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MEDICINE AND SURGERY

**GST 203**

**CITIZENS ROLE IN A DEMOCRACY**

In a democracy sovereignty resides in and flows from the people. The people have the right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self determination and the people have a right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy government offices. These precepts embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) capture the foundation for the famous formulation government is “of the people, by the people and for the people.” In essence there is no democracy without the participation of people within the state(citizens) and this participation is both a right and responsibility and for efficient participation to take place citizens have to be informed about issues in government and politics as these issues affect their lives. Although barriers to citizen participation are present in every country. They are both subtle and obvious, these barriers are to be removed in other to achieve full citizenship

**Citizenship**: This term implies a certain relationship that exists between people and government. Being a citizen means that you have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions affecting public welfare. In ancient Rome, being a citizen was considered a prvilledge because it wasn’t accorded to all inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Slaves, serfs and some alien residents were denied citizenship for racial, political and religious reasons.

Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. A man may become a citizen of a state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within territory of that state. Citizenship by birth is fundamental in most countries. The constitution of Nigeria defines citizenship as

a. Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belongs to a community indigenous to Nigeria.

b. Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria

c. Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria

Section 26(I) to Section 32 stipulates conditions necessary for a person trying to naturalise in order to b regarded as a citizen of Nigeria .Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of Civil citizenship, Political Citizenship and social citizenship

**Civil citizenship** refers to rights necessary to protect individual liberty

**Political citizenship** is associated with participation in democratic exercise of political powers

**Social citizenship** enables the individuals to have access to resource that enables them live a civilized existence. The concept of citizenship is broad and diverse hence it has been assigned different definitions by different people in Glover (2004:18) It is argued that there are 3 dimensions of active citizenship : ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship.

**CITIZEN RIGHTS**: Individual’s rights and liberties are the ground work of the state since it enables men to live and develop fully. However these rights are not absolute and are limited by the rights of other members in this state. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of a constitution it becomes a civil right

**DEMOCRACY:** Derived from two Greek words “Demos” – people “kratos”-rule that is “rule by the people” The concept of democracy originated from Ancient Greece. The Greek democracy however was a limited institution that excluded laborers, slaves and aliens from exercising political rights. The idea that all citizens high or low, within a state are entitled to take part was advocated in England after the great civil warduring that period Levelers, a radical party, advocated that it is unnatural irrational and tyrannical for any man to rule or govern any sort of men in the world without their free consent. The revolt by American colonies in England was successful and led to development of democratic ideas and institutions as a way of life. These ideas spread widely throughout the 19th century. American ruler Abraham Lincoln perceived democracy as “government of the people, by the people and for the people”

Since there is no single definition of democracy however various definitions can be deduced from the various definition: **Fundamental rights of citizens is guaranteed, Independentand impartial judiciary, Existence of Rule of law, Freedom of press and Free and fair periodic election.**

**DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIXENS IN DEMOCRACY:**

While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duty to the state. Democratic citizens realize they don’t only have rights they also have responsibilities. They recognize democracy requires investment and hard work. Hence the saying “you get the government you deserve” For democracy to succeed citizens ought to be active and not passive .These are some of the duties citizens are expected to perform:

a. A citizen should have the duty to vote

b. A citizen should be willing to pay taxes

c. A good citizen must have to obey the law

d. Good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms instead he/she should offer constructive criticisms to government policies

e. A good citizens must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community

f. (S) he must support public education in every way possible

**Conclusion:** Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. It is considered the best form of government in the modern era as it allows citizens to exercise and enjoy many rights and it gives them responsibilities at the same time. Citizens pay important role in democracy and Democracy would not exist without the cooperation and commitment of citizens.