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CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY

INTRODUCTION

The people have a collective right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as a part of self-determination. Also, the people have the right to take part in their government through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately rule them. These precepts are being controlled by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They capture the foundation for the famous

formulation that democratic government is "of the people, by the people and for the people." This simply means that governmental processes belong to the people and the governments belong to the people. There is no democracy without engagement of citizens. Citizens engagement brings about economic, social, culture and political development. The government in power must always be accountable and transparent with information, which in turn helps the citizens to be informed about what is happening in government and the country. There are barriers hindering citizens from participating in democracy. For this barrier

to be removed, citizens need to understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government. They need to be informed about the things that are mentioned above in order for them to make the right choices.

CONCEPTUAL

CLARIFICATIONS

- **CITIZEN/CITIZENSHIP-** It implies a certain type of relationship between the people and the government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. To be a citizen means to enjoy certain liberties and rights. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. Turner

(1997:176), gave a definition of citizenship as a formal legal identity that the individual person inherits through a collection of legal rights and obligations, controlling access to the scarce political, economic and cultural resources of the society.

Citizenship can be divided into; Civil citizenship, Political citizenship and Social citizenship. Civil citizenship refers to the rights necessary to protect individual liberty e.g. freedom of speech, justice, the freedom to conclude valid contracts; Political citizenship is associated with participation in the

democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community or as an individual elected by the members of such a community; Social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to these resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.

Citizenship shown by Glover (2004:18), shows that there are three dimensions of active citizenship; Ethical citizenship, Integrative citizenship and Educative citizenship.

Ethical citizenship understands active participation in a collective strive towards the public good as an essential feature of citizenship. Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political parties and institutions.

Educative citizenship on its part according to Dagger (1997) refers to the process that develops a moral, practical and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice this citizenship.

- **CITIZENS' RIGHT-**
Individual's rights and

liberties are the ground work of the state since it exists to enable men to live and develop fully. Right may therefore be defined as privilege prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. If the civil rights of a citizen are invaded by another citizen or government, he is entitled to seek redress in the court of law. Example of these rights are right to life, right to work, right to freedom of religion, right to education, right of association and right to freedom of speech, writing and publication among others.

- Democracy- The word democracy is derived from the Greek word "demos meaning people and kratos

meaning rule, that is rule by people. Democracy or representative government which is also known as indirect government is associated with the free discussion of political views, the right to differ concerning them and the settlement of differences by counting of votes. Abraham Lincoln, former American President, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people.

The things that we can deduce from various definition of democracy are the following features

- The fundamental rights of citizens is guaranteed
- Independent and impartial judiciary

- Existence of rule of law
- Freedom of press
- Periodic election that is free and fair.

Duties and responsibilities of citizens in a Democracy

- A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote
- A citizen should be willing to pay taxes, since without taxes to fund the government, there would be no democracy.
- A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law.
- A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to governmental policies

- A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community.

CONCLUSION

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voters. It is considered the best form of government in the modern era. Citizens play very important roles in democracy. There would be no Democracy without the cooperation and commitment of citizens. A positive attitude should be maintained with development of the state being the priority.

