



Faculty of Legal Studies, South Asian University
in collaboration with
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
organises a workshop on

Research and Advocacy in Action for Refugee Protection

11 September 2018

Background:

Refugees face similar challenges across the world. However there are certain challenges which originate from the specificities of a particular context.

South Asian countries, and in particular, India has a positive record on its national capacity to manage a large scale refugee influx and generously include them within society. However, in the absence of a national legal framework for refugee protection, a positive protection environment generally remains ad-hoc and informal. A broad-based advocacy effort is critical to ensure that refugees and asylum-seekers enjoy safe asylum through access to territory, access to basic services such as health, education and legal aid and effective socio-economic inclusion in the host society to live a life of dignity in asylum. Advocacy, therefore, should be at multiple levels, notably at the grass-roots, operational and policy-making levels.

This workshop organized by South Asian University (SAU) in collaboration with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) India is aimed at exploring two critical areas of refugee protection as follows-

1. Role of academic teaching and research in refugee protection

As public debates on refugees become stronger, it is important that an accurate understanding of refugees is developed through evidence-based research and training on refugee law and forced migration. Academic institutions and researchers can play a significant role in enhancing public understanding of refugee protection through introduction of refugee law/refugee studies in institutions and promoting evidence-based research on various aspects of refugee protection.

However, to build a credible knowledge-base and common understanding on refugee issues, fundamental humanitarian principles such as 'do no harm' should be followed. Ethical refugee research methodologies should be embedded in research projects from the beginning to ensure that refugee voices are respected and issues of consent and confidentiality are strictly maintained. Most importantly, evidence-based research should be a means to directly impact refugee lives positively in the short-term where possible or indirectly benefit refugees by influencing public policy in favour of refugees in the medium to long term.

2. Advocacy in Action for Refugees in India

'Advocacy in Action' for refugees is required to addressing practical challenges and making policy-level impact on refugee protection. Such challenges include, but are not limited to, detention/deportation, access to documentation and essential services, financial inclusion. Such a practical, action-oriented approach may lead to the development of a coherent and consistent national refugee protection framework by consolidating national capacity to influence public opinion and policy in favour of refugees. A bottom-up, gradual and multi-stakeholder approach that builds on existing national capacity to strengthen institutional engagement on refugee protection in India at different levels will enable/facilitate positive change in partnership with multiple government and non-government actors with an emphasis on national ownership of refugee protection.

AGENDA

9.30am	Registration
10.00am- 10.30am	<p><i>Inaugural Session</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Introduction to the workshop: Dr. Srinivas Burra, Faculty of Legal Studies, South Asian University</p> <p>Address by: Ms. Yasuko Shimizu, Chief of Mission, UNHCR India</p> <p>Inaugural address: Professor Sasanka Perera, Vice-President, South Asian University</p>
10.30am- 11.00am	Tea Break
11.00am- 12.00 noon	<p><i>Session 1: Role of academic teaching and research in refugee protection</i></p> <p>Chair: Mr. Narinder Singh, Former Member, UN International Law Commission & Former Additional Secretary and Legal Advisor, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Dr. Priyanca Mathur, Associate Professor, Jain University, Bengaluru- <i>Academic teaching and refugee protection</i></p> <p>Ms. Maya Mirchandani, Senior Fellow, Observer Research Foundation- <i>Policy research and refugee protection in India</i></p>
12.00 noon- 1.00pm	<p><i>Session 2: Advocacy in Action for Refugees</i></p> <p>Chair: Dr. Srinivas Burra, Faculty of Legal Studies, South Asian University</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Dr. Parivelan K M, Associate Professor, TISS Mumbai- <i>Universities and action-oriented research for refugee protection</i></p> <p>Ms. Pallavi Saxena, Senior Legal Consultant, Migration and Asylum Project- <i>Role of national civil society organisations in refugee advocacy</i></p>