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**chapter 8: CITIZENS ROLES IN A DEMOCRACY**

**INTRODUCTION:** 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 geniue elections to determine who will legitimately occupy governmental offices. 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 preferences and work to see that government responds to citizens’ views, thus holding those in government accountable. Thus, a symbolic relationship exists between democracy, the citizens and states development to the effect that citizens government, made by the citizens for the citizenry is called democracy and it is the involvement or active participation’s 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

**CITIZEN/ CITIZENSHIP** : The term citizen has 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 Ancient Rome, it was considered a privileged status to be called citizens because the status was not accorded to all inhabitants of the Roman Empire. Slaves, serfs, and some alien residents were deprived of citizenship for recial, political, and religious reasons. To be a citizens means to enjoy certain liberties and rights as opposed to the slaves who could not enjoy them. Modern states confer citizens on practically their whole residents or populations. They provide rights and liberties to enable them develop their personalities. In reality the essence of a states is to provide opportunities to enable citizens to lead the good life.

Citizenship of a state maybe required either by birth or by naturalization.

**CITIZENS RIGHTS**: in order to let the citizens have a share in the running of his /her government, a group of rights is very essential. These rights are not absolute since they are limited by the rights of other citizens in the state. A right may be defined as a privilege or prerogative conferred by law upon a person or group. When a privilege is expressed within the framework of the constitution of the state, it becomes civil rights. If the civil rights of a citizens are invaded by another citizen or the government, he is entitled to seek redress in the court of law

**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.

It is also 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

**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 they not only rights, they have responsibilities. They recognize that democracy requires an investment of time and hard work. A government of the people demands constant vigilance and support by the people.

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 pay taxes, since without taxes to fund a democratic government, there would be no democracy

c) A good citizen must have a duty to obey the law

d) a good citizen must refrain from interference with the rights of other members of the community. He must not interfere with the properties of other person

e) they must support public education in every way possible through the payment of taxes , through local volunteer efforts, through according this system the respect to which it should be entitled.

f) A good citizen must refrain from uttering destructive criticisms but must be prepared to offer constructive alternatives to government policies.

**Conclusion**

Democracy is a system of government where the citizens directly elect the government by voting. It is also defined as the system of government by the people, of the people and for the people. Citizens play an important role in democracy There would probably be no democracy without the cooperation and commitment of citizens. Citizens must be aware of their rights and responsibilities as without awareness among the citizens, a government may turn into a tyranny.