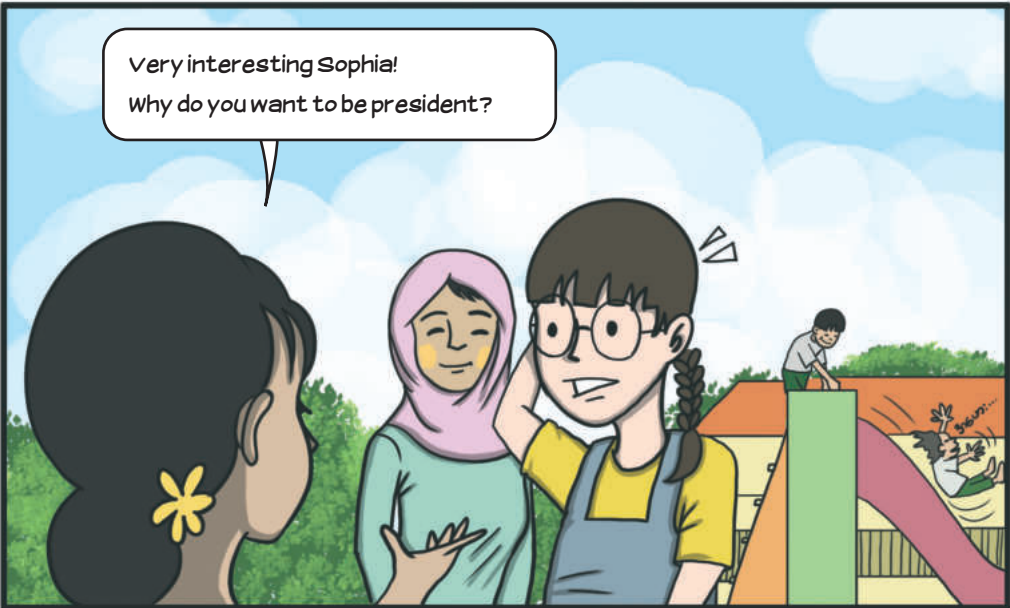
Finally, we also want to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Sweden for their support, without which this publication and MyConstitution as a programme would not be possible.

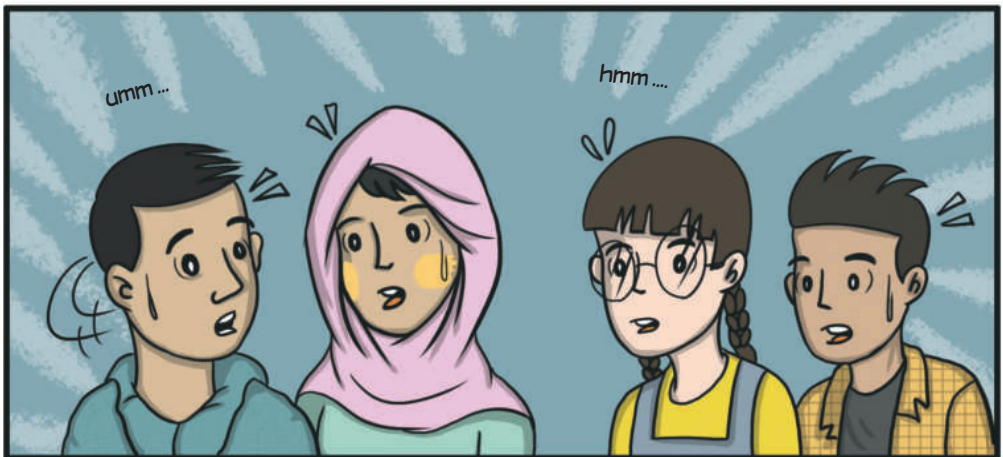
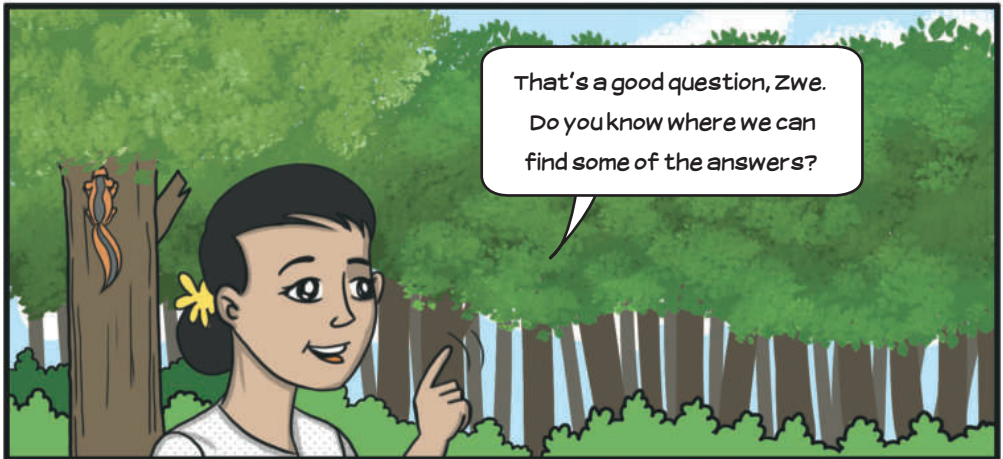
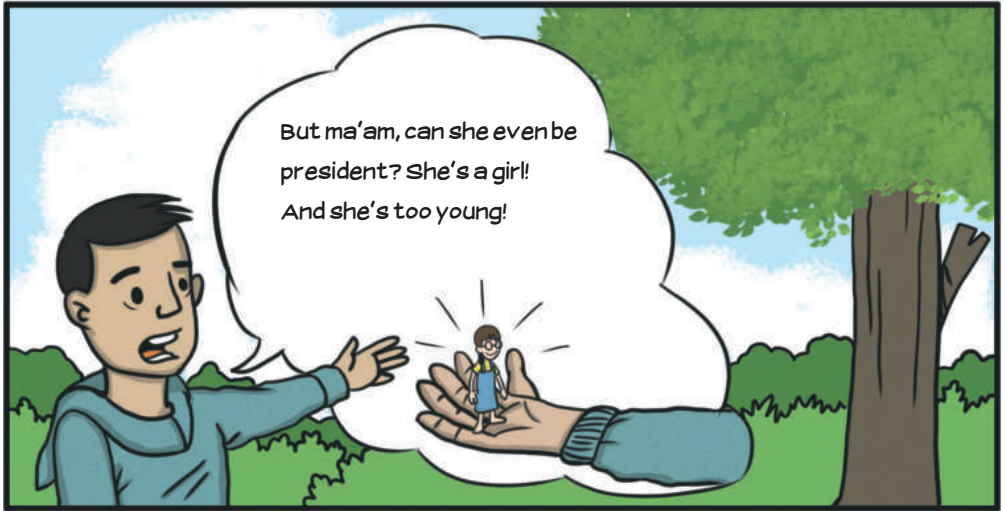
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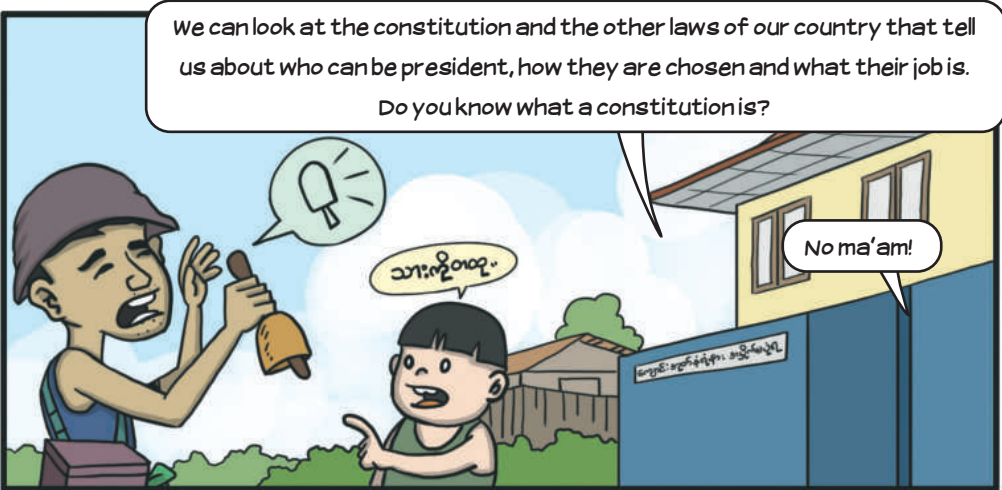


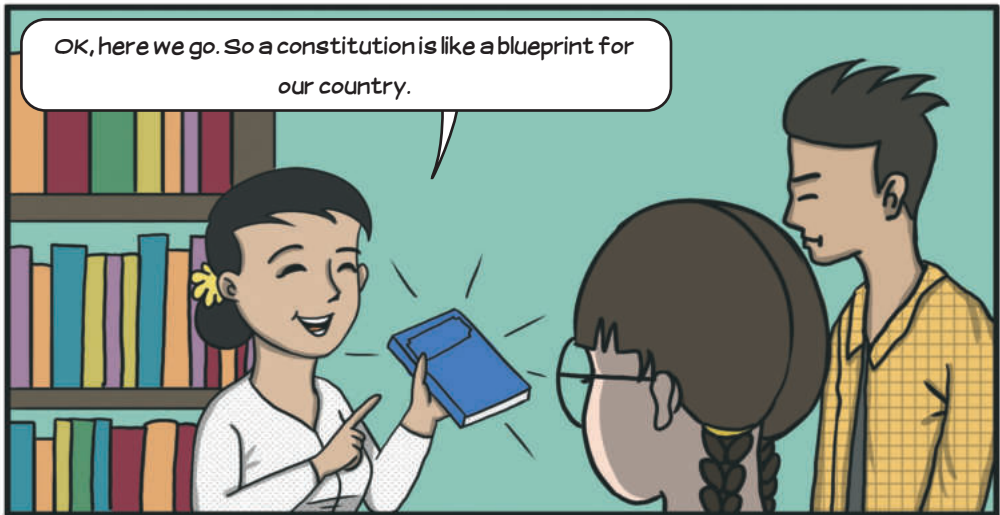
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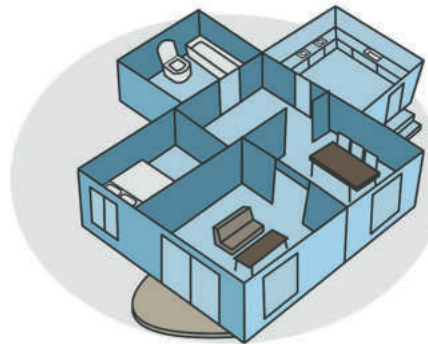


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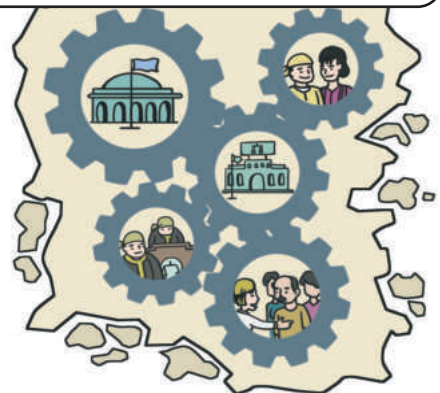




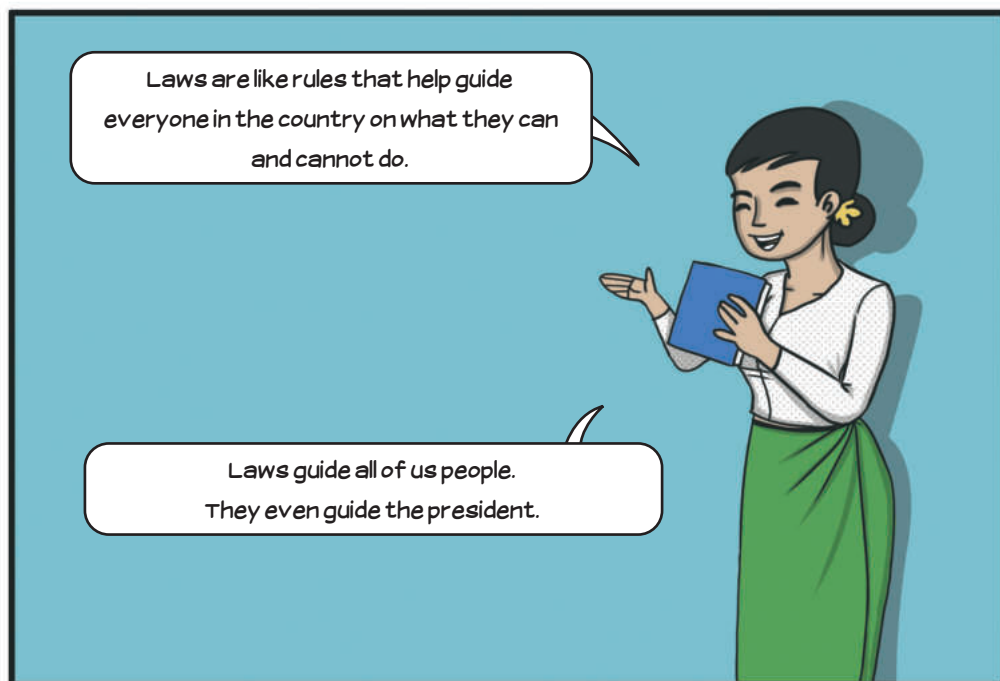
When we build a house, we use a blueprint. It tells us how many bedrooms there are, where the kitchen and bathroom will be and whether the house is made of cement or wood.

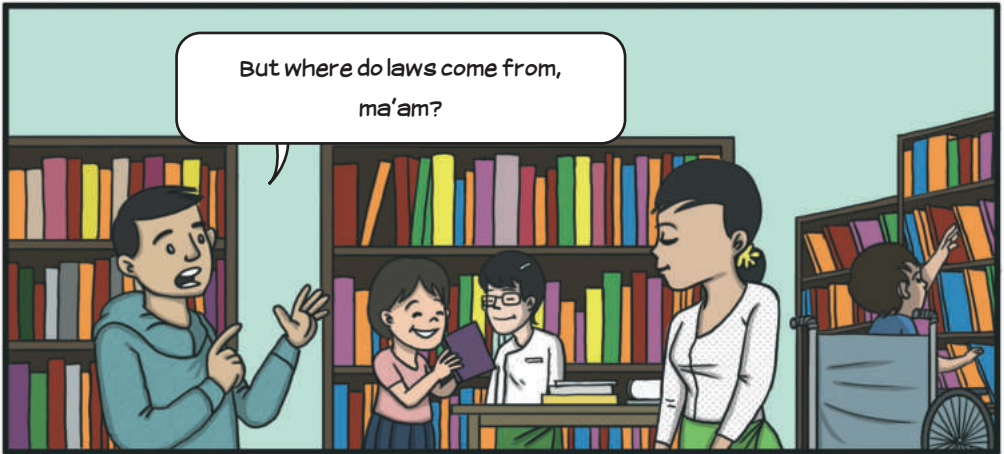


A constitution is like that. It tells us how our country will be set up—who will run the country and how these people and bodies will interact. It also explains how they work for the public.

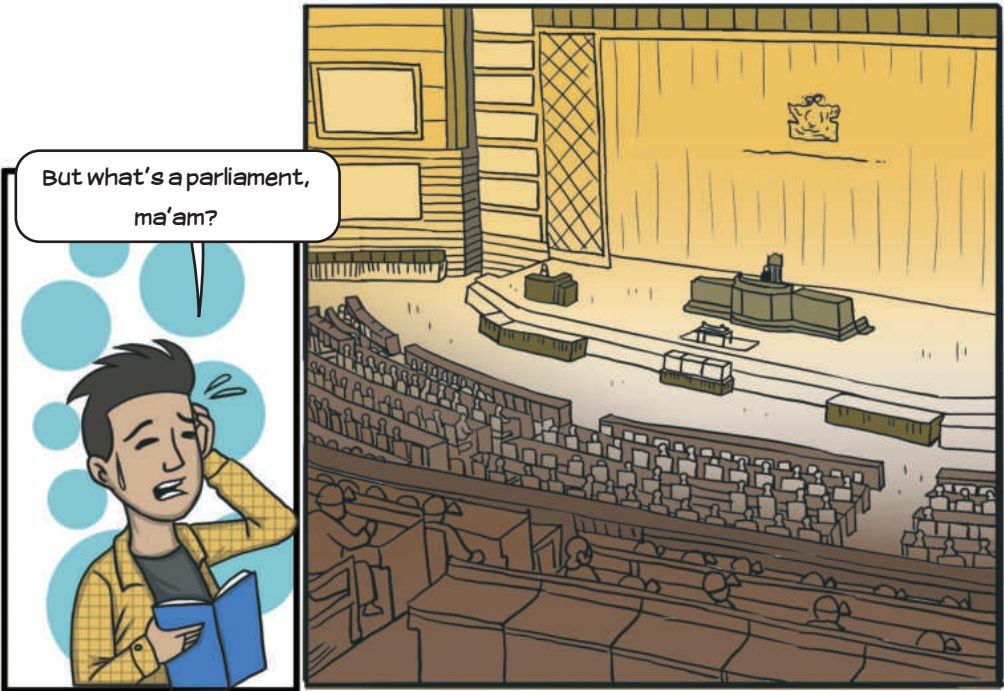


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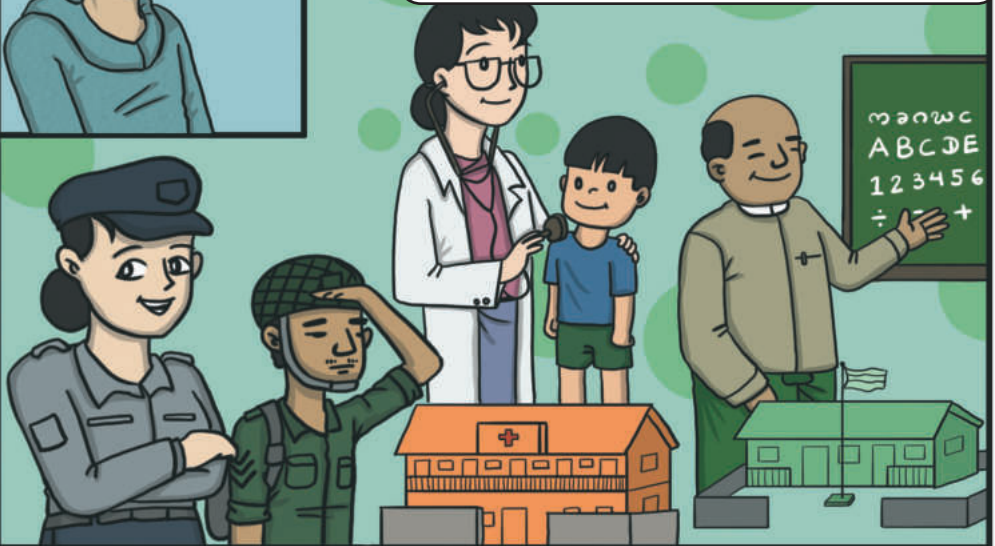
Members of Parliament are also supposed to make sure that the members of the government do their job properly. They can ask the government questions when they all come together in parliament, and they can even check that they are spending money properly.



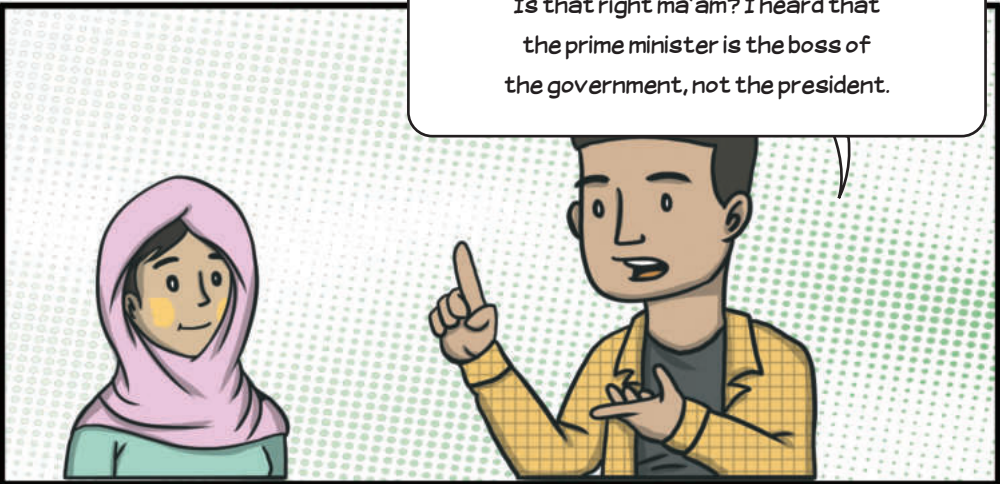
But what is the government, ma'am?



All the countries in the world have a government, made up of people whose job it is to run the country. The government is supposed to make sure that we all have basic services, such as schools and hospitals, and that we are kept safe, for example, by making sure we have a police force and a military that protect us.



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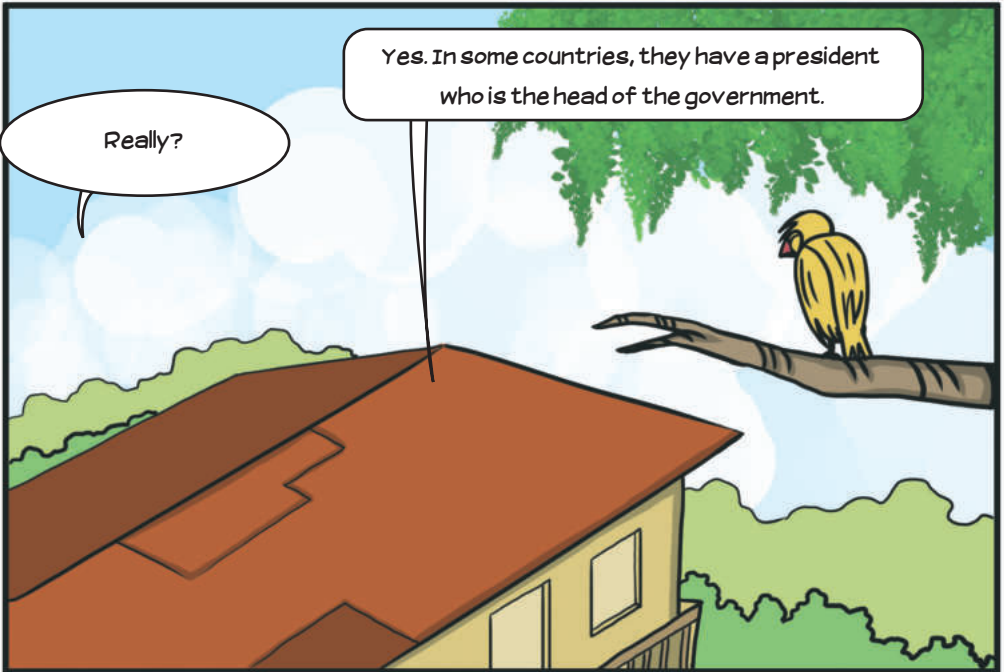


Different countries have different names
for the person who leads their government.

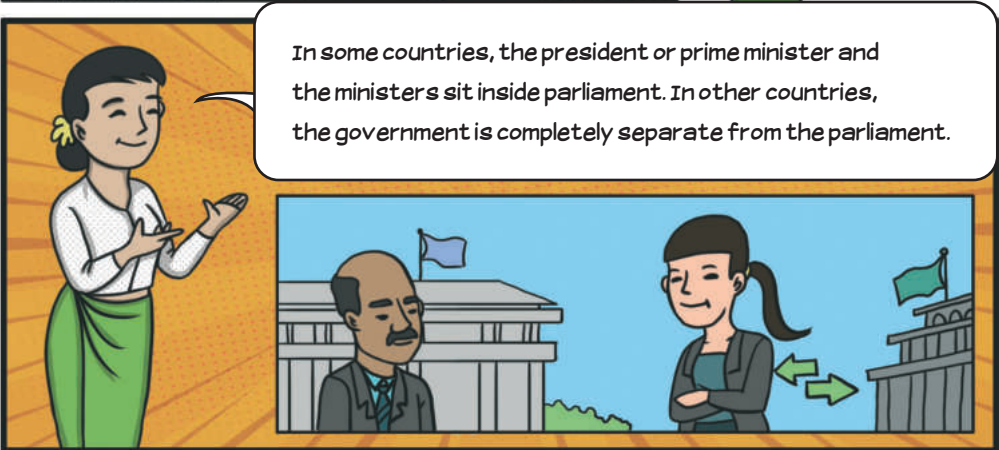
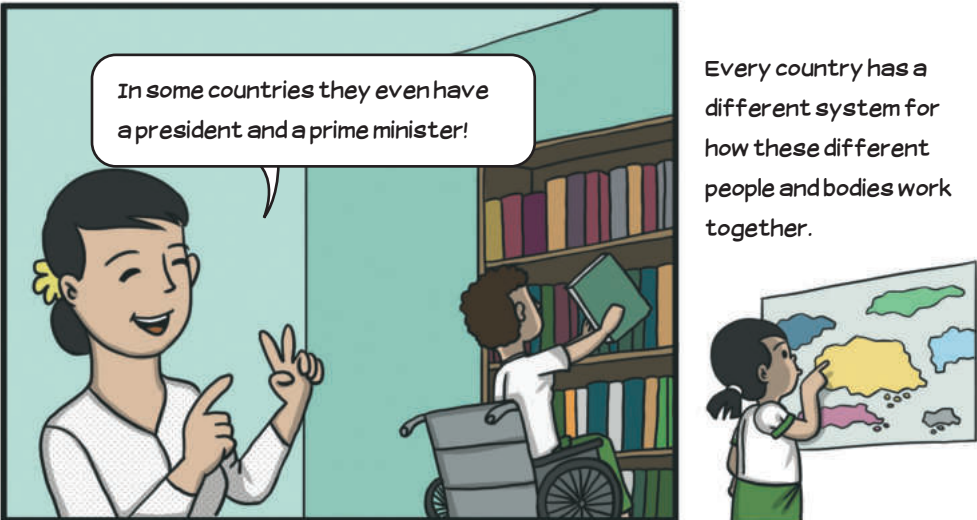


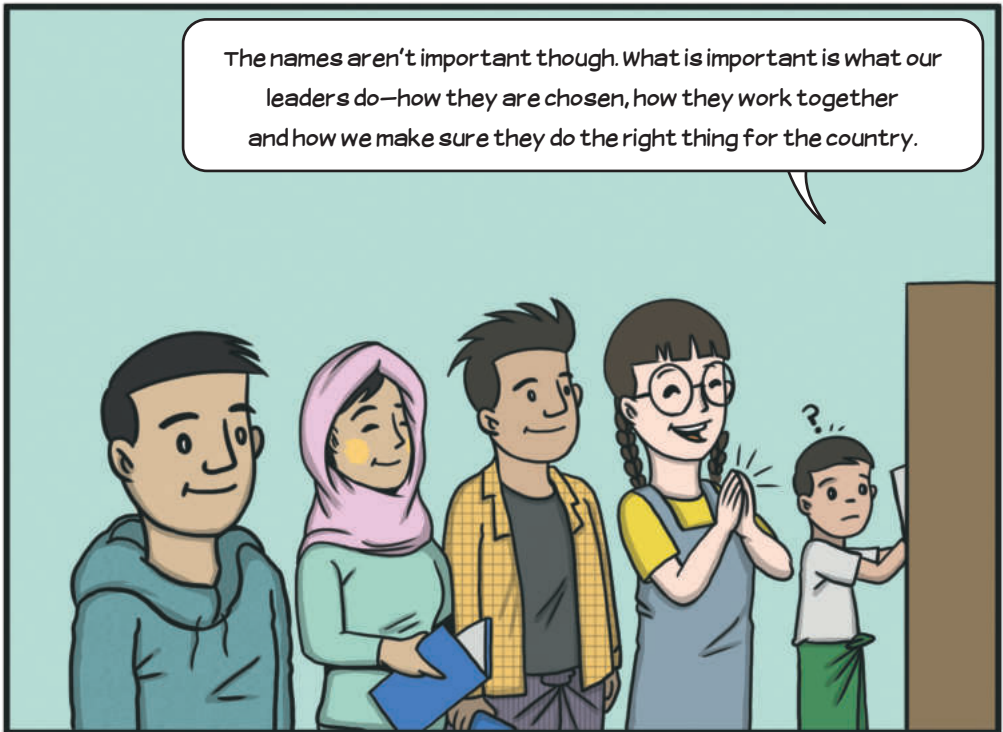
Really?

Yes. In some countries, they have a president
who is the head of the government.



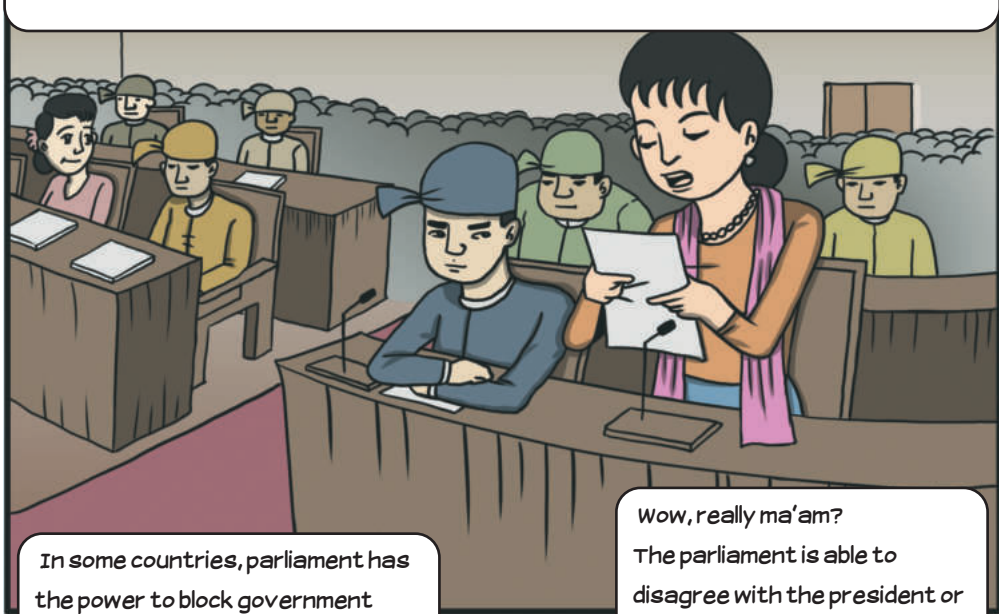
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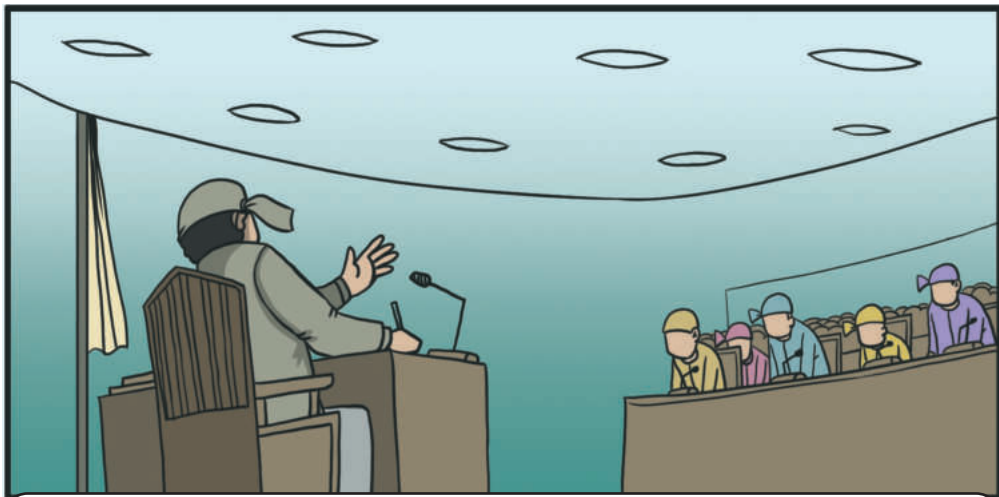
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The constitution also sets up other bodies that can make sure the government does the right thing.



In some countries, parliament has the power to block government action.

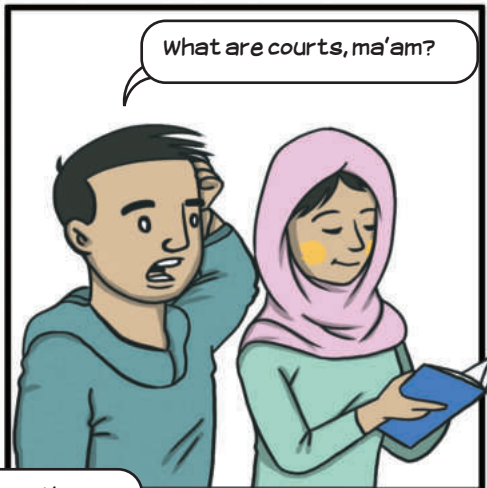
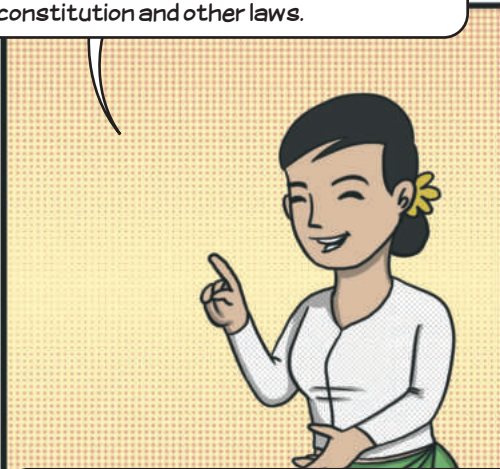
Wow, really ma'am?
The parliament is able to disagree with the president or prime minister?



Yes, Sophia. Depending on what the constitution says, parliament can have quite a lot of power to make sure that the president is doing things that it agrees are for the good of the country.



In most countries, the courts also make sure that the government follows the constitution and other laws.



What are courts, ma'am?

The courts decide whether someone has broken the rules—including the president and the government.



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In our country, these rules are found in the constitution and our laws.

I'm confused ma'am!

Well, when you play football, there are rules that you must follow. For example, you can't tackle people or touch the ball with your hands. If you break the rules, you might get into trouble with the referee.



Courts are like referees. People go to the court if they think someone hasn't followed the rules.

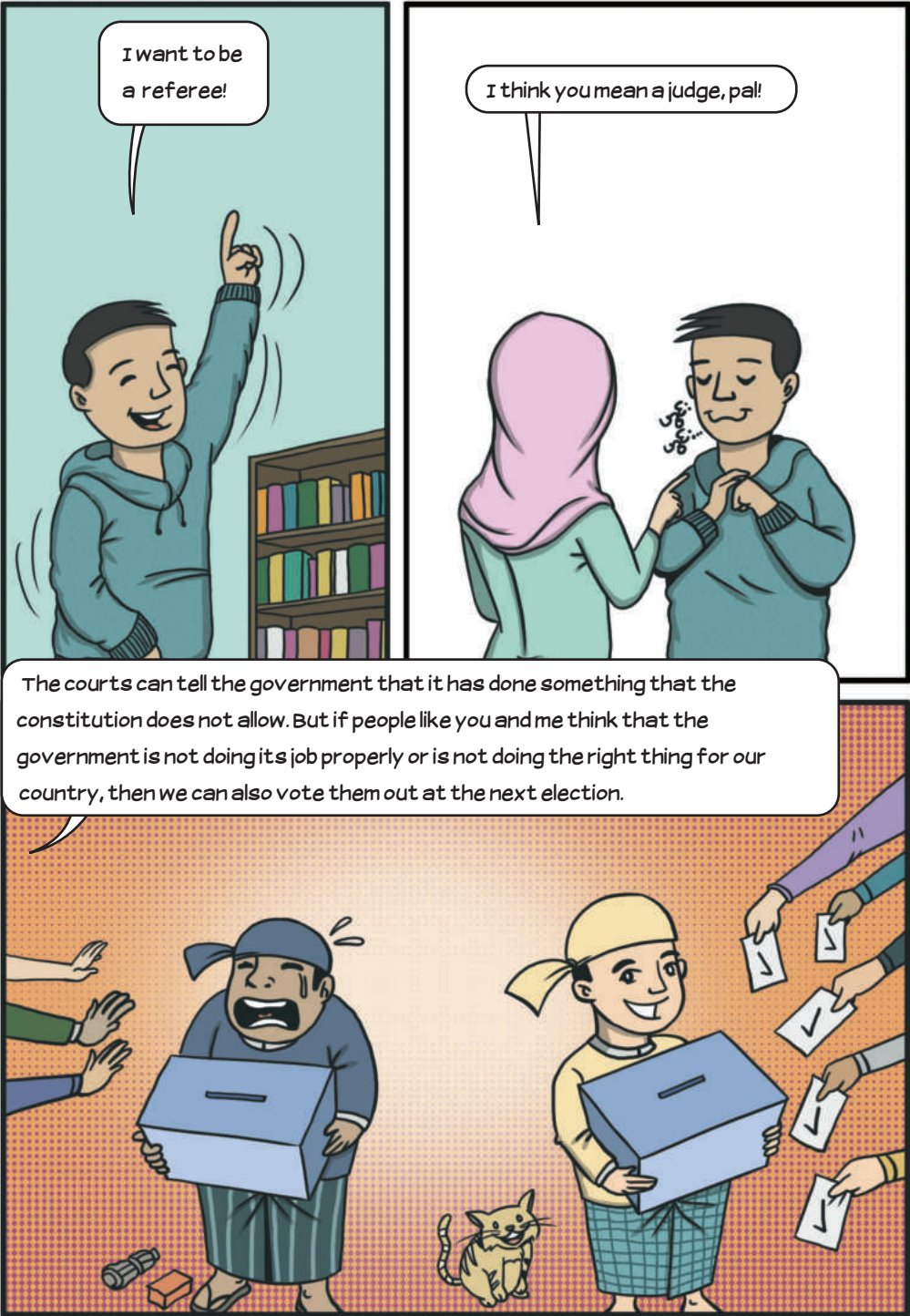


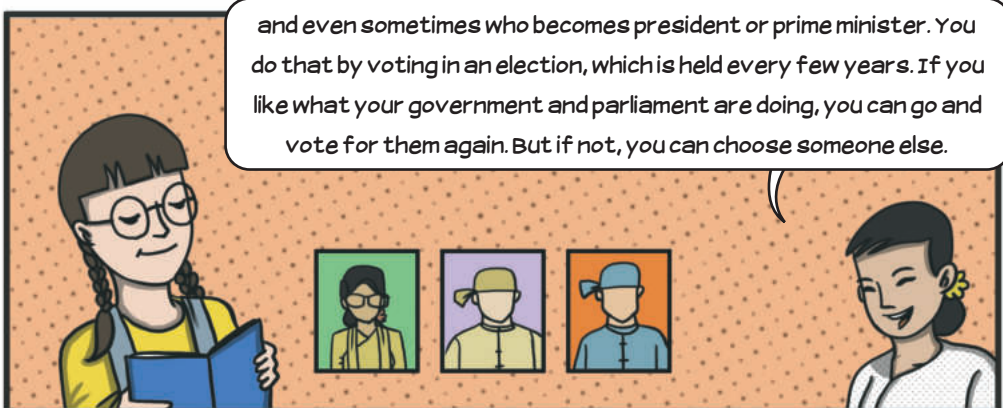
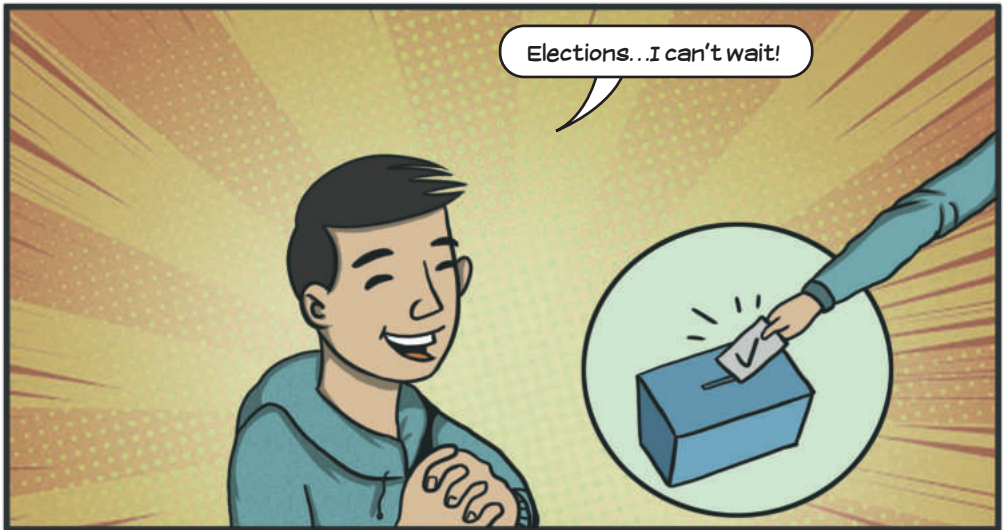
They want the 'referee' to make a decision.





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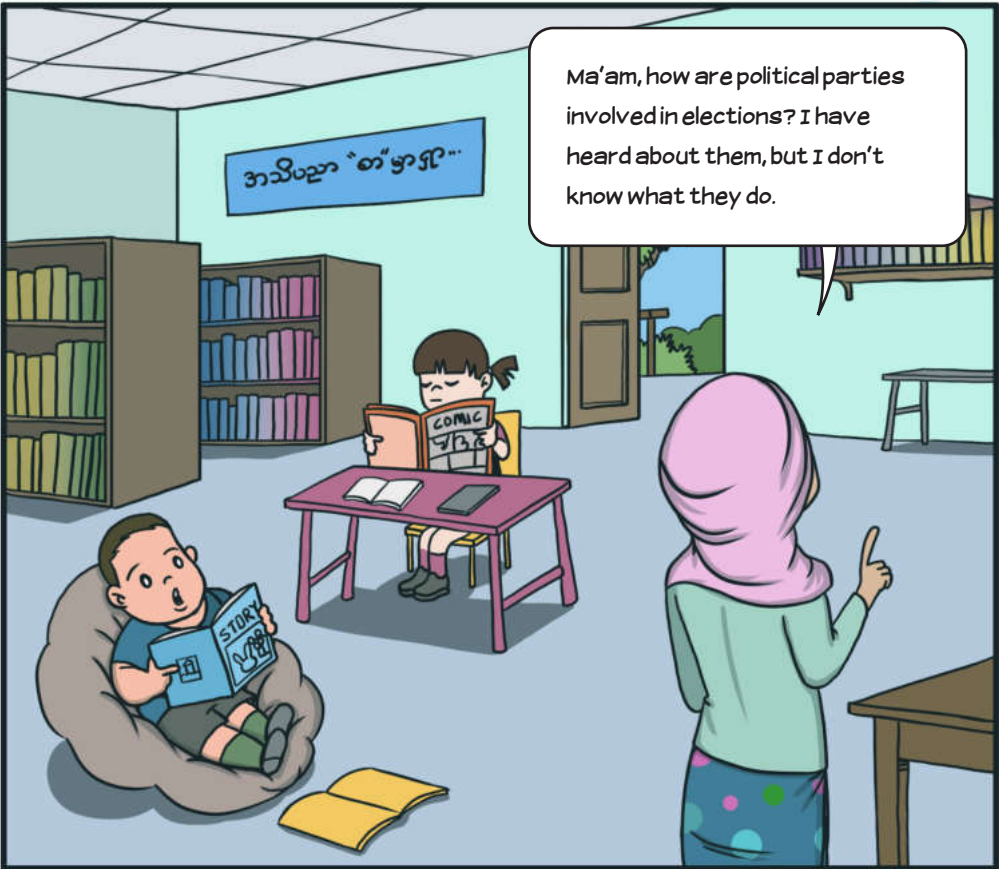
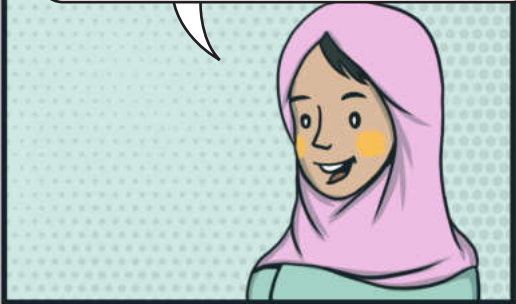


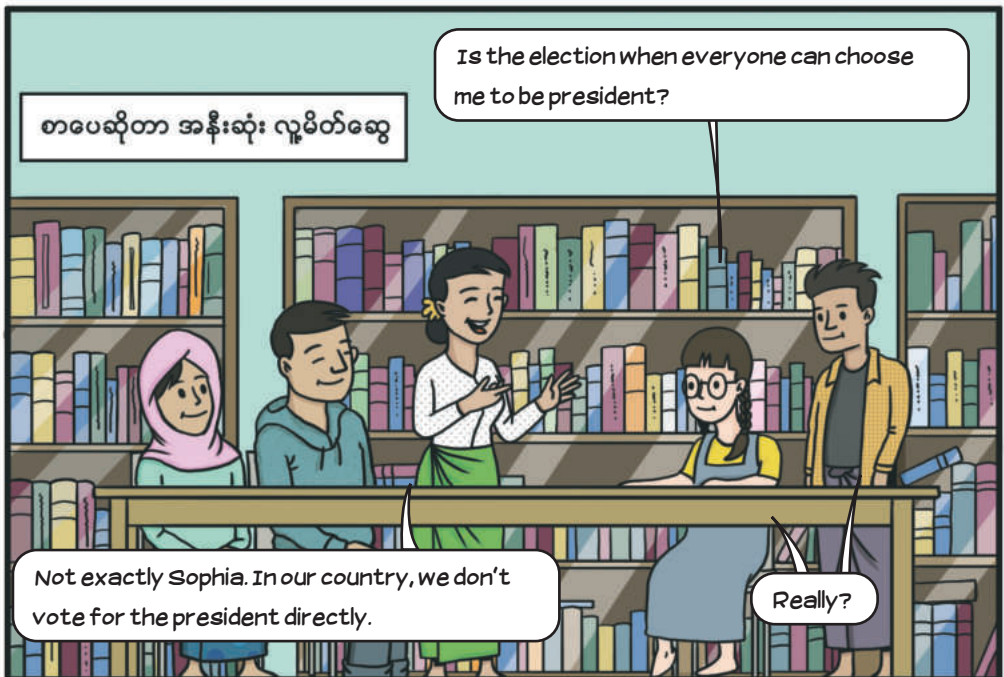
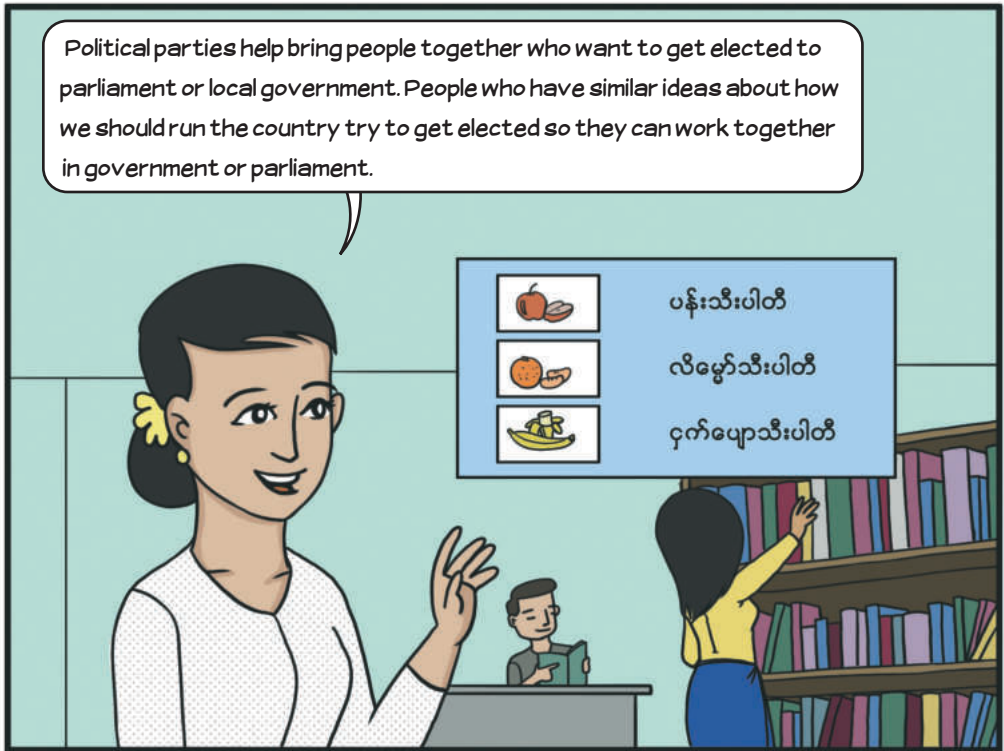


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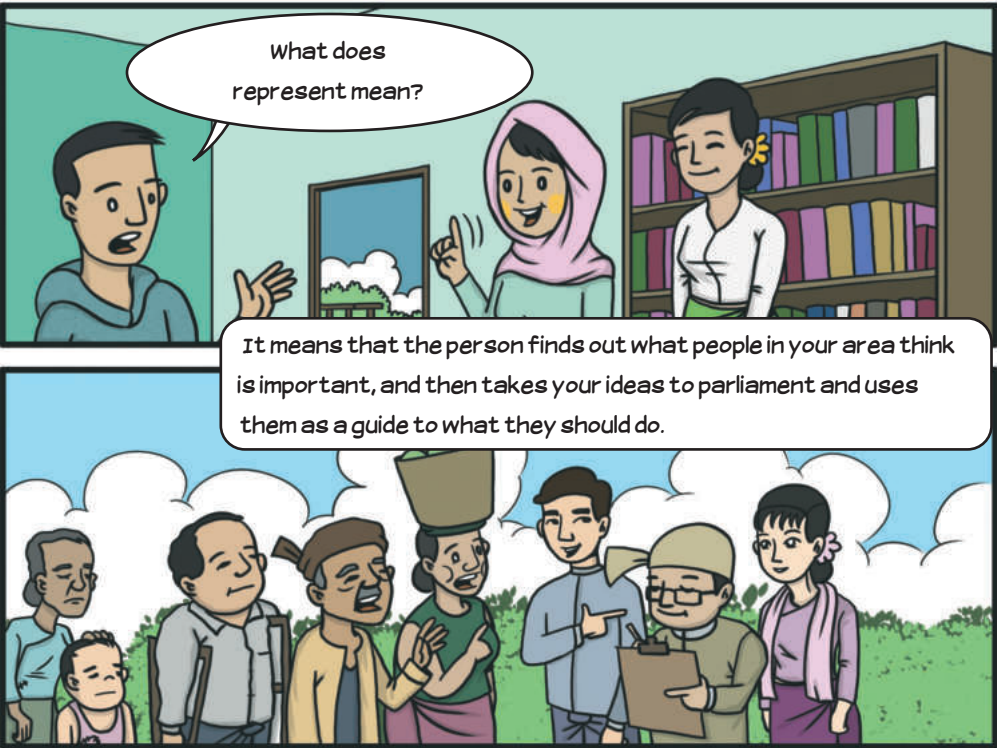
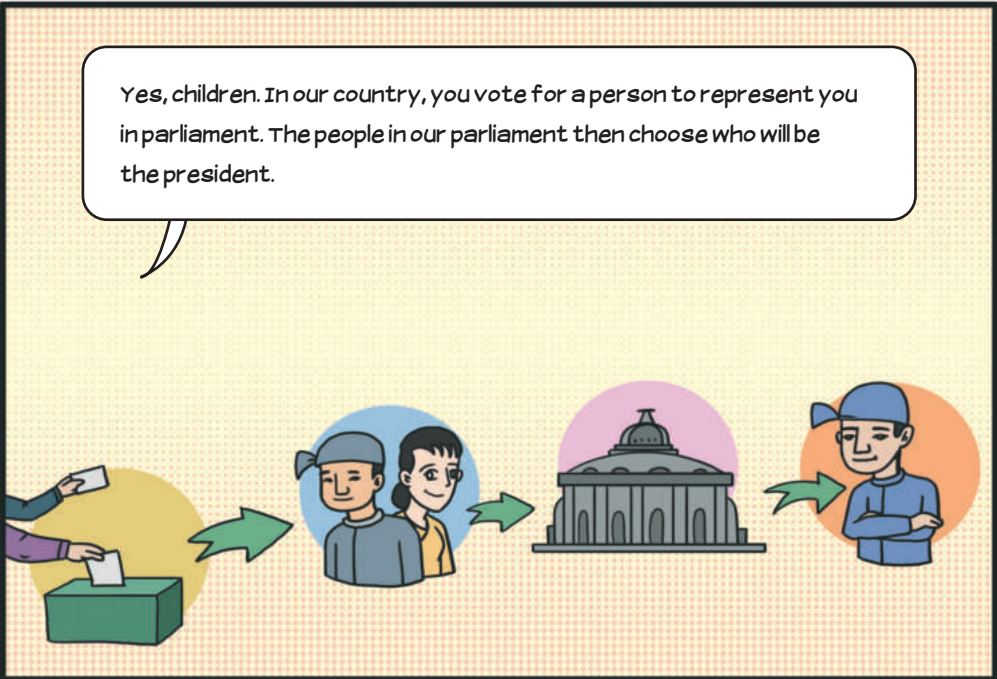


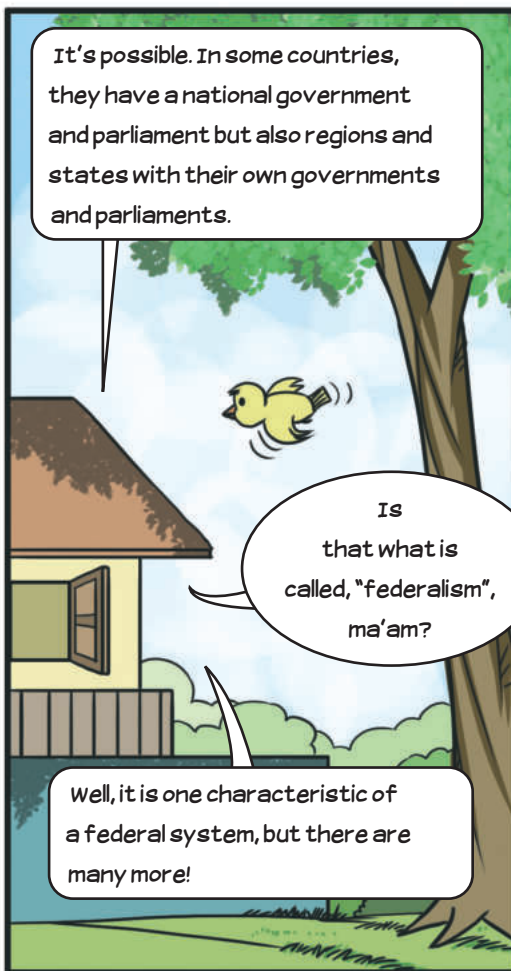
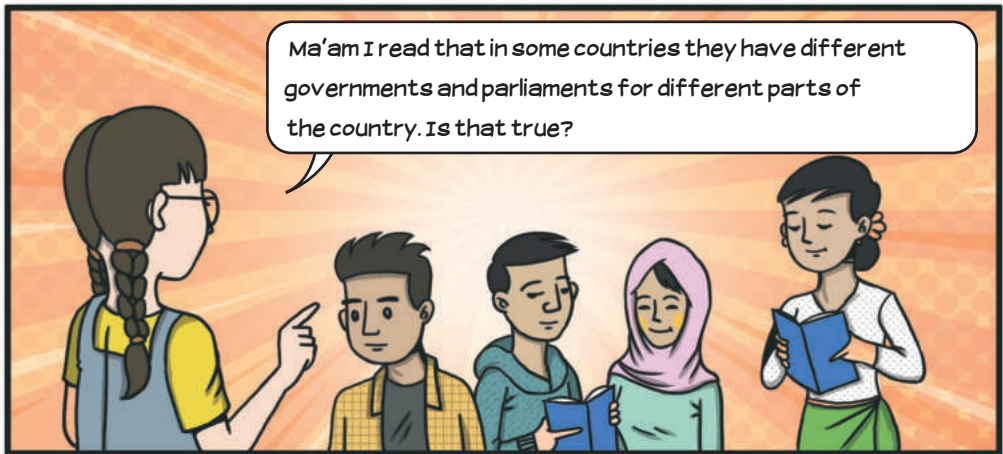
Voting is when you choose someone to represent you. Like when we vote for our student council representatives every year. You go into a voting booth and put a tick next to the person's name who you want to choose. This process is called an election.





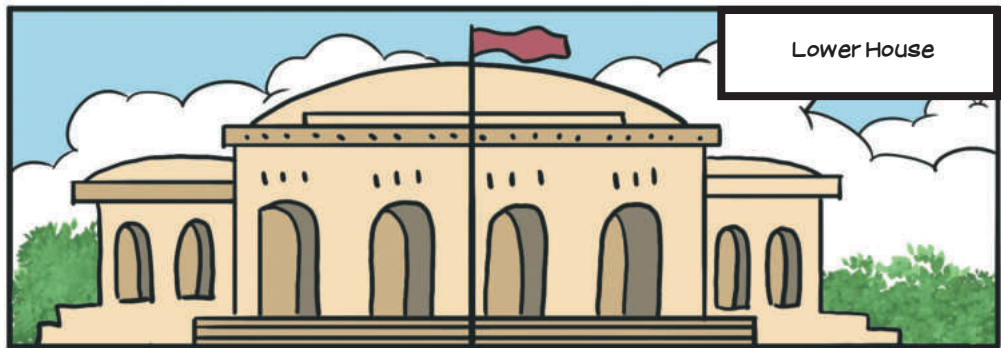
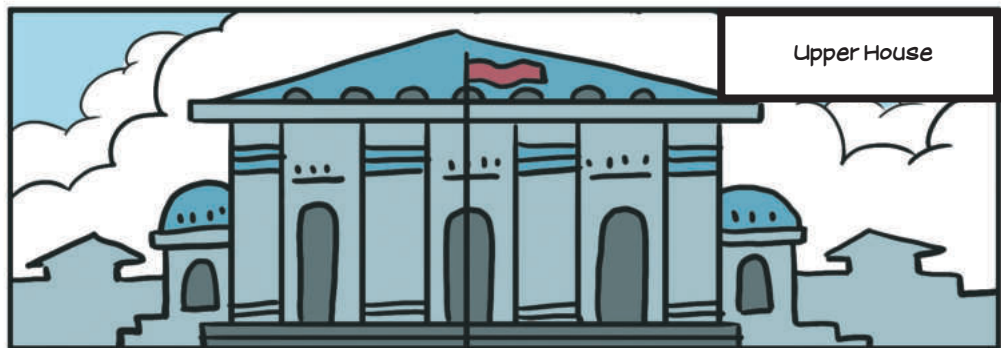
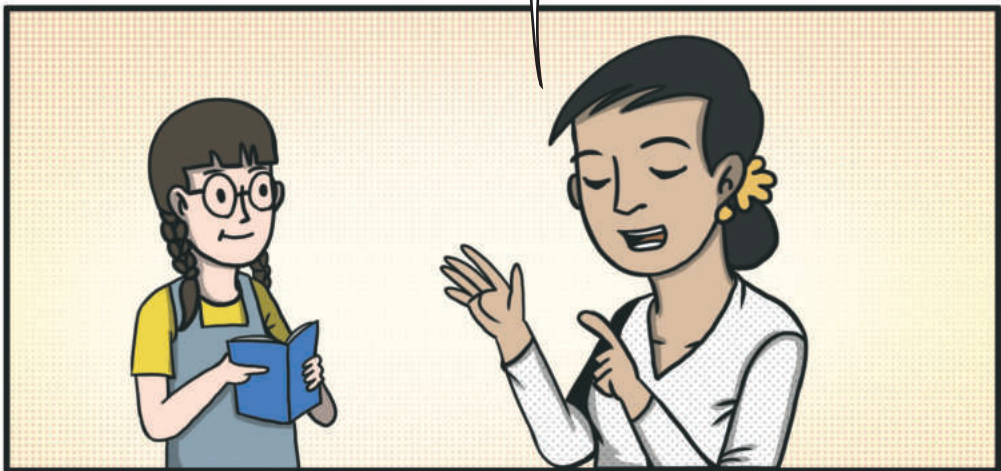
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Well, some countries have two houses in their parliament. Often, one chamber is supposed to represent the regions or states, while the other is supposed to work for the nation as a whole.



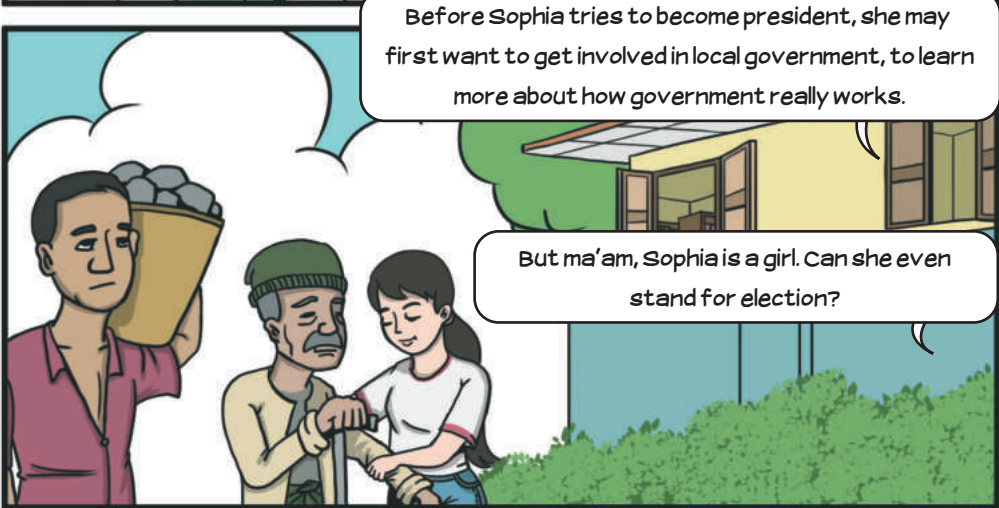
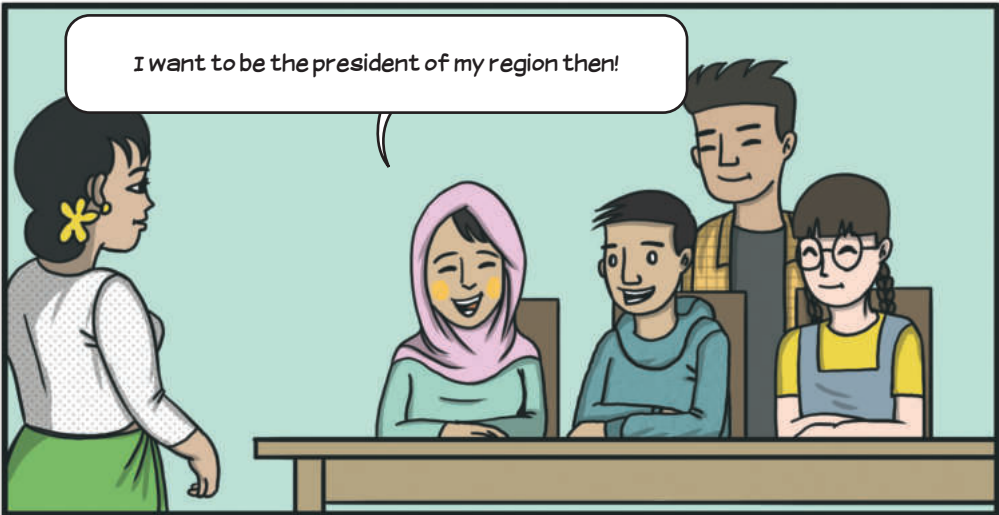
Some countries prefer a system that has different levels of government because the local levels sit closer to the people who elect them and can better understand local needs.



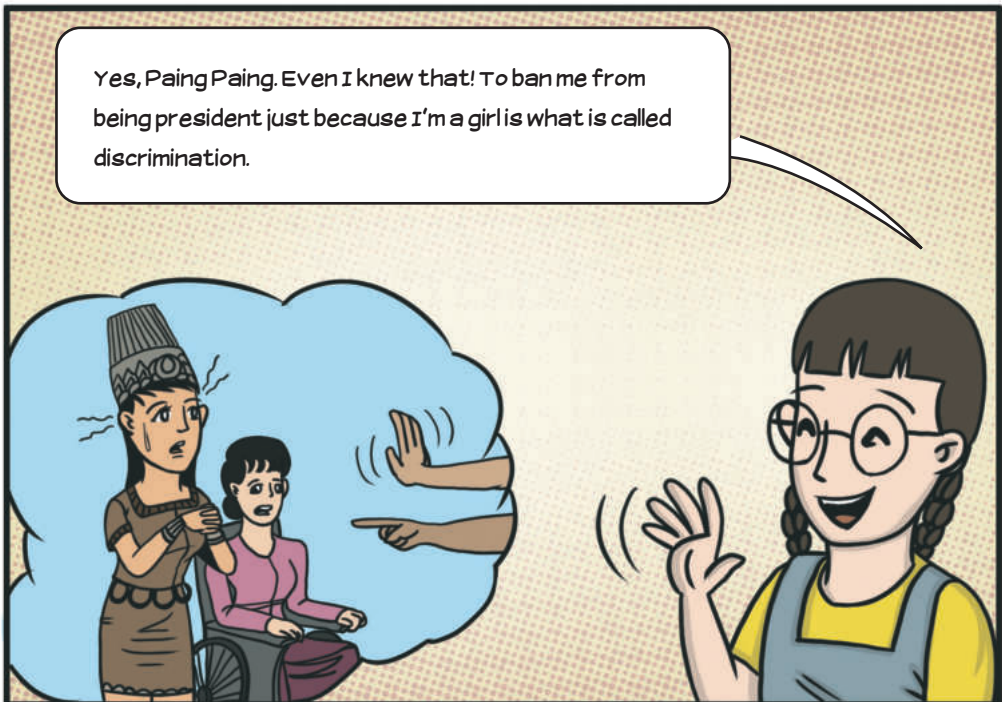
For example, members of a regional government or parliament might know better whether that area needs a new school in a neighbourhood, or a hospital or perhaps even a road!



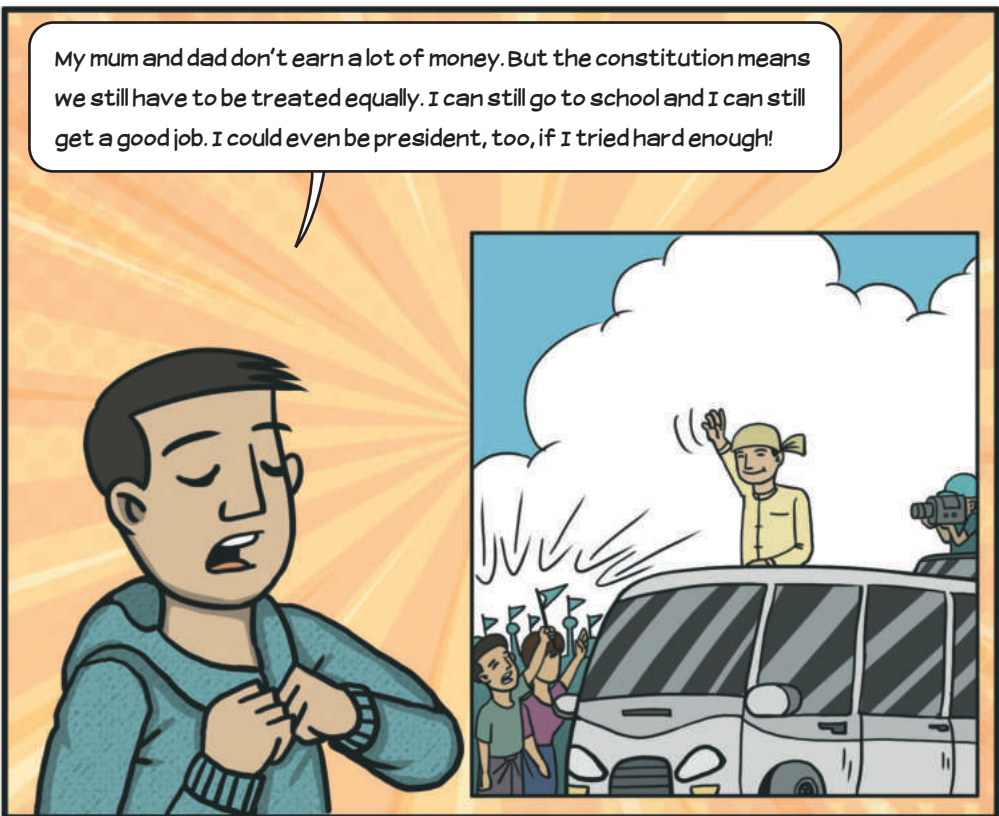
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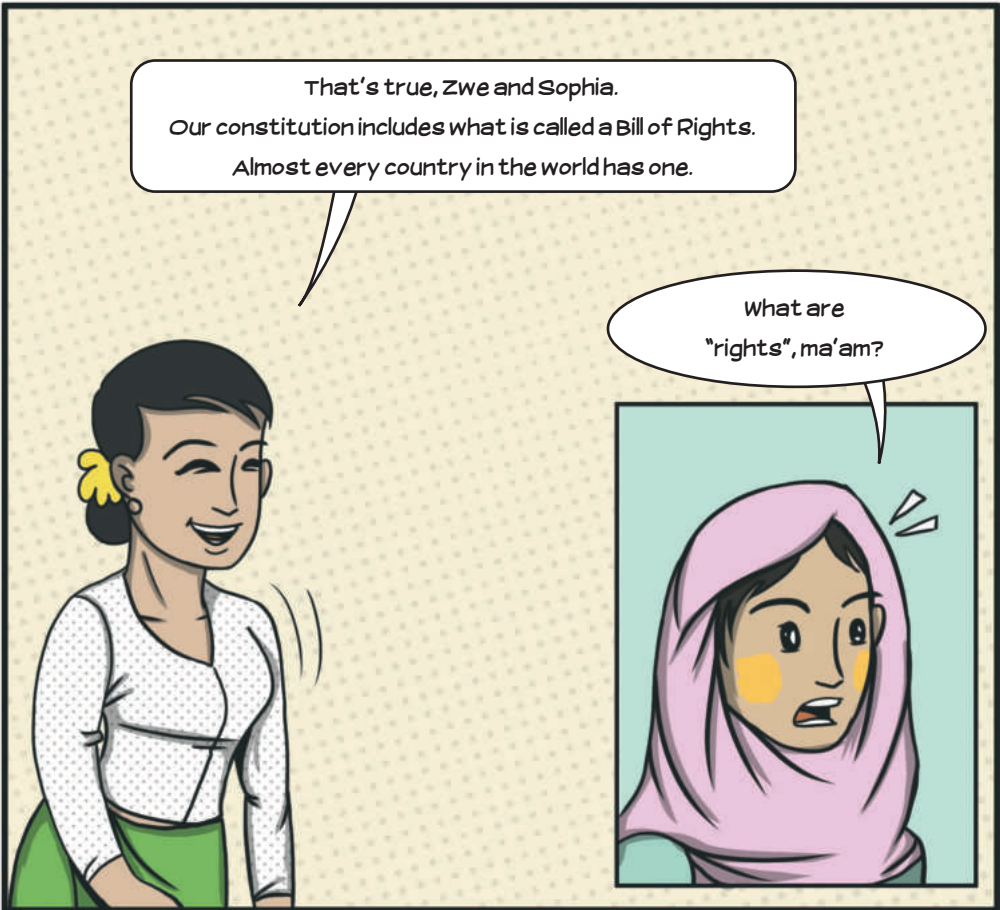


But ma'am, Sophia is a girl. Can she even stand for election?

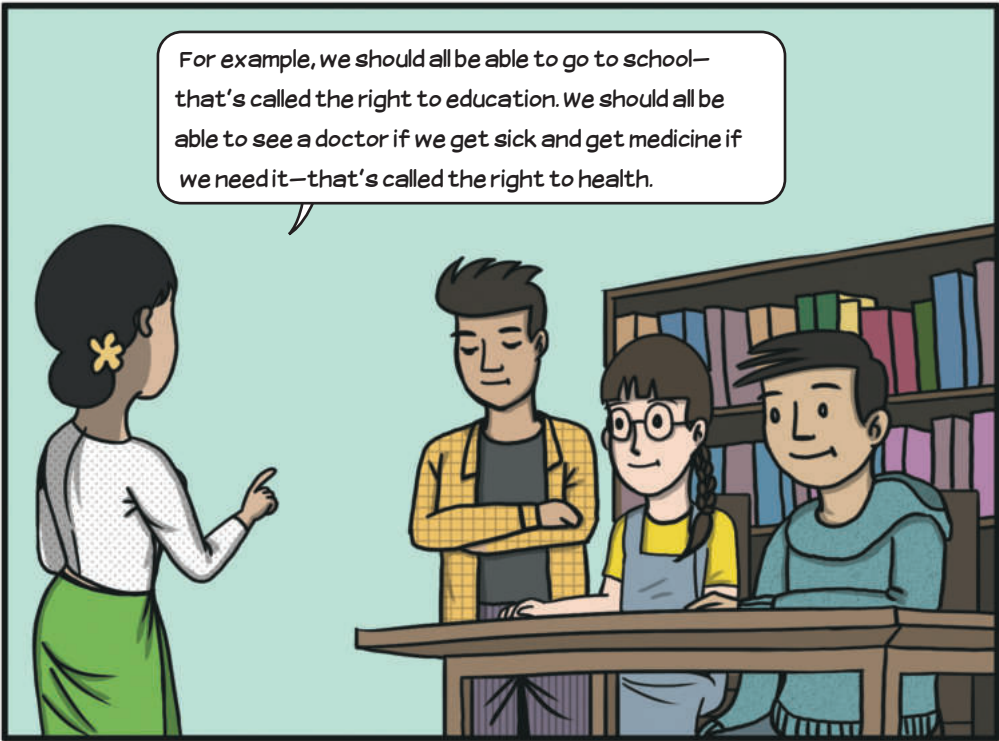


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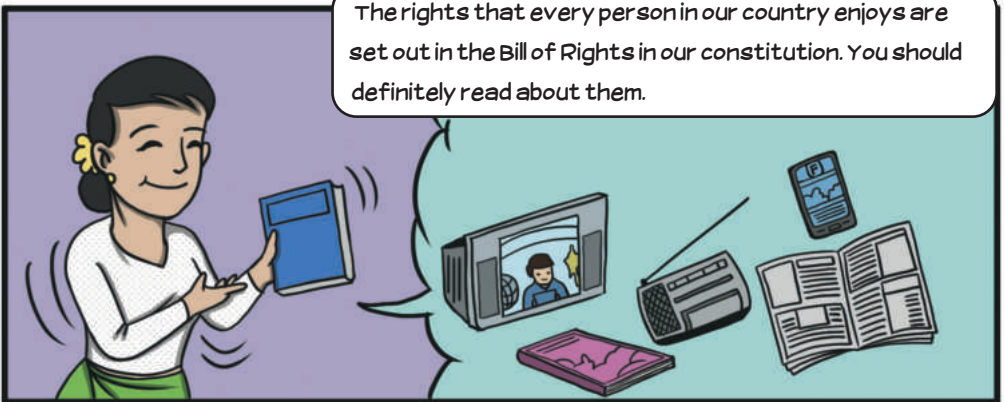
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Yes it is. The media have an important job in our country because they help us understand what the government is doing. They ask people questions and then share the information with us.



The rights that every person in our country enjoys are set out in the Bill of Rights in our constitution. You should definitely read about them.



Ma'am, do we have a right to say whatever we want in our constitution?



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Governments sometimes try to limit rights but you can ask the courts to decide on what is fair. For example, our constitution says we have the right to assemble and protest together.



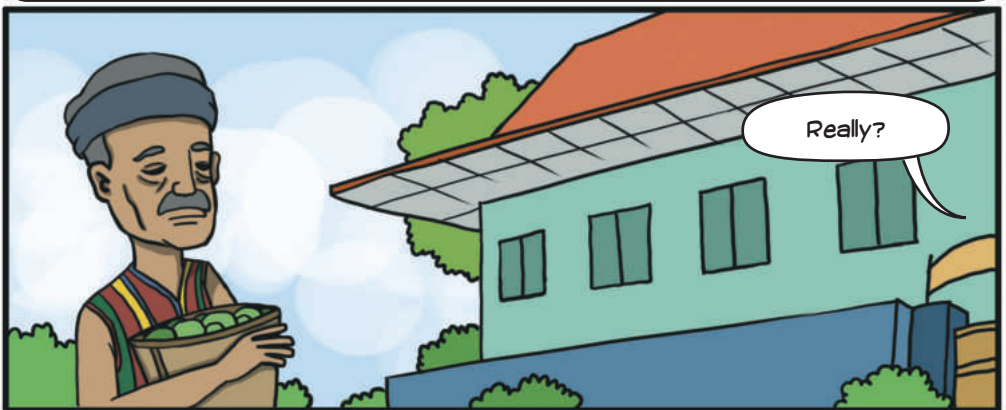
I know a case where a community wanted to protest against the government cutting down a holy forest to build an airport.



The local mayor tried to stop their protest, but the court said that the order was "unconstitutional" because it unfairly limited their right to freedom of assembly.



Sometimes limits are allowed though. Sophia, did you know that our constitution puts an age limit on who can be president?



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Yes, most countries require you to be 20 or 25 years old to stand for parliament.



You often have to be even older to run for president. In this country you need to be at least 45 years old.



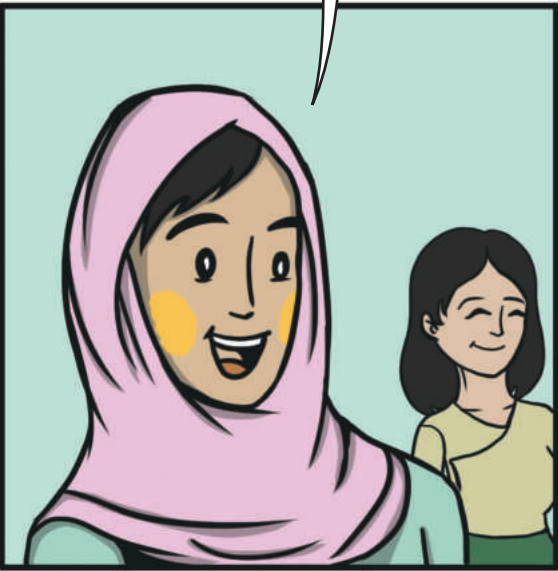


It's true. I know that sounds like a long time away, but you can still be involved in trying to do good things for the country in the meantime. This will help you be a better leader for the people. Can any of you think of how else you could get involved in working with your community, before your run in an election?



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I want to run for the school student council this year.
That way I can practise how to listen to people and
understand what they want and why.



I can also learn how to work with the student council members
to encourage them to work on the issues I think are important.





They also work with the local police and officials to help women whose husbands have hurt them to get help. Last year, they spoke to our local Member of Parliament to get the law changed to protect women better.



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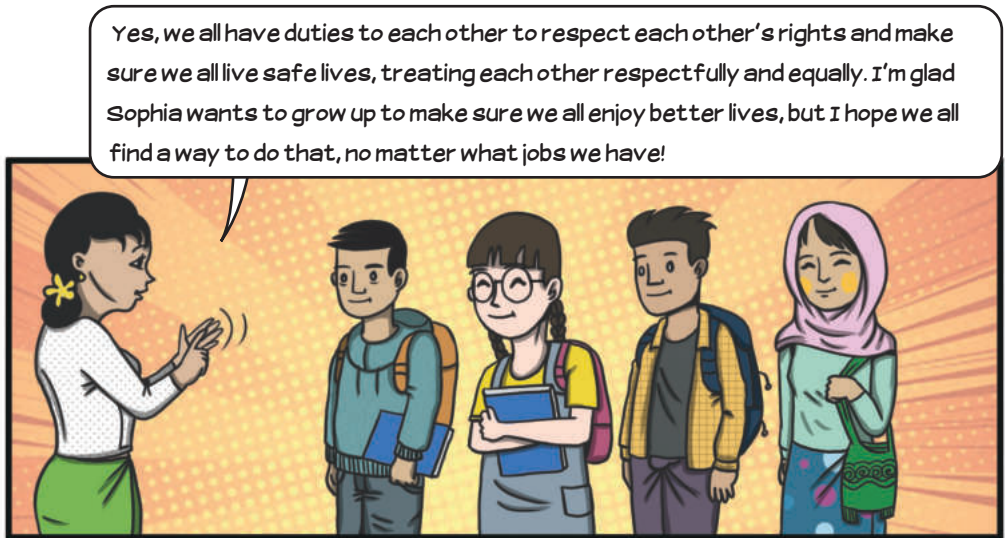
My dad is an engineer and he works for an organization that is trying to protect our environment. In our local area, they cut down lots of trees. He works with the logging people to make sure that they are following the rules about what you can cut down and how much. He also helps them to make sure they protect local animals.





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International IDEA

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization with the mission to advance democracy worldwide, as a universal human aspiration and enabler of sustainable development. We do this by supporting the building, strengthening and safeguarding of democratic political institutions and processes at all levels. Our vision is a world in which democratic processes, actors and institutions are inclusive and accountable and deliver sustainable development to all.

In our work we focus on three main impact areas: electoral processes; constitution-building processes; and political participation and representation. The themes of gender and inclusion, conflict sensitivity and sustainable development are mainstreamed across all our areas of work. International IDEA provides analyses of global and regional democratic trends; produces comparative knowledge on good international democratic practices; offers technical assistance and capacity-building on democratic reform to actors engaged in democratic processes; and convenes dialogue on issues relevant to the public debate on democracy and democracy-building.

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MyConstitution

The MyConstitution programme works towards a home-grown and well-informed constitutional culture as an integral part of democratic transition and sustainable peace in Myanmar. Based on demand by a wide variety of Myanmar stakeholders, expert advisory services are provided to those involved in constitution-building efforts. The MyConstitution programme also provides opportunities for learning and dialogue on relevant constitutional issues based on the history of Myanmar and comparative experience.

The project is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, the Government of Luxembourg, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway and the Government of Sweden.



Let's talk about constitutions!

'Let's talk about constitutions!' is designed to present obscure and difficult constitutional concepts to non-specialist and young audiences in an entertaining and informative way. International IDEA's MyConstitution Programme developed this cartoon booklet to promote young people's understanding of constitutional issues and thereby empower and inspire youth to play a full and meaningful part in their own constitution-building process. With dynamic images, relatable characters and simple language, 'Let's talk about constitutions!' illustrates key concepts to answer the questions: what is a constitution and why is it important? The cartoon is an educational tool that can be enjoyed by youth and adults alike, whether integrated into youth centre curricula or non-governmental organizations civic education campaigns. Since the booklet was designed primarily for Myanmar, the characters and scripts are tailored to the Myanmar context. The information shared in the cartoon, however, is relevant for people interested in learning and teaching about constitutions all around the world.

MyConstitution contributes to a home-grown, well-informed, and inclusive constitutional culture in Myanmar by strengthening partners' constitution-building expertise and access to relevant knowledge and networks. The programme is funded and supported by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Norway, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and the Government of Sweden.