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**Citizens Roles in a democracy**

**Sovereignty resides in and flows from the people in a democracy. They have a collective right to choose their governmental , political and electoral systems as part of self-determination. The authority of government likewise derives from the will of the people in their choice of these systems, and the people have a right to take part in their government, including through genuine elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices. These precepts are embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in modern constitutions the world over. They capture the foundation for the famous formulation that democratic government is of the people, by the people and for the people . In essence, they mean just that: government belong to the people; and elections belong to the people. There is no democracy without the engagement of citizens. Engagement is thus both a right and a responsibility of citizens in establishing, developing and sustaining democracy. Citizens engagement is not an abstraction; it takes tangible forms and serves particular purposes to improve people’s lives. Citizens engagement pursues economic, social , cultural** **and political development, including the provision of opportunity , resources, services, and security (Albright, 2012). For democracy to deliver, citizens must become informed about issues that can improve their lives. They must be free to come together to express their views and preference and work to see that government responds to citizens views , thus holding those in government accountable. To be informed , particularly government-held information. They need to learn from those who compete in politics how politicians intend to employ that information for the good of the population. Access to information is essential to an informed citizenry. That is why transparency is a necessity for democracy. Citizens, including political competitors, must also be free to impart their views about governmental processes and public affairs; otherwise citizens cannot be truly informed, nor can they freely make choices. Barriers to citizen participation are multiple in every country. They are both subtle and obvious, small and formidable, and based on numerous factors. For full citizenship to be achieved, we must remove these barriers, whether they are based on gender , race , ethnicity, religion, age or another status. If not, universal and equal suffrage is essentially denied, and governmental credibility is undermined. Citizens must, therefore, understand ideas about citizenship, politics and government. They need knowledge to make decisions about policy choices and the proper use of authority, along with the skills to voice their concerns, act collectively and hold public officials accountable. Thus, a symbiotic relationship exists between democracy, the citizens and states development to the effect that citizens government, made by citizens for the citizenry is called democracy and it is the involvement or active participations of the people in governance that brings about development .**

**Conceptual Clarifications**

**In order to enhance their meanings as used within the context of this paper, it is important to clarify a few concepts.**

**Citizens/ citizenship**

**The term citizens has an inherently political meaning that implies a certain type of relationship between the people and government. Citizens have a set of rights and responsibilities, including the right to participate in decisions that affect public welfare. In addition to intrinsic democratic value; participation is an instrumental driver of democratic and socio-economic change, and a fundamental way to empower citizens . To be a citizens means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to the slaves who could not enjoy them . They provide rights and liberties to enable them develop their potentialities. In reality, the essence of a state is to provide opportunities to enable citizens to lead the good life. Citizenship of a state may be acquired either by birth or by naturalization. A man becomes a citizen of a particular state if his parents are citizens of that state or if he is born within the territory of that state. Citizenship determined by the place of birth is fundamental in the laws of most countries. This is what informed Turner (1977:176) when he opines that citizenship is a formal legal identity that the individual person inherits through a collection of legal rights and obligation, controlling access to the scare political, economic , and cultural resources of society . On the other hand , the process by which an individual may voluntarily change his /her citizenship of a another state is known as naturalization. The conditions under which naturalization are conferred vary country to country**

**Chapter 111, section 25 :1(a) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria define citizenship as:. A) Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community indigenous to Nigeria: provided that a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section of neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was born in 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 ; and. C). Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria. Citizenship can be perceived to be made up of, or 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). Political citizenship is associated with participation in the democratic exercise of political power, either as a member of a political community ( e.g. a voter )or as an individual elected by the members of such a community (e.g. a politician) Social citizenship embodies the claim that citizens ought to have access to those resources that allow them to live a civilized existence in accordance with the standards prevailing in society.**

**Citizenship as well as shown by Glover 2004:18 who argues that there are three dimension 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. The personal sacrifices that are made aid some public benefit and are hence ultimately also enjoyed by the person who sacrifices. Integrative citizenship needs engagement in a wide sphere of participation that can go beyond formal political practices and institutions. The concept involves the belief that every individual plays an assortment of roles, and that this form of citizenship enables the individual to integrate their various roles . Educative citizenship refers to the process that develops a moral, political and intellectual sense of self in individuals when they practice their citizenship.**

**Citizens Rights : individuals rights and liberties are the groundwork of the state since it exists to enable men to live and developed fully . In order to let the citizens have a share in the running of his/her government, a group of rights is very essential. Right entails some duties and responsibilities on the part of every citizens. A right may therefore be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or a group. Important civil rights accorded Nigerian citizens in its constitution include ; the right to life, the right to work, right to freedom of religion, rights to education , rights to association etc.**

**Democracy : it has been etymology established that the word democracy is derived from the Greek word Demos meaning people and kratos meaning rule that is rule by the people. Abraham Lincoln, former American president, perceived democracy as the government of the people, by the people and for the people. According to him, Democracy is a government of the people when it is designed to represent the common will of the citizenry within a state and that it is a government by the people when it’s ideological undercurrents is grounded in the people’s culture also it is a government which is for the people when the power employed by the custodians of state business emanates from and resides in the collective mandate of the people.**

**Since there is no single definition of democracy however, what can be deduce form the various definitions of democracy are the followings features: 1) The fundamentals rights of the citizens is guaranteed 2) Independent and impartial judiciary. 3) Existence of rule of law 4) Freedom of press. 5) Periodic election that is free and fair**

**Duties and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy**

**While the state provides rights and liberties, all citizens have duties to the state. Democratic citizens recognize that not only duties to the state. Democratic citizens recognize that they not only have rights, they have responsibilities. They recognize that democracy requires an investment of times and hard work. Citizens are therefore expected to perform the following responsibilities in a democracy :. A) A citizen in a democracy should have the duty to vote. B) A citizen should be willing to o pay taxes, since without taxes to fund a democratic government C) A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law. D) A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms must be prepared to offer constructive alternative to government policies. E) A good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community. F) He must support public education in every way possible.**