CIVICS EDUCATION

TOPIC: HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are the basic freedoms that all human beings are entitled to and which must be given to all citizens in a state. These fundamental human rights are naturally endowed and must be enjoyed for as long as a person is living within the dictates of the law of such society.

Fundamental human rights can be defined as those benefits that a person enjoys (which are natural, inalienable and indispensable) irrespective of his/her age, sex, religion, race or origin.

Some of the rights stated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria include:

1. Right to life
2. Right to personal liberty
3. Right to freedom of thought
4. Right to human dignity
5. Right to freedom of conscience and religious belief
6. Right to freedom of expression
7. Right to peaceful assembly
8. Right to marry
9. Right to vote
10. Right to privacy

Characteristics of Human Rights

1. Human rights are indivisible: The enjoyment of one right leads to the enjoyment of another and the denial of one right lead to the denial of another. Human rights have a wholistic approach because it cannot be divided between people. All human beings are entitled to freedom, security and decent standard of living without any form of discrimination.

2. Human rights are universal: The entire world is a global village where all human beings have similar nature and are guided by almost the same principles irrespective of where they come from their race, sex or religion. Every living being around the world has the right to life, movement, expression, association etc. What makes you to enjoy these rights is not because you live in Nigeria, America, France etc. It is because you are a member of the human race and you belong to a universal entity called the world.

3. Human rights are indispensable. Human rights are important that people cannot do without them. Money is very important to life therefore people must be able to work and get well paid so as to meet their basic needs of life. This makes economic rights indispensable.

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5. Human rights are constitutionally recognized: The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recognizes fundamental human rights in line with the universal declaration of human rights (UDHR) of the United Nations. Protection of human rights is lawful such that when these rights are denied, people can go to the court of law to seek for redress.
CATEGORIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS

6. **Civic and Political Rights**: Civic and political rights relate to peoples’ freedom, liberty and legitimate right in the management of their affairs through the political system of the country they belong.

These rights may include:
(a) Right to life
(b) Right to equality before the law
(c) Right to freedom of movement and association
(d) Right to political participation of voting and being voted for during election.
(e) Right to personal liberty

2. **Economic and Social Right**: These are socio-economic human rights which enable citizens to interact with others in the society and equally be involved in the economic activities of the state. These rights may include:
(a) Right to good food, clothing, housing and medical care
(b) Right to equal pay for work done
(c) Right to free and qualitative basic education
(d) Right to social security
(e) Right to advance one’s cultural belief

3. **Environmental Rights**: These are rights that help all human races to attain both physical and mental health by ensuring that a good, clean and conductive environment is sustained. Environmental rights are also called solidarity rights and may include:
(a) Right to peace
(b) Right to clean environment
(c) Protection from destruction
(d) Right to decent housing and owning of properties

**Safeguards of Rights of Individuals**

1. **Independence of Judiciary**: Judges must be air and impartial in protecting individual’s rights against invasion by private individuals for government.

2. **Entrenchment**: Fundamental human rights should be entrenched in the constitution of the land.

3. **Decentralization and Separation of Powers**: When powers are decentralized and arms of government operate independency, without appropriate checks and balances, the rights of the people will not be protected.

4. **Rule of Law**: Those in government should govern the people according to the provisions of the constitution. Also, the citizens have to obey the laws of the land as well as respect the constitution.

5. **Free Press**: Freedom of the press should be guaranteed. This will make them write issues objectively.

6. **Law**: Supremacy and existence of law to maintain the rights of individuals and their corresponding obligations.
7. **Existence of Human Rights Bodies:** Human rights bodies should be allowed to exist and perform their functions effectively in the defence of the rights of the people to complement the roles of government in the protection of human rights. Such bodies like Human Rights watch, civil liberty organization, Amnesty International, etc should be allowed to exist and operate.

8. **Political Legal Education:** There should be enlightenment programme by the government and non-governmental organizations to educate people of their rights and how such rights can be protected in a state.

### Why rights are entrenched into constitution

1. **Fulfillment of UN resolution:** Entrenching fundamental human rights into constitutions will help countries of the world to comply with the 1948 Universal Declaration of Fundamental Human Rights by the world bod.

2. **To prevent dictatorship:** Writing of fundamental human rights into constitutions will prevent rulers from tampering with those rights at will, and in the process prevent the emergency of a dictator.

3. **To promote the rule of law:** The rule of law is better protected and maintained when the rights of the people are respected.

4. **Education:** When rights are written and read by the people, they are being educated of their rights and privileges in a state.

7. **Seeking redress:** When rights are written down in a document called constitution, it will give opportunity for citizens to seek redress in the court of law.