



IASSW Message on World Social Work Day March 15, 2016: Responding to the Refugee Crisis, Role of Social Work

The refugee crisis is not new and in fact people displaced by disasters including wars, conflicts and political instability have required social work interventions since the beginnings of the social work profession. Due to the increases in disasters affecting both developed and developing countries, disaster social work has become an important area in social work education, practice and research. Similarly professional social workers are developing strategies to respond appropriately in conflictual contexts. In recent times, the wars in Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, and terror activities in Pakistan, have resulted in an influx of refugees who are not always welcomed in different countries, both in Europe and Asia. Crises continue in south Asia, as refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan seek safe places to raise their families and practice their right of religion. The crisis of refugees in central and eastern Africa endures. The more recent and dynamic refugee crises in the Middle East and Mediterranean has attracted the attention of the world as Europe is once again affected by people seeking safe haven to protect themselves and their families.

Professional social workers through their social work associations, educational institutions and various voluntary organisations have been working with governments, UN agencies and other stakeholders to deal with the growing crisis. On World Social Work Day 2016, in New York, Vienna, Geneva and Brussels, International Federation of Social Workers is partnering with International Association of Schools of Social Work and other regional associations to debate on this issue and come up with a global strategy and pledge their commitment to deal with this crisis.

IASSW believes that learnings from practice should be integrated in social work curricula across the globe so that the new social work workforce is oriented with adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes for working with migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in different contexts. Social workers will need to strengthen and work in partnership with all other agencies and professional groups to ensure that grassroots voices reach the governments and ensure the right to life and well-being for the most vulnerable and distressed people around the world.