



Contemporary Refugee Crisis and Social Work Response

Saheel Hafiz shah¹, Shahida Akhter², Dr. Wakar Amin Zargar³

¹Saheel Hafiz Shah, Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir, Srinagar (India)

²Shahida Akhter, Research Scholar, Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir, Srinagar (India)

³Dr. Wakar Amin Zargar, Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, University of Kashmir, Srinagar(India)

ABSTRACT

'Refugee' is an internationally accepted legal term to describe someone needing protection from another country because they are being targeted by authorities or other groups involved in an organised violence campaign in their own country. Refugees are diverse ethnically, including people of all ages and socio-economic backgrounds, both women and men. The problem of the world's refugees is among the most complicated issues before the world community. Contemporary conflicts have put a massive pressure on the credibility and smooth functioning of world's ruling apparatus. Regional and interstate conflicts have contributed to the large number of human displacements and mass migrations across the globe. As such the world is witnessing an era of massive refugee crises. A refugee crisis is a humanitarian crisis which should be addressed on humanitarian basis. Social work as a profession offers much services to refugees. The values of social work, acknowledging principles of both social justice and the dignity and worth of each individual person, likewise enables social work to focus on the importance of ensuring that responses to refugees as are well considered and appropriate. This paper looks into the contemporary refugee crisis world over and the outcome of such crisis and how social work as a profession is responding to these refugee crises.

Keywords: Conflict, Crises, Displacements, Refugee, Social work

1. Introduction

Contemporary times have seen rapid growth of conflicts in Societies. As such societies ravaged by armed conflicts have paid a massive toll in loss of human life and economic, political and social disintegration. Present day internal wars typically take a heavier toll on civilians than inter-state wars, because combatants have increasingly made targeting civilians a strategic objective. This disregard for humanitarian norms and for the Geneva Conventions on the rules of war also extends to treatment of humanitarian workers, who are denied access to victims in conflict zones or are themselves attacked. Vulnerable sections of the society like Women



and children in particular, suffer unspeakable atrocities in armed conflicts. The widespread insecurity and trauma due to the atrocities and suffering of the civilian population is another terrible legacy of these conflicts. Conflicts create extensive emotional and psychological stress associated with attack, loss of loved ones separation from parents and destruction of home and community. Many children develop problems such as flashbacks, nightmares, social isolation, heightened aggression, depression and diminished future orientation. These problems of mental health and psychological functioning persist long after the fighting has ceased and make it difficult for children, who may comprise half the population, to benefit fully from education or to participate in post conflict reconstruction. Sexual violence is another ruthless weapon of war. Warring parties resort to rape and sexual slavery of women to humiliate, intimidate and terrorize one another. Millions of children suffer starvation and disease as a result of war. Girls are sometimes obliged to trade sexual favours for food, shelter or physical protection for themselves or their children causing intense psychological trauma. In addition the incidence of HIV/AIDS has increased. It has been observed that escaping as a result of wars has produce large number of human displacements around the world. As such refugees and internally displaced persons are the symptoms of war, communal violence motivated by ethnic or religious hatred, persecution and intolerance [1].

The world is entering in its most dangerous chapter in decades. The sharp uptick in war over the recent years is outstripping our ability to cope with consequences. From the global refugee crises to the spread of terrorism, our collective failure to resolve conflict is giving birth to new threats and emergencies. Even in peaceful societies, the politics of fear is leading to dangerous polarization and demagoguery. The unresolved world disputes find its place in the contemporary world conflicts. The last 60 years have suffered their share of crises, from Vietnam to Rwanda to the Iraq war. The recent conflicts around the world like in Syria and Iraq, Turkey, Yemen, Greater Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, Democratic republic of Congo, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Ukraine, Mexico etc has given tough time to international and regional peace and human welfare organisations [2]. In response to these serious refugee crises, this paper will try to attempt to look into the social work response and interventions.

2. Refugees-An overview

‘Refugee’ is an internationally accepted legal term to describe someone needing protection from another country because they are being targeted by authorities or other groups involved in an organised violence campaign in their own country. It cannot be applied to people seeking to escape random violations of their rights, escaping violence in a civil conflict, fleeing natural disasters, or escaping starvation [3]. The term "refugee," like the people it describes, can cover a lot of ground. Politicians, aid workers, academics, and the press often approach the word from different angles, and with varying ideas of the rights, roles, and responsibilities the term implies. Such divergent views fuel the global debate about how best to manage and protect refugees, who by some counts number over 13 million [4].



Contemporary conflicts have put a massive pressure on the credibility and smooth functioning of the political think tank institutions and the world's ruling apparatus. Regional and inter state conflicts have contributed to the large number of human displacements and mass migrations across the globe. As such the world is witnessing an era of massive refugee crises. A refugee crisis is a humanitarian crisis which should be addressed on humanitarian basis. World's contemporary conflicts have lead to large scale atrocities on humans including mass killings and human rights violations. On one hand refugees in the other non-native regions face issues like psychological problems, basic security, impaired access to basic health care by an insecure environment, children out of school, lack of employment opportunities etc. On the other hand accommodating huge influx of displaced persons has become a big challenge for the host countries which otherwise face internal challenges to provide dignified facilities to their own citizens.

History, remarks a character in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, "is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake". The recent experience of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children from Afghanistan, the Middle East, Syria, and Africa, fleeing war, persecution and poverty also has the quality of a nightmare [5]. Most conflicts since World War II have produced refugees. As the political situation in various regions changes, so do the countries that produce refugees, e.g.: After WWII: from Germany and Eastern Europe. In 1970s & 80s: from conflicts in Central and South America including Chile, El Salvador, Colombia, Argentina and Uruguay; in the 1980s, Indo-Chinese refugees arrived from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. In 1990s: from countries of former Yugoslavia including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and Serbia; from Africa, including Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. Many refugees also came from the former Soviet Union and China. In 2000s: an increase in people arriving from Africa, in particular Sudan, Liberia, Somalia, and Sierra Leone. Afghanistan, Burma/Myanmar, Iraq, and Iran have also produced refugees for some decades [6].

3. Refugee Crises

Contemporary armed conflicts have produced large a number of refugees world over and the refugee Crises situations has now become a big challenge to the international peace. World is witnessing highest level of displacement on record. An unprecedented 65.6 million people around the world have been forced from home by conflict and persecution at the end of 2016. Among them are nearly 22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. There are also 10 million stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, health care, employment and freedom of movement.

3.1 United Nations agency for refugees

The United Nations agency that helps refugees is United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (also known as the UN Refugee Agency), which emerged in the wake of world war II to help Europeans displaced by that conflict. UNHCR was established on December 14, 1950 by the UN General Assembly with a three year mandate to complete its work and then disband. The following year, on July 28, the legal foundation of helping refugees and the basic statute guiding UNHCR's work, the United Nations convention relating to the Statutes of



Refugees, was adopted. So instead of ending its work after three years, UNHCR has been working ever since to help refugees.

In 1960, the decolonization of Africa produced the first of that continent's numerous refugee crises needing United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees intervention. Over the following two decades, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had to help with displacement crises in Asia and Latin America. By the end of century there were fresh refugee problems in Africa, and turning full circle, new waves of refugees in Europe from the series of wars in the Balkans. In the World here nearly 20 people are forcibly displaced every minute as a result of conflict or persecution, the work of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is more important than ever before [7].

It is pertinent to mention that a report entitled "9 maps and charts that explain the global refugee crises" published in vox media dated January 30, 2017 has explained following important facts related to refugee crises:

1. The number of displaced persons is the highest it's been since World War II.

In the middle of the 2016, the UN high commissioner for refugees released a striking report. It found that the number of displaced persons- people forced from their homes as a result of conflict or insecurity – has never been higher. In fact the report found, we haven't seen anything like this since the Second World War (though there are a lot of more people alive now than there were then). World war second is the most devastating conflict in human history, claiming more than 60 million lives. And while no conflict today is anywhere close to that deadly, there are a lot of smaller ones going on that people in the developed world can live their days mostly ignoring.

2. Most of the People are not technically "refugees"

This terrible situation often gets referred to as "the refugee crises", but that is actually misleading. The majority of people who have been displaced are what's called internally displaced people", or IDPs – people who have been forced from their homes but have not left their countries. Refugee and asylum seekers are people who have been forced from their homes and their countries (though they have slightly different status under international law). This fact explains in very simple terms, why the refugee fleeing their countries can't just "go home". Huge numbers of them are stuck in their countries, often in giant camps for displaced persons. The situation in their home country is so unsettled-their country is too violent, too poor or both- for people to go back to their home towns and cities and live normal lives. Hence why this became an international, and even global, crises. People can't stay at home, so they are fleeing abroad.

3. Syria is the single largest driver of the refugee crises, but as a whole lot of other problems are contributing.

Generally we think of the refugee crises as Syrian refugee crises. And indeed, Syria's civil; war is the Single largest source of refugees worldwide. But in total Syrians only make up a third of the world's 16 million refugees. The remaining two-thirds are fleeing a group of other conflicts- such as fighting



between Taliban and Afghanistan's government, ethnic violence in south Sudan that some observers warn is verging on genocide, and the Myanmar government's systematic oppression of the Rohingya Muslim minority. When the World War II ended, that was it – the main driver of the refugee crises at that time was over, and the allies could focus on rebuilding and settlement. Now, though, there is basically no chance that all of these conflicts will end at the same time- which means the refugee crises will be with us for the foreseeable future.

4. The refugee crises is straining nearby states to the breaking point

Here is another little known fact: The vast majority of refugees do not go to wealthy countries. That is because of the countries wracked by civil war and violence are pretty far from the wealthy west. Refugees, who flee their countries with virtually nothing, often don't have the resources or connections to get into a rich country. They generally settle in the first relatively stable country they can get to that borders their own nation.

The result, then, is that poor and middle income countries are the ones being forced to feed and clothe these refugees. Turkey currently hosts 2.5 million Syrians, the most of any country. Germany, the largest recipient of Syrian refugees in the developed world, has taken in 600,00- even though its population is roughly the same as Turkey's, and its GDP is about 4.5 times higher. Even tiny Lebanon has taken in more Syrians, roughly 1.1 million to be exact. In 2013, Lebanon's population was 4.5 million – so that rapid influx increased the country's population by about a quarter.

5. International relief efforts are chronically underfunded

Theoretically, international agencies are supposed to pick up the slack: to help countries like Lebanon that have way more refugees than they can afford to supply. In practice, though, that's not what happens. It indicates that when the refugee crises started getting really acute in 2014 and 2015, funding didn't nearly as much as it was supposed to. The UN got a little more than half of what it said it needed to manage the humanitarian crises plaguing the world.

As a result, then, life for refugees-either in camps or otherwise- ends up being pretty miserable. Amnesty International reported in 2015 that "at least 40% of refugees [in Lebanon] live in inadequate accommodation 'including in makeshift shelters (garages, worksites, one room structures, unfinished housing) and informal settlements' whilst 'others are at risk of eviction or live in overcrowded apartments.'" In the midst of all this, Trump is reportedly weighing an executive order that would cut of 40 percent of US funding for the UN – a double whammy with his order barring refugees from entering the country.

6. The result is that the refugees are fleeing to Europe through some dangerous routes

The result of regional and international failure is refugees are increasingly fleeing to the west. In 2015, the last year we have full data, 1 million refugees fled to Europe – an increase in four times over the 2015 numbers. These routes are dangerous. Refugees crossing the Mediterranean often travel in poorly



constructed dinghies that make even the short trip from Turkey to Greece dangerous. Between January and October 2016, roughly 3,800 migrants died crossing the Mediterranean – a figure higher than the number of migrant deaths on the Mediterranean in all of 2015. And even when you get to land, you are not safe: In one incident, in August 2015, 71 migrants crammed into a truck suffocated to death in a truck in Austria. Once on the European continent, Syrian refugees often go to the Balkans to enter the European Union at Hungary or Croatia. But even once in the EU, refugees must confront a number of European countries that are working to keep them out, or keep them from moving across Europe. The border controls between Hungary and its neighbours, for example, or between Austria and Germany are a major and at times perilous impediment to refugees.

7. Europe isn't taking in a ton of people

While millions of people are looking to Europe for refuge. Europe simply won't provide it. Part of this is a "can't" question. Greece, a major entry point for refugees, is so wracked by its own financial crises that it simply can not process a large number of refugee applications. The result is that huge numbers of refugees are living in makeshift refugee camps while waiting to be resettled. But another Part of this is a "won't" question. Some European countries, like Hungary, simply don't want to admit large number of refugees – so that they are building walls and penning up refugees indefinitely.

8. Even before Trump's order, America wasn't taking in a ton of Syrian refugees

Since World War II, the United States has let in more refugees than any other country on earth. But has failed to step up in the past few years, particularly in response to the outflow from Syria. The United States has resettled a total of 18,000 Syrian refugees, according to the Migration Policy Institute- far fewer than major European recipients like Germany. Part of this is geography, but not all of it. Over the same time period, Canada accepted 40,000 Syrians – despite having a popular one-tenth the size of America's. Now, however, all refugee entry in the United States has been suspended temporarily –and Syrian refugee resettlement has been suspended indefinitely. Ostensibly, this is in response to security concerns, but no Syrian refugee admitted to the United States has committed a terrorist attack.

And as America dithers, the global refugee crisis only gets worse [8].

4. Major Refugee Crisis around the World

4.1 Syrian Refugees

Refugees of the Syrian Civil War or Syrian refugees are citizens and permanent residents of Syrian Arab Republic, who have fled from their country since the onset of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 and have sought asylum in other parts of the world. Since March 2011, conflict has devastated Syria. Now it is internationally recognized as the largest refugee and displacement crisis of our time and the "worst humanitarian disaster since the end of the cold war [9]. The Syrian civil war has set back the national standard of living by decades — now that healthcare, schools, and water and sanitation systems have been damaged or destroyed. Syrian children and



families have witnessed unspeakable violence and bear the brunt of the conflict. Hundreds of thousands of people have died, 5.1 million Syrians have fled the country as refugees, and 6.3 million Syrians are displaced within the country. Half of those affected are children. The conflict in Syria has now displaced 12 million people, creating the largest wave of refugees to hit Europe.

The Syrian conflict has placed enormous strain on its neighbouring countries, with Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey shouldering the largest burden [10]. According to latest UNHCR report about 5,598,685 are registered Syrian refugees as on 01 March, 2018. This figure includes 2 million Syrians registered by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, 3.5 million Syrians registered by the government of Turkey, as well as more than 30,000 Syrian refugees registered in North Africa [11]. The airstrikes left more than 1,000 children killed or injured this year across Syria. According to UNICEF regional communications chief Juliette Tomuma, about third of the nearly 400,000 besieged civilians are children as the violence rips through the rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta [12].

4.2: Instability in the Middle East

Global displacement levels declined to a historic low in 2005, but started escalating again because of a series of conflicts, including the U.S. invasion of Iraq. By mid-2015, the total number of refugees and internally displaced people had climbed to an all-time high of more than 60 million people, the UNHCR estimates — reflecting both the masses of people newly uprooted from war-torn regions of Syria and South Sudan, as well as those displaced years ago from places like Pakistan and Afghanistan who still haven't been able to return home [13].

4.3: The Rohingyas Refugee Crises

The 2015 Rohingya refugee crisis refers to the mass migration of thousands of Rohingya people from Myanmar (also known as *Burma*) and Bangladesh in 2015, collectively dubbed "boat people" by international media. Nearly all who fled travelled to Southeast Asian countries including Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand by rickety boats via the waters of the Strait of Malacca and the Sea. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that 25,000 people have been taken to boats from January to March in 2015 by traffickers. There are claims that, while on their journey, around 100 people died in Indonesia, 200 in Malaysia, 10 in Thailand, after the traffickers abandoned them at sea.

The Rohingya people are a Muslim minority group residing in the western state of Rakhine, Myanmar, formerly known as Arakan. The religion of this ethnic group is a variation of the Sunni religion. The Rohingya people are considered "stateless entities", as the Myanmar government does not recognize them as an ethnic group. The Rohingya people therefore lack legal protection from the Government of Myanmar, are regarded as refugees from Bangladesh, and face strong hostility in the country. The Rohingya people have been described as one of the most persecuted people on earth [14]. The Rohingya speak Rohingya or Ruaingga, a dialect that is distinct to others spoken throughout Myanmar. They are not considered one of the country's 135 official ethnic



groups and have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless. Nearly all of the Rohingya in Myanmar live in the western coastal state of Rakhine and are not allowed to leave without government permission. It is one of the poorest states in the country, with ghetto-like camps and a lack of basic services and opportunities.

This has led many Buddhists to consider the Rohingya Bengali, rejecting the term Rohingya as a recent invention created for political reasons. Since the violence erupted, rights groups have documented fires burning in at least 10 areas of Myanmar's Rakhine State. More than 500,000 people have fled the violence, with thousands trapped in the no-man's land between the two countries, according to the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) [15]. The humanitarian crisis caused by escalating violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State is causing suffering on a catastrophic scale [16]. Before this crisis began, the country was already hosting a verified population of well over 200,000 Rohingya from Myanmar - and likely many more. Bangladesh was also coping with pressing needs and challenges of its own. The new arrivals are adding massive pressure to services in existing refugee camps and in makeshift settlements. Basic services are now badly outstripped, including water, health, and particularly shelter and sanitation. Conditions in the settlements and camps are now so critical that disease outbreaks are a looming prospect.

Refugees arriving in Bangladesh report fleeing appalling violations of human rights and other abuses in Myanmar. According to these harrowing accounts, villages have been burned down, parents or relatives have been killed in front of traumatized children, and women and girls have been raped or brutalized. The use of mass violence and discriminatory policies by the state has seen the situation worsen in recent years, with allegations of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Restrictions on the Rohingya's movement and access to essential services have further compounded the problem, creating the conditions for the current crisis and the radicalisation of disenfranchised Rohingya.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees is on the ground coordinating a massive refugee response in Bangladesh and leading efforts to provide shelter and care for those displaced. It is already working to register new arrivals and provide comprehensive protection services.

The stateless Rohingya minority in Myanmar have been described by the United Nations as "the most persecuted people in the world." The vast majority of Rohingya refugees reaching Bangladesh during this latest crisis are women and children, including newborn babies.

5. Major issues of Refugees

Refugees are the worst sufferers of conflicts around the world. Their displacements carry a number of stories of their victimhood. The outcome of their displacements presents a saga of distressful experiences they face at the non-native places. The problems as a result of such situations have been described as below:

Situations remain hostile to refugee crises and given that refugees fear persecution and are forced to involuntarily flee their homes to escape intolerable conditions, displacement and pre-migration trauma are



critical considerations when working with refugees. Pre-migration events may be a precursor to psychological trauma and more pronounced mental health problems and play an important part in refugees' post migration adjustment and adaptation (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Nickerson, Bryant, Steel, Silove, & Brooks, 2010; Robjant, Hassan, & Katona, 2009 as cited in Chung, 2017). Displacement and pre-migration situations of war and conflict may involve witnessing or being subjected to torture, killings, atrocities, incarceration, starvation/deprivation (e.g., food, shelter), rape, sexual assault, and physical beatings.

Many refugees experience multiple traumatic events. Nevertheless, escaping to refugee camps does not guarantee a safe haven because camps are frequently overcrowded, physically unsafe, and unsanitary; they also tend to provide poor nutrition and medical care. Furthermore, violence may create dangerous conditions in the camp, compounding already existing trauma and psychological problems. Studies have found that refugees, compared with the general U.S. population, have higher rates of psychopathology, including depression, dissociation, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and psychosis (American Psychological Association, 2010; Arnetz, Rofa, Arnetz, Ventimiglia, & Jamil, 2013; Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005 as cited in Chung, 2017).

In addition, specific groups of refugees are at higher risk for developing more serious mental health problems and trauma. These groups include (a) older refugees, who may be more settled in their ways and may find adjusting to a new environment more challenging; (b) unaccompanied minors; (c) single men younger than 21 years who lack familial and social support; (d) women who are widowed because their husbands were killed during war; and (e) women and girls who were victims of rape and sexual assault during displacement and pre-migration (Chung, 2001; Chung & Bemak, 2002b as cited in Chung, 2017).

Forced migration followed by adjustment to a new environment and culture may engender trauma. Although refugees receive services such as medical assistance, employment and training programs, and food assistance, the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program prioritizes economic self sufficiency. In addition, the United States and Canada are the only two resettlement countries that require refugees to repay airfare and transportation costs (Alexander, 2010 as cited in Chung, 2017) which may add significant pressure to an already stressful situation. In fact, research has shown a correlation between displacement trauma and financial burden (Wagner, et al., 2013 as cited in Chung, 2017).

Lindencrona, Ekblad, and Hauff (2008) described four resettlement stressors: (a) social and economic strain, (b) loss of status corresponding with racism and discrimination, (c) threats and violence, and (d) alienation. Although economic strain and alienation were found to be significant predictors of mental illness, the four stressors were predictive of PTSD symptoms, with pre migration and displacement torture being the strongest predictors. Therefore, the first few post migration years constitute a critical period when refugees are challenged to learn new coping skills and behavioral and communication patterns while attempting to meet basic needs such as housing and employment (Bemak, Chung, & Pedersen, 2003 as cited in Chung, 2017). For example, some refugees may survive displacement and pre migration by becoming numb and unresponsive to minimize



feelings associated with traumatic memories of psychological, physical, and sexual violence (Spahic-Mihajlovic, Crayton, & Neafsey, 2005 as cited in Chung, 2017). However, this survival strategy may be incongruous and maladaptive in the resettlement country, where refugees need to learn new, culturally appropriate coping strategies (Bemak & Chung, 2014 as cited in Chung, 2017).

Refugees may experience secondary trauma or cumulative trauma during post migration and post displacement (Akinsulure-Smith, 2009; Finklestein & Solomon, 2009 as cited in Chung, 2017). For example, many Vietnamese refugees on the Gulf Coast were re-traumatized by the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, which brought back memories of the Vietnam War (Bemak & Chung, 2011 as cited in Chung, 2017). Similarly, some U.S.-based refugees were re-traumatized after the events of 9/11. Also contributing to secondary trauma is survivor's guilt (Bemak & Chung, 2014 as cited in Chung, 2017), which is characterized by relocated refugees remorse and guilt about having family and friends in their home countries who are still in danger.

Furthermore, refugees may experience culture shock during resettlement that contributes to existing trauma and feelings of helplessness and disorientation (Oberg, 1960; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001 as cited in Chung, 2017). Often, these feelings are magnified for refugees from sociocentric cultures who are adjusting to new reference groups that may emphasize individualism (Bemak & Greenberg, 1994; Bhugra, 2004 as cited in Chung, 2017). These types of experiences play an important role in integrating one's culture of origin with the relocation culture. In summary, successful integration is often dependent on refugees' openness to adaptation, development of new social support systems, identification with new reference groups, acceptance of new norms and values, and ability to resolve psychological trauma.

The other barriers which come into fore is lack of proficiency in the host country's language, underemployment or unemployment, and educational background may hinder refugees post displacement and post migration adjustment and contribute to already existing or newly developed trauma (Renner & Senft, 2013 as cited in Chung, 2017). Learning a new language may be challenging and exacerbates frustrations in adjusting; contributes to culture shock, trauma, and feelings of helplessness; and raises questions about self-worth and decreased social status (Bemak & Chung, 2015; Renner & Senft, 2013; Willott & Stevenson, 2013 as cited in Chung, 2017). In addition, the pressure of becoming economically self-sufficient and repaying airfare and transportation costs may heighten trauma. Refugees are also confronted with challenges finding work that matches their training and education (Renner & Senft, 2013; Willott & Stevenson, 2013 as cited in Chung, 2017), because educational qualifications and certifications from their country of origin are often not transferable to their resettlement country. Thus, refugees may experience underemployment and downward vocational and socioeconomic mobility (Davila, 2008 as cited in Chung, 2017), as well as difficulties in employability (Bemak & Chung, 2014; Willott & Stevenson, 2013; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008 as cited in Chung, 2017). Vocational difficulties and regulatory barriers to occupational mobility may add to existing trauma and stress (Renner & Senft, 2013; Willott & Stevenson, 2013 as cited in Chung, 2017). For example, refugee wives may be forced to work if their husbands are unemployed or



underemployed. This new relationship dynamic may contribute to conflict regarding gender roles and the importance of traditional cultural values, which may result in domestic violence previously absent in their home country (Bemak & Chung, 2014, 2015 as cited in Chung, 2017).

Successful post displacement and post migration adjustment may be hindered by experiences of discrimination, racism, and xenophobia, which may contribute to hostility, exclusion, rejection, and subsequent refugee trauma (Aydin, Krueger, Frey, Kastenmüller, & Fischer, 2014; Kira et al., 2010 as cited in Chung, 2017). Refugees who are racially and ethnically different from the majority culture find themselves at higher risk of experiencing racism and discrimination compared with those who are physically similar to the majority culture (Berry & Sabatier, 2010 as cited in Chung, 2017). Racism and discrimination toward refugees related to housing, health care, employment, professional advancement, home mortgages, and educational access may manifest overtly or covertly (Chung, Bemak, Ortiz, & Sandoval-Perez, 2008 as cited in Chung, 2017) [17].

6. Social work Response to Refugee Crises

Social workers representative's worldwide are responding to the refugee crisis and have formulated a five point working plan to:

1. Coordinate social worker action in each of the affected countries to provide better understandings and responses to refugee needs during their journey, transfer and integration in the asylum countries.
2. Provide a focused strategy that supports vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied children and young people, older people, those with health issues and trafficked persons.
3. Establish a comprehensive political advocacy strategy that reflects a 'ground up' perspective on refugee needs, aspirations and solutions.
4. Develop social work models that support refugees in isolated or life threatening situations where other forms of assistance are not available. Including that there will be an increasing number of refugees who face closed borders or hostile host communities who will face the critical dilemma of staying where they are not welcome or returning to a war situation that may result in their death.
5. Enhance the skills of social workers working with others to constructively develop inclusive and cohesive societies.

This organised response from the social work profession across international boundaries developed at the professions own initiative, independently from any government and as a result of the absence of any substantial regional or international coordination. The lack of political cohesion has devalued the dignity of those affected by the crisis at all points during their journey and eventual integration into asylum countries or in facing the consequences of returning to a war zone. This void of responsibility is the main obstacle to alleviating the trauma of the people trying to find safety and security. The political bodies have proven they can, when they have the will, find large sums of money to bail out banks and other financial institutions – but they are reluctant



to help people in need. Governments have chosen to use military action that inflames the situation rather than invest in diplomatic and political solutions.

The political response must therefore look beyond the immediate crisis. It must focus on creating a worldwide environment enabling sustained social development, as envisaged in the Sustainable Development Goals. Establishing social capital and social justice are prerequisites for peaceful, economically viable and sustainable societies. When the packed trains roll-in there is only standing room which swells into the streets. Social workers and volunteers find themselves standing amongst the crowds responding to one request, then another and another. Giving guidance on the possibilities ahead, pointing to the possible places where families can rest and eat. The situation is chaotic and painful for the refugees who have travelled with such uncertainty; and not knowing the challenges that lie ahead tomorrow. The volunteers come out in their hundreds each day, organising donations and distributing them.

It is a vista of the best and worst of humanity. The worst, as the refugees are escaping wars that could have been prevented if politicians had the will to engage with one another, and also if the international agencies had of been able to provide and protect refugees closer to their home countries.

At the heart of social work are the principles of respecting human dignity, actively supporting the right of people to have a say in their own development / recovery, and building people's capacity. At a meeting organised by the Austrian Association of Social Workers for government services and NGO's responding to the crisis, social workers commented that: 'We need to now break down the traditional silos that have divided us. We need to think outside the box, share resources and work together in new ways to maximise our abilities'

International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) is advocating, through its UN accreditation, for global governance to bring an end to the conflicts that drive the crisis and for better coordination to support for the refugees' access to host countries. IFSW calls on governments, regional bodies and international agencies to show the courage of immediate action demonstrate humanity and respect for people and involve them in decision-making about their futures.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics calls on social workers to act to prevent discrimination based on religion, race culture and other factors. Our Code of Ethics also calls on social workers to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, particularly people who suffer massive displacement due to wars and violent civil conflicts [18].

6.1 Social Workers Response in Europe

Since the war began in March 2011 more than nine million Syrians have fled their homes. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than three million Syrians have fled to neighbouring Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq while another 6.5 million refugees are living with Syria. National Association of Social Workers supports all efforts to provide a safe haven and support services for people fleeing the crisis in Syria.



Social workers in Europe have declared their support for refugees fleeing their home countries and seeking a new life. Ioakimidis, who is vice-president of the European Association of Schools of Social Work said, "grassroots movements of social workers across Europe are getting material aid to the camps, as well as using their skills to advocate for the refugees. While the social work in refugee camps is about material survival – shelter, water and food – the picture becomes more complex in the countries in which refugees want to stay.

6.2 Social Workers in Germany

Germany has been one of the more welcoming countries towards refugees. Gabriele Stark-Angermeier, deputy chief executive of the Munich branch of the welfare organisation Caritas has said "Our role as social workers is to try to help the refugees with their first needs. We are not in the role of the state to register and prove identities."

The social work role in Munich – which had an influx of 12,000 refugees in just one day last year – has included helping refugees access health services, reuniting family members and, vitally, getting volunteers to teach German. As Stark says, this social work is "about people settling into new communities and how these communities will adapt". The outpouring of volunteers in Austria and Germany who have welcomed the refugees sets an example for the politicians to follow. Sometimes the answers come from the governments, but often and in this situation the governments will have to react to the actions of civil society.

Many social workers moved directly into action. Work plans that were once focused on normal daily social work activities changed to supporting families without food or shelter. Assisting young women that have had to use their bodies to pay the price of journeying from extreme poverty and conflict to somewhere safe. As soon as the crisis began the social workers came together to support and advocate solutions in this crisis. As social workers "we seek to be a professional community that is not afraid to stand up for those in need.

7. Conclusion

In the context of humanitarian crises social workers as a global professional community need to advocate for transnational, indeed, a global response to the humanitarian crisis of migration in accordance to the UN Convention and other human rights documents, instead of the usual local and regional, chaotic responses that dehumanize people. By standing up to the crisis of humanitarianism, they need to challenge, bring to the light, and popularize the most fundamental underlying causes of migrations: the local, regional, and international wars as consequences of corporate interests that turn, the 'zones of poverty into zones of wars, and *vice versa*'. Above all, they need to constantly reinforce, and demand respect, for the International human rights standards regarding the right to political asylum, and the right to, and need for, the integration processes rather than the creation of off-shore, isolated, and segregated refugee camps [19].

Social work as a profession clearly has much to offer in services for refugees. From a skill base that integrates intrapersonal and inter-personal helping with the practicalities of assisting people to negotiate their way around the social welfare system, social workers can respond to the complex needs of refugees within an



understanding of the wider context of family relationships and social institutions. The values of social work, acknowledging principles of both social justice and the dignity and worth of each individual person, likewise enable social work to focus on the importance of ensuring that responses to refugees are well considered and appropriate with their human rights based practice and multi-systemic approach that integrates the physical, social, political, economic, spiritual and cultural, social workers offer a unique role when working with refugees and asylum seekers. They make valuable contributions by directly assisting refugees and asylum seekers in the task of negotiating new and complex systems, dealing with grief and loss and the effects of torture and trauma, and resettling into a new society. Due to their skills in communication and advocacy social workers are often valued as key educators of other service providers about refugees and asylum seeker needs. Furthermore, their community development expertise helps ensure the needs and strengths of asylum seekers and refugees are understood in a communal context. Accordingly, social work is playing an increasing role in work with refugees.

Refugees are not helpless. They have significant resources, skills, strengths, health and education. These human assets should be the foundation for rebuilding societies, evidence from social work interventions across the world speak clearly to engaging people in rebuilding their societies. This is in marked contrast to the denigration that is perpetuated by the 'humanitarian aid' mentality. Besides this governments and agencies should uphold human dignity, ensure that people are treated with dignity and respect in refugee camps, strengthen community and social interdependence and, above all, involve people in all decision-making over their futures. The inhumanity shown to people escaping war and poverty is a direct result of political failures in many global, regional and national political bodies, which lack the will and the knowledge to do what is needed. [17]. This crisis now needs governments to work together to resolve the humanitarian catastrophe now affecting many of the people across the world. Millions of people caught up in the crisis are working with social workers, some employed by the state or NGOs, and many who are volunteering. They have the skills to work effectively with very traumatised and distressed people. They also act as the catalyst in organising volunteers to welcome and assist the integration of refugees into new areas.

References

- [1] United Nations, "Armed conflicts and their consequences- the United Nations," [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/docs/15armedConflict>.
- [2] J.-M. Guehenno, "10 conflicts to watch in 2017," 2017. [Online]. Available: <http://www.google.co.in/amp/foreignpolicy.com/2017/01/05/10-conflicts-to-watch-in-2017/amp/>.
- [3] NSW Refugee Health Service & STARTTS, "Working with Refugees- A guide for Social Workers," September 2004. [Online]. Available: <http://www.startts.org.au/media/Resource-Working-with-Refugges-Social-Worker-Guide.pdf>.



- [4] Migration Policy Institute, "Refugees: Risks and Challenges Worldwide," 1 November 2002. [Online]. Available: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/refugees-risks-and-challenges-worldwide>.
- [5] The British Association Of Social Workers, "Social Work calls for a different response to the current refugee crises," 26 June 2016. [Online]. Available: <http://www.basw.co.uk/news/article/?id=1186>.
- [6] J. a. U. H. E. Karl De Rouen, *Civil Wars Of The World- Major Conflicts since World War II*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2007.
- [7] United Nations, "Refugees," [Online]. Available: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/refugees>.
- [8] Zack Beauchamp, "9 maps and charts that explain the global refugee crises," 30 January 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.vox.com/platform/amp/world/2017/30/144432500/refugee-crises-trump-muslim-ban-maps-charts>.
- [9] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Syria Regional Refugee Response," 01 March 2018. [Online]. Available: <http://googleweblight.com/i?u=http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php&hl=en-IN>.
- [10] CNN, "More than 1,000 children killed or injured this year in Syria, UN says," 06 March 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/amp.cnn.com/cnn/2018/03/06/middle-east/russia-syria-ghouta-safe-passage-intl/index.html>.
- [11] K. S. a. D. Lydia De Pillis, "A Visual guide to 75 years of major refugee crises around the world," 15 December 2015. [Online]. Available: <http://feixingren.com/graphics/2017/politics/alabama-election-analysis/?graphics/world/historical-migrant-crises>.
- [12] Wikipedia, "Rohingya refugee crises," 2015. [Online]. Available: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/2015_Rohingya_refugee_crises.
- [13] Aljazeera, "Myanmar: Who are the Rohingya," 5 February 2018. [Online]. Available: <https://www.google.co.in/>.
- [14] United Nations Office for the Coordination Of Humanitarian Affairs, "Rohingya Refugee Crises: Pleding Conference," [Online]. Available: <https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crises-pledging-conference>.
- [15] F. B. a. R. C.-Y. Chung, "Refugee Trauma; Culturally Responsive Counseling Intervention," *Journal and Counselling & Development*, pp. 299-308, Volume 95, 2017.
- [16] IASSW, "Responding to the refugee Crises," March 2016. [Online]. Available: <https://www.iassw-aiets.org/2016/03/13/851>.
- [17] D. Zavirek, "The Humanitarian Crises of Migration versus the crises of humanitarianism: Current dimensions and challenges for social work," *Social Work Education*, Vol 36, No. 3, pp. 231-244, 2017.



- [18] N. Ostrand, "The Syrian Refugee Crises: A Comparison Of Responses by Germany, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States," *Journal On Migration and Human Security*, vol. 3 ,No 3, pp. 255-279, 2015.
- [19] B. Berti, "The Syrian Refugee Crises: Regional and Human Security Implications," *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 17, No 4, pp. 41-53, 2015.