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**CHAPTER 8: CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY.**

In a democracy, the people have the collective right to choose their governmental, political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. Governments, governmental processes and elections belong to the people. There is no democracy without the involvement of the citizens. Citizens must be informed about issues that can improve their lives and should be free to come together to express their views and work to ensure that the government respond to their views.

**Citizen/Citizenship**: This term has a political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the government and the people. Citizenship of a state can be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. A man becomes a citizen of a state if his parents are citizens of the state or if he was born within the territory of the state. Citizenship determined by the place of birth is fundamental in the laws of most countries. Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of **Political citizenship**: This is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power either as a member of a political party or as an individual selected by the members of such a political community, **Civil citizenship:** This refers to rights necessary to protect individual liberty, **Social citizenship:** This embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standard prevailing in society. **Glover** argues that there are three dimensions of active citizenships which are: Ethical citizenship, integrative citizenship and educative citizenship. **Kenny**, a community development practitioner, argues that contemporary constructions of citizenship can be understood by differentiating passive from active citizenship.

**Citizens’ Rights:** For citizens to have a fair share in running of his/her government, a group of rights is very essential. Right involves some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizen. A right can be defines as a privilege conferred by law upon a person or a group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it becomes a civil right. Important civil rights in the Nigerian constitution include: the right to life, the 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:** It is derived from the Greek word *demos* meaning people and *kratos* meaning rule , that is “rule by the people.” Democracy originated from ancient Greece. Direct democracy is a system that enables people exercise authority themselves. Abraham Lincoln conceived Democracy as government of the people, by the people and for the people. The state exists to serve the individual and provide the conditions which make a full and which make a full and happy life possible **(Maxey, 2010: 53).** Some features that can be deduced from the various definitions of democracy are: The fundamental rights of the 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.**

While the state provides rights and liberties, citizens have duties to the state and Democratic citizens understand that they not only have rights but have responsibilities. Citizens are expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy: a) A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote. There is no point in democracy which we do not participate. b) A citizen should be willing to pay taxes in order to fund a democratic government. c) A good citizen must obey the law, Democracy cannot exist in a lawless society. d) A good citizen must not interfere with the rights of other members of the society. e) A good citizen should not offer destructive criticisms but should offer constructive alternatives to government politics. f) He or She must support government education every way possible by payment of taxes, through local volunteer efforts e.t.c. Citizens play an important role in Democracy.