

# National Service As a Tool of National Development



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The development of a nation is determined by the active participation and effective organization of its citizens. National greatness and development has nothing to do with the size of population and the abundance of natural resources. History tells us that nations with few natural resources have become economic powerhouses. In today's world, skills, industriousness, productivity, collective service and hard work are the determining factors of national development and greatness. Experts define nation building as the conscious and focused application of the people's collective resources, energies, and knowledge to the task of liberating and developing the psychic and physical space of the nation. Nation building and national development involve the construction of psychological and physical structure of the nation. Sawa and national service involve the development of behaviors, values, skills and physical structures of the Eritrean youth. National service protects the present and ensures the future identity and independence of Eritrea.

Nation building is deliberate, sustained and focused projection of national culture and collective action to develop a political and economic system. It is developing and instituting national institutions that give protection and continuation to a nation. In Eritrea, national service is a big institution and gives way to the establishment and empowerment of other institutions. It plays a decisive role in the ability of Eritrea to sustain itself as a sovereign nation by providing competent fighters and skillful workers. National service enhances the national identity of Eritrea and it is a process that strengthens the unity of the people. It fosters social harmony, economic growth and military strength. It cultivates national loyalty and commitment among Eritreans.

National development in Eritrea is people-oriented and its success is evaluated in terms of the impact it has had in improving the vast majority of the people. The means and ends of development continue to be the people. National service enhances the personality and produces thousands of organized and disciplined men and women that are the moving force behind the socioeconomic transformation of Eritrea.

National development is the growth of the nation in terms of unity, education, economic well-being and mass participation in government. In Eritrea, the unity of the people and the participation of the people in national issues have been rising from time to time. Development is not explained by mere GDP rather it is the socio-cultural, political, economic and spiritual wellbeing of a society. Development is not purely an economic phenomenon but rather a multi-dimensional process.

Active, sustained and organized participation of the people is a basic condition for national development. In Eritrea, people's participation was not limited to orchestrated political participation. Through national service, Eritreans participate in all national activities that touch the life of the country. Without public participation, there cannot be development.

The youth occupy a prominent place in any country. In Eritrea, the youth are prepared to become the owners and leaders of tomorrow. Like many developing countries, they outnumber the middle-aged and the aged sections of the Eritrean society. They go to Sawa and prove to be the foundation of the Eritrean society. The energy, character and orientation of members of the national service determine the pace of development and security of the nation. Through their readiness and talents, Eritrea makes commendable strides in defense and economic and political proficiency. And because of their energies, dreams and aspirations, the future of Eritrea is becoming promising.

Peace and security are necessary preconditions for national development. In the absence of peace no meaningful development can take place. The exceptional peace and security prevalent in Eritrea is to a greater extent the product of the youth who have participated in national service. Members of national service are the most active and productive segment of the Eritrean society and, hence, determine the peace, security and prosperity of the country. Peace, which is now a scarce commodity in Africa, is in abundance in Eritrea. Peace has become an important national resource to be used for development. The youth of Eritrea are the flag bearers in the midst of a battle of honor.

Sawa is a site where Eritrean youth are taught to become citizens responsible for the development and dignity of the nation. It has emerged as an important national space through which particular representation of Eritrea is presented and promoted. It is a site where the image of an ideal citizen for development and defense is manufactured. National service can also be considered as a paradigmatic disciplinary institution, molding the bodies and minds of the Eritrean youth. It has been said that greatness is achieved through service.

Humble service is the way of our martyrs and it has become the way of every Eritrean who seeks to follow them. Members of the national service are working not to be rewarded but to help and serve the nation. They are serving not for recognition, appreciation, position and promotion. Rather, they are constantly asking: “What more can I do to be a great servant for my people?”

Discipline, among others, makes nations great. Discipline is fundamental to the functionality of the social, economic and political system of any society. National service is the highest manifestation of discipline and self-restraint. Choosing to serve is neither an easy nor a natural action. National service is an act of loving the people and obeying to serve the nation. Choosing to serve requires sacrificing personal interests.

No nation can exist and make progress without discipline. Discipline has much to do with social development and to achieve societal discipline, the individuals that make up that society need to have a high level of self-discipline. The national service of Eritrea inculcates the highest level of discipline and self-restraint on the people. It is discipline that unites the diverse nature of the Eritrean society together. The stable social life of the country has been founded on discipline. Eritrea, with few population and meager resources at hand, has survived by discipline. The backbone of Eritrea’s successful resistance and self-reliant development has been discipline of the country’s citizens.

National service creates a favorable climate for development by instilling tolerance, endurance and self-restraint coupled with handwork, creativity and thirst for knowledge. The unity and experience gained in service have the capacity to make great contribution to the development of the nation. Gender equality, nationalism, humanity, love for knowledge, respect for law are additional values that could have far reaching impact in the development aspiration of the nation. With the positive values that have been accumulated in the struggle for independence and the national service, Eritrea can perform miracles in a peaceful nation-building.

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