

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

Since 1991, national service has been a part of Eritrea important policy. In 1995, through the Proclamation 82/1995, the government changed the requirement and made it compulsory for all Eritrean between the age of 17 to 40 years old to participate in the National Service for 18 months, the exception only applied for those who were veterans from the thirty-years war and mentally or physically infirm people. By 2002, as the tension between Eritrea and Ethiopia was in peak due to the border war in 1998, the government decided to extend the national service indefinitely.

Enforced indefinite national service is an increasingly important element of Eritrea's human rights crisis and has gained the international attention. The policy later triggered Eritrean young generation to leave the country, as they could not bear with the forced labor, low salary, and no freedom in the national service. Those who tried and evaded national service are treated cruelly. Evaders are detained in terrible conditions, and heavy penalties were imposed on the families of those who evade service or flee the country. Despite that, in pursuit of a better life and future, Eritrean youth still choose to flee.

In 2015, UNHCR recorded that around 5000 Eritrean left the country each month. Mainly they went to Europe to seek asylum, initially going through the Mediterranean route. Some more resided in neighboring Ethiopia and Sudan, bringing the diaspora to about half a million, and making the country of six

million people “one of the world’s fastest-emptying nations,” according to the *Wall Street Journal* in 2016.

In 2016 Eritrean comprised a total of 11 percent of all migrants entering Europe and represented Europe’s second largest immigrant group by sea arrival. In those numbers Eritrean migrants were disproportionately young men around 18-27 years old and were increasingly unaccompanied children. EU countries, including Italy, in 2016 fielded 25,250 asylum applications from Eritrean nationals. In 2015, the top recipients of asylum applications from Eritrean nationals were Germany (10,990), Switzerland (9,965), the Netherlands (7,455), and Sweden (7,230).

By the end of 2015 UNHCR, estimated that more than 411,000 Eritreans were living as refugees or in a refugee-like situation outside the country, this number were showing an increase of 159,000 from the end of 2011. In 2010 according to the World Bank, Eritrean migration was estimated around 1 million in total, meanwhile the total population of Eritrea was estimated at 6 million in 2016.

Even though they had to sacrifice so much and even pay so much money to be smuggled outside the country, sadly enough not all migrants who left Eritrea made it to their destination. In 2014 an estimated of 3,379 migrants died attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea and in 2015 a reported 3,771 died at the sea. This trend continued in 2016, a tragic record number of 5,079 migrant deaths occurred in the Mediterranean, including a large number of Eritreans victims.

Eritrea received a lot pressure from the international community because of this migration problem, the community also accused Eritrean government to abuse the national service and violate human rights. As it was expected the pressure that came from UN Resolution 1907, then followed by its member states' sanctions and isolation towards Eritrea, caused the country economy to be in the red zone for over the years. Furthermore, Eritrea started to lose its potential valuable workers as the young generation who were supposed to be the primary asset and driving forces towards the bright future, left the country.

In answer to the pressures and to rebuild their economy, Eritrean government started to take measures to prevent, or even stop the migration. *The first effort* is to slowly but surely opening their country. This effort was showed by the recent visit of several international bodies to Asmara and participation of Eritrea in more of international conferences and assemblies. *Second*, reforming the national service, made it back to the original 18 months and raised the monthly salary of the conscripts according to their education. Though changes have been made over the year, national service remains significant as Eritrea government presented national service as an existential matter for their country. They perceived that one of the pillars upon which the very existence of Eritrea stands, is the national service, thus they were still reluctant to banish the program. *Third*, to invest more to the mining sectors and created jobs in the mining sectors infused by the foreign direct investment. *Fourth*, issued a new Nakfa currency notes to restrain the money in the black market and hit human traffickers abroad, such as those in Sudan and Ethiopia.

Thus, the Eritrea government actions mentioned above answer the research question of “How are Eritrea Government Policy to Reduce the Massive Youth Migration?”