

# Governance & Disclosure Practices

Learning Series for Voluntary Organisations, Issue - III, 2012

## Meetings through Video Conferencing



Credibility Alliance  
Improving Governance Building Trust

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## Meetings through Video Conferencing

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**Credibility Alliance**

Improving Governance Building Trust

\* The Advisory support members have contributed to the document, however, the entire content is not necessarily the opinion of the advisory group.

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## Foreword

In the present technology era, we find many developments happening which have an effect on our practices leading to need of new practices. One common example that applies to most of all, is the dependency on mobile phones for personal data. This new facility has driven many of us away from maintaining a Address Diary !

In this issue of CA Learning Series, we focus on some of the evolving practices in conducting organisational processes.

A web conference that utilizes video may be considered a particular type of videoconference – one in which the content is carried over the Internet. Videoconferencing is a term that refers to a video session in real-time among two or more users in two or more locations. Early versions, before the popularity of the Internet, utilized satellite communications and traditional analog TVs. Inhouse systems became popular in the early 1980s. Videoconferencing allows communication among several end-points, while the terms “video chat” and “videophone” commonly refer to one-on-one communications.

By connecting people online, web conferencing allows economical meetings among people located at different places without the cost and time involved in physical meetings where everyone gathers in one place. File sharing, collaborative web browsing, and application sharing are also easily supported over the Internet. As a result of the efficiency of this method, there is an increased reliance on web conferencing in place of the traditional face-to-face meetings.

Considering the existing legal framework for Voluntary Organisations in India and the increasing practice among Voluntary Organisations to hold important meetings such as the Board Meeting over electronic means, it is important to understand the pros and cons of the same.

This present Issue of CA Learning Series discusses the relevant issues relating to holding meetings through Video Conferencing/Electronic Mediums.

CA is grateful to the Author and all its Advisory Panel Support Members, for their active and valuable inputs.

CA also takes this opportunity to reiterate that the existing Norms of CA remains the same and the views expressed through the Learning Series are aimed to primarily strengthen good governance and accountable practices.

**S. P. Selvi**  
Executive Director,  
Credibility Alliance

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# Meetings through Video Conferencing

## Introduction

- 1.01** The Board Members of an NPO can be located in different geographical location and it is always difficult for member staying in far away places to attend Board meetings regularly. The administrative and travel cost is also an important issue in case of NPOs. Therefore, it becomes important to understand the legally acceptable ways of conducting general and Board meetings with the help of technology and video conferencing.
- 1.02** There is no rule or guidance under the Societies or Trust Act regarding holding meetings through video conferencing. However, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Govt. of India has issued directions and guidelines regarding holding of meetings through electronic means and video conferencing. The guidelines issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Govt. of India can be a great reference document for conducting meetings through electronic medium in the NPO sector. In this issue the relevant issues in context of NPOs are discussed. The Information and Technology Act, 2000 recognition electronic record and electronic means of communication.

## Video Conferencing and Meetings through Circulation

- 2.01** In this issue we are discussing meetings held through video conferencing, various other modes of meeting such as Tele conference, Meeting through Circulation, Skype etc. shall be discussed in another independent issue. It may be noted that, meeting through video conferencing demand adequate infrastructure and technology, such meetings do not come in the category of meetings through circulation, because the resolutions are not required to be circulated again for confirmation of the participating members. However, in other forms of meetings such as Tele conference, Skype etc. it would be necessary to circulate the resolutions for confirmation.

## Circular issued by Ministry of Corporate Affairs

- 3.01** The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has issued 3 circulars in this regard. The 1st Circular No. 21/2011, dt. 02.05.2011 clarifies the legal validity of using electronic platform under section 2, 4, 5 and 81 of the Information Technology Act, 2000. The 2nd Circular No. 27/2011, dt. 20.05.2011 clarifies the legal validity and the procedures to be followed in use of electronic mean with regard to general meetings. The 3rd Circular No. 28/2011, dt. 20.05.2011 clarifies the legal validity and the procedures to be followed in use of electronic mean with regard to Board meetings. All the three circular are provided **Annexure 1, 2 & 3**. It may be noted that any meeting which is not in conformity to the above said circulars does not become illegitimate or void as these circulars do not apply to NPOs, they are for reference purposes only.

## Only Video-Conferencing is permissible for Meetings

- 4.01** It has been clarified that only Video Conference facility i.e. audio-visual electronic communication facility is allowed for conducting meetings. Any other mode of meeting such as Tele-conferencing or Audio Conferencing or participation through Telephone/Mobile shall not be permissible. However, any such meeting through Tele-conferencing or Audio Conferencing may also be legitimatised by getting the resolution approved through circulation.
- 4.02** NPOs who have Directors in different parts of the country or even international Directors, can employ video conferencing for their Board meetings. Such meetings should be recorded, currently only NSDL & CSDL have been approved as approved video-conferencing facility. Any such audio-visual electronic meeting should enable all persons participating in that meeting to communicate simultaneously with each other without an intermediary, and to participate effectively in the meeting.
- 4.03** However, as the above guidelines are in context of companies, the NPOs may devise practical and legitimate ways of holding e-meetings. Some suggested practices are discussed here under.

## Issues for NPOs in using other electronic mediums for Meetings

- 5.01** It has to be understood that the minutes of a meeting are the most important evidence for legal purposes. Therefore, an organisation should be careful about ensuring the evidence value of all the meetings.

- 5.02** The legal frequency of NPOs is also important, the NPO registered as section 25 Companies are required to have minimum two board meetings in a year. The remaining forms of organisation i.e. are subject to various state laws and their own bye laws are required to have one or two compulsory board meetings. Therefore, an NPO should confine to the legitimate and approved methods of board meeting for at least 2 meetings in a year.
- 5.03** For fast decision making, NPOs may also have electronic meetings through Skype, Tele-conference, Video conference etc. But from an evidence point of view Skype and Tele-conference might be difficult to record. In case of Tele-conference one may have voice recording but such voice recording has not been recommended under the circulars issued by MCA as an approved means. However, an organisation may consider conducting additional board meetings (over and above the minimum requirement) through Tele-conference or Skype by keeping voice recording as well as create transcript based minutes as evidence. The minutes should be signed by circulation or in future meetings for legitimacy.

### Convening and Notice for such Meeting

- 6.01** The notice for such meeting should be made as per the bye laws of the organisation. All the Board members should be informed and confirmation should be obtained. In the absence of confirmation it may be presumed that the particular Trustee/Board member may physically attend the meeting. The notice should contain contact number, email address of the Secretary or designated person responsible for convening the meeting.
- 6.02** The notice should provide information regarding the available facility of video conferencing and also about the access and participation in the meeting.

### Quorum for such Meeting

- 7.01** The participation through video conferencing should also be counted for the purposes of quorum. A roll call should also be made at the conclusion of the meeting or at re-commencement of the meeting after every break to ensure presence of quorum throughout the meeting.

### Place for such Meeting

- 8.01** Ideally the Board meeting should be held at the registered office or approved place, however, all the Board members need not physically participate. Therefore,

the legally approved place for holding such meeting as per the trust deed or bye laws or the registered office should be the locus/place of such meeting. If there is no specific bar in the trust deed or bye laws regarding the place of meeting, then the organisation may also resolve to consider the place of the Chairperson and Secretary as the place of the meeting. The place of the Chairperson and Secretary should be considered as the place of the meeting only in the cases of Board meeting. In case of general meeting the registered office or approved place should only be used for conducting meetings.

### **Can a Trustee/Director totally avoid physical presence**

- 9.01** All Trustee/Directors should attend at least one meeting in a year physically. The organisation should ensure that the Directors are not skipping the physical presence through out the year.

### **Can both General or Board Meeting be held**

- 10.01** There is no legal bar in holding both general and Board meetings through video conferencing. However, in both the cases it needs to be ensured that all the persons eligible for attending the meeting should have appropriate access to the technology and infrastructure for such meetings.

### **Recording Attendance & Signing of Records**

- 11.01** All the members or Trustees who have given consent for attending the meeting and have participated in the meeting, will be deemed to have signed the attendance and the records and minutes as may be required. All the records pertaining to minutes shall be placed and signed by the Chairperson who has to be physically present. In the subsequent meetings the minutes of the last meeting should be placed before the Chairperson and should be the first agenda item for confirmation.

### **Minutes & Recording of meeting through Video Conferencing**

- 12.01** All meetings made through video conferencing should be recorded and proper arrangement should be made for storing the soft copies with adequate back up. In addition to the video recording the minutes of the meeting should be written as usual. The draft minutes of the meeting should be circulated in soft



copy within 7 days to all the members/Directors/Trustees who participated and doubts or clarification should be incorporated. If the doubts or clarification are serious and have a direct bearing on the resolution then such issues should be taken up in the next meeting.

- 12.02** The minutes should also disclose the mode of attendance of various members/Directors/Trustees in all the past meetings.

### **Can Directors & Trustees participate through intermediaries**

- 13.01** It is not permissible to participate through electronic mode with the help of an intermediary. The persons who are not tech-savvy cannot be allowed any support person for participation in such meeting. Such persons have to be physically present.

### **Role & Responsibility of the Chairperson or Secretary**

- 14.01** The Chairperson or Secretary of the Meeting should ensure the following :
- To take attendance at the beginning of the meeting and ensure the quorum throughout the meeting. The name of the persons absent should also be declared and confirmed. If the meeting gets disconnected then the quorum and attendance should be taken again at the time of re-commencement.
  - Every member, Trustee, Director should provide the full name, location and a declaration that no other person is participating in the meeting.
  - Every member, Trustee, Director should confirm that the audio and video quality is good and they are comfortable with it.
  - In case of dissent over any motion the Chairperson or Secretary should make another roll call and record the dissent and assent.
  - Should safeguard and ensure the integrity and decorum of the meeting.
  - Should ensure that the video conference facility and equipments are available to all the participating persons.
  - To ask for repetition or reiteration of any statement if it is not clear or any participant request for such repetition or reiteration.
  - To prepare the minutes of the meeting.
  - To provide a summary of the meeting in the end of the meeting. The chairman of the meeting shall announce summary of decisions taken at the meeting in respect of each agenda item and names of the directors who have consented/dissented to those decisions.

## Adjournment of Meetings through Video Conferencing

- 15.01** Normally Board meetings are adjourned to future date if the quorum is not present and the number of persons present in such future meeting automatically form the quorum. The question arises whether in the meetings through video conferencing also the same norm for quorum apply in case of adjournment. It is desirable that if a meeting through video conferencing is adjourned even then the quorum requirement should not be lifted in an adjourned meeting. It may be noted generally in an adjourned Board meeting the quorum requirement are waived and the members present form the quorum. Such waiver should not be given in case of adjourned meetings through video conferencing.
- 15.02** If the quorum is not complied in an adjourned meeting held through video conferencing then such meeting should be adjourned to a further date and physical Board should be convened. In such physically present meeting the norms pertaining to quorum in case of adjourned meeting can be applied. In other words, the norms pertaining to quorum in case of adjourned meeting should not be applied to meeting through video conferencing but can be applied in meetings where members are physically present.



*Annexure 1*

**Circular No. 21 of 2011 issued by MCA, dt.02.07.2011**

Circular No.21/2011

No 17/95/2011/CL.V  
Government of India  
Ministry of Corporate Affairs

5<sup>th</sup> floor, 'A' Wing, Shastri Bhawan,  
Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi  
Dated: 02.05.2011

All the Regional Directors,  
All the Registrar of Companies

**Subject: Green Initiative in the Corporate Governance -- Approval of Ministry of Corporate Affairs for appointment of agency for providing electronic platform for electronic voting under the Companies Act, 1956.**

Sir,


The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has taken a "Green Initiative in the Corporate Governance" by allowing paperless compliances by the Companies after considering sections 2, 4, 5, and 81 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 for legal validity of compliances under Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.

Section 192A of the Companies Act, 1956 read with Companies (Passing of the Resolution by Postal Ballot) Rules, 2001 already recognizes voting by electronic mode for postal ballot. Some of the listed company have already started using electronic platform of certain agencies for providing and supervising the electronic platform for electronic voting.

In order to have secured electronic platform for capturing accurate electronic voting processes, It is hereby clarified that the agency appointed for providing and supervising electronic platform for electronic voting shall be an agency duly approved by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

It is further clarified that for the above purpose, National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL) and Central Depository Services (India) Ltd (CDSL) are being approved by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs subject to the condition that they obtain a certificate from Standardization Testing and Quality Certification (STQC) Directorate, Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications & IT, Govt. of India, Electronics Niketan, 6 CGO Complex, New Delhi - 110 003, INDIA. Once they obtain the same and inform the Ministry, they will be authorized to undertake these activities.

Yours faithfully,

  
( Kamna Sharma )  
Assistant Director

Copy to: All concerned

## Annexure 2

### Circular No. 27 of 2011 issued by MCA, dt.20.05.2011

General Circular No. 27/2011  
No 17/95/2011-CL.V  
Government of India  
Ministry of Corporate Affairs  
5<sup>th</sup> floor, 'A' Wing, Shastri Bhawan,  
Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi  
Dated: 20.05.2011

All the Regional Directors,  
All the Registrar of Companies

**Subject: Green Initiative in the Corporate Governance – Participation by shareholders in general meetings under the Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.**

Sir,

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has taken a “Green Initiative in the Corporate Governance” by allowing paperless compliances by the Companies after considering sections 2, 4, 5, 13 and 81 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 for legal validity of compliances under Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.

2. The Ministry has been receiving representations from various Industry bodies to recognize participation by shareholders in meetings under the Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.
3. Section 13 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, inter-alia provides time and place of dispatch of notices in electronic mode, which may be applicable for the purpose of notice period provided in the Companies Act, 1956 or in the Article of Association of the company.
4. In the light of the above provisions and circumstances, it is hereby clarified that a shareholder of the company may participate in a general meeting under the provisions of Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.

For this purpose, the company shall also comply with the following requirements and procedures, in addition to the normal procedures required under the Companies Act, 1956 for holding general meeting: --

- (a) Electronic mode means video conference facility i.e. audio-visual electronic communication facility employed which enables all persons participating in that meeting to communicate concurrently with each other without an intermediary, and to participate effectively in the meeting.
- (b) The notice of the meeting must inform shareholders regarding availability of participation through video conference, and provide necessary information to enable shareholders to access the available facility of videoconferencing.
- (c) The Chairman of the meeting and Secretary shall assume the following responsibilities:
  - (i) to safeguard the integrity of the meeting via videoconferencing.
  - (ii) to ensure proper videoconference equipment/facilities.

- (iii) to prepare the minutes of the meeting.
- (iv) to ensure that no one other than the concerned shareholder or proxy to the shareholder is attending the meeting through electronic mode.
- (v) If a statement of a participant in the meeting via videoconferencing is interrupted or garbled, the Chairman of the meeting or Secretary shall request for a repeat or reiteration, and if need be, the Chairman or Secretary shall repeat what he heard the participant was saying for confirmation or correction.

5. (a) Section 166 of the Companies Act, 1956 inter-alia provides that a company is required to have its Annual General Meeting either at the registered office of the company or at place within the city, town or the village in which registered office of the company is situated.

(b) Section 174 of the Companies Act, 1956 inter-alia provides that at least five members in case of public company and two members in case of other company have to be personally present and shall be the quorum for the general meeting.

(c) In a general meeting, where shareholders are allowed to participate through electronic mode, the quorum as required under section 174 of the Companies Act, 1956 as well as chairman of the meeting shall have to be physically present at the place of the meeting.

6. To provide larger participation and for curbing the cost borne by the shareholders to attend general meetings, listed companies may provide video conferencing connectivity during such meetings at least five places in India. It is recommended that these places would be situated all over India in such a way that it covers top five States/UTs based on maximum number of members or at least 1000 members, whichever is more, residing as per the address registered with the depositories.

7. In order to have secured electronic platform for capturing accurate electronic voting processes, the necessary clarification has already been issued vide Circular no. 21/2011 dated 02.05.2011.

Yours faithfully,

  
(Monika Gupta)  
Assistant Director

Copy to: All concerned.

### Annexure 3

## Circular No. 28 of 2011 issued by MCA, dt.20.05.2011

General Circular No. 28/2011  
No 17/95/2011-CL.V  
Government of India  
Ministry of Corporate Affairs

5<sup>th</sup> floor, 'A' Wing, Shastri Bhawan,  
Dr. Rajendra Prasad Road, New Delhi  
Dated: 20.05.2011

All the Regional Directors,  
All the Registrar of Companies

**Subject: Green Initiative in the Corporate Governance – Participation by directors in meetings of Board / Committee of directors under the Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.**

Sir,

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs has taken a "Green Initiative in the Corporate Governance" by allowing paperless compliances by the Companies after considering sections 2, 4, 5, 13 and 81 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 for legal validity of compliances under Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.

2. The Ministry has been receiving representations from various Industry bodies to recognize participation by directors in meetings of Board / Committee of directors under the Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.

3. Section 13 of the Information Technology Act, 2000, inter-alia provides time and place of dispatch of notices in electronic mode, which may be applicable for the purpose of notice period provided in the Companies Act, 1956 or in the Article of Association of the company.

4. In the light of the above provisions and circumstances, it is hereby clarified that directors of a company may participate in a meeting of Board / Committee of directors under the provisions of Companies Act, 1956 through electronic mode.

For this purpose, the company shall also comply with the following requirements and procedures, in addition to the normal procedures required under the Companies Act, 1956 for holding meetings of Board / Committee of directors: --

- (a) Electronic mode means video conference facility i.e. audio-visual electronic communication facility employed which enables all persons participating in that meeting to communicate concurrently with each other without an intermediary, and to participate effectively in the meeting.
- (b) Every director of the company must attend the meeting of Board/Committee of directors personally at least one meeting a financial year of the company.

(c) The Chairman of the meeting and Secretary shall assume the following responsibilities:

- (i) to safeguard the integrity of the meeting via videoconferencing.
- (ii) to ensure proper videoconference equipment/facilities.
- (iii) to prepare the minutes of the meeting.
- (iv) to ensure that no one other than the concerned director or other authorized participants are attending the meeting through electronic mode.
- (v) If a statement of a participant in the meeting via videoconferencing is interrupted or garbled, the Chairman or Secretary shall request for a repeat or reiteration, and if need be, the Chairman or Secretary shall repeat what he heard the participant was saying for confirmation or correction.

5(a) The notice of the meeting must inform directors regarding availability of participation through video conference, and provide necessary information to enable directors to access the available facility of videoconferencing.

(b) The notice of the meeting shall also seek confirmation from the director as to whether he will attend the meeting physically or through electronic mode and shall also contain the contact number(s) / e-mail addresses of the Secretary / designated officer to whom the director shall confirm in this regard.

(c) In the absence of any confirmation from the Director, it will be presumed that he will physically attend the Board meeting.

6. At the start of the scheduled meeting through electronic mode, a roll call shall be made by the Chairman/ Secretary. Every director and authorized participant shall state, for the record, the following:-

- i. Full Name
- ii. Location
- iii. that he can completely and clearly see and communicate with each of other participants.
- iv. and will ensure that no one other than the concerned director or authorized participant is attending the meeting through electronic mode.

Thereafter, the Chairman/ Secretary shall confirm the participation of the directors in the meeting who are not physically present. After the roll call, the Chairman or Secretary may certify the existence of a quorum.

It is clarified that a director participating in a meeting through use of video conference shall be counted for the purpose of quorum. A roll call should also be made at the conclusion of the meeting or at re-commencement of the meeting after every break to ensure presence of quorum throughout the meeting.

7. The place where the Chairman or Secretary is sitting during the Board meeting shall be taken as place of meeting in terms of section 288 of the Act, and all recordings will be made at this place. The other statutory registers which are required to be placed in the Board meeting as per the provisions of the Act, shall be placed before the Chairman for compliance of the Act. The statutory registers required to be signed by the other directors shall be deemed to have been signed by directors participating through electronic mode if they have given their consent to this effect in that meeting.

8. If a motion is objected to and there is a need to vote, the Chairman/ Secretary should call the roll and note the vote of each director who should identify himself.

9 (a) In the end of the meeting, Chairman of the meeting shall announce the summary of the decisions taken in that meeting in respect of each agenda item and names of the directors who have consented or dissented to those decisions. Video recording of that part of the meeting shall be preserved by the company for one year from the conclusion of that meeting.

(b) In the minutes, chairman shall also confirm the mode of attendance of every director of the company during last three meetings whether personally or through electronic mode.

(c) Draft minutes of the meeting shall be circulated in soft copy not later than 7 days of the meeting for comments/confirmation to the directors who attended the meeting to dispel all doubts on matters taken up during the meeting. Thereafter, the minutes shall be entered in the minute books as prescribed under section 193 of the Act. The minutes shall also disclose the particulars of the Directors who attended the meeting through electronic mode.

Yours faithfully,

  
25/5/11  
(Monika Gupta)  
Assistant Director

Copy to: All concerned.



## About Credibility Alliance

Credibility Alliance (CA) is a consortium of Voluntary Organizations committed towards enhancing Accountability and Transparency in the Voluntary Sector through good Governance. Registered in May 2004 as an independent, not-for-profit Organization, CA emerged as an initiative from within the Sector after an extensive consultative process over a period of two years involving thousands of VOs all over India. As an Organization, CA aspires to build trust among all stakeholders through improving Governance within the Voluntary Sector. As an initiative whose hallmark has been the participatory approach, CA has developed suitable Norms through wide-ranging consultation with and participation of diverse Organizations within the Sector by developing a large membership base.

With the mission 'to build credibility of the Voluntary Sector through creation and promotion of Norms of Good Governance and Public Disclosure', CA's core programme areas comprise of: Accreditation, Capacity Building, Networking and Information Dissemination.

- I. **Accreditation:** Accreditation of Voluntary Organizations refers to the certification of upholding of the quality of an organization, which adheres to the minimum norms or desirable norms set by Credibility Alliance. The main purpose of the Accreditation exercise is to develop a cost effective mechanism of periodic evaluation of VOs in the country.

'Minimum Norms' are the Norms that all VOs should follow. It is mandatory for all the Accredited Members of CA to comply with the Minimum Norms or give an undertaking that they will do so within an year, whereas 'Desirable Norms' are the next level of Norms for good Governance and public disclosure. These are the practices that are at present not mandatory and some Organizations may require time to adopt such practices.

- II. **Capacity Building:** Credibility Alliance focuses on the Capacity Building process to maximize its potential and sustain its work by adopting the existing best practices. CA plans the Capacity Building initiatives for the Voluntary Organizations by identifying and outlining the gaps in the Sector, assessing the needs and finally instituting the programs to address those needs.
- III. **Networking:** Credibility Alliance facilitates interaction between experts in different areas and promotes the sharing of ideas and information between the Voluntary Organizations and the experts. CA helps VOs to seek issue-based information in the Sector that they are working in, which helps in building the professional capacities of VOs through training, thereby enabling them to increase institutional capacities.
- IV. **Information Dissemination:** Credibility Alliance sensitizes, spreads awareness, assists, educates and appraises on the recent developments, responsibilities and other critical issues pertaining to Voluntary Sector by disseminating vital information periodically to all VOs.



## Credibility Alliance

Improving Governance Building Trust

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