

World Social Work Day 2016 (March 15th)
Greetings from the IFSW Asia Pacific Regional President

Fellow Social Workers of the Asia Pacific Region,

I am glad to be able to celebrate this year's World Social Work Day with all of you.

In my message for last year's World Social Work Day, I mentioned that "social work is a profession with the ability to bring change to people's lives". Unfortunately, the world is filled with a wide range of livelihood issues and social problems. As social workers, when we try to fight these, sometimes it feels hopeless. Yet, we discover again and again that our profession is full of hope whenever we build relationships with people, bring change to their lives and see how they achieve personal growth with newly gained vitality and power.

During this year, the world has changed drastically. A large scale refugee crisis has unfolded globally, and there are considerable inflows to European and other countries. Conflicts over ideology or religion, culture, and economic issues have deepened, and many disputes seem to rather intensify instead of calming down.

Under such circumstances, can we choose to feel more hopeless? I think not. I believe that awareness of the need for collaboration by the UN and cooperating agencies, including various sectors is surely rising. The Millennium Development Goals aimed for 2015 and they showed clear results regarding measures in poverty, public hygiene, and education for women and children in developing countries. After 2015, there will be continuous efforts towards Development Goals.

These endeavors have contributed to poverty alleviation and women's and children's education in many developing countries. Through such projects and many others by NGOs, change is happening in rural communities, families, children's education, and women's lives. Women acquire new skills together with their peers and start businesses in collaboration in their own communities with other women. Hence, they bring solidarity, change and economic profit to their own families and communities. Families recognize such change brought about by women and both women and their families start to have a heightened awareness about the importance of educating women and children. Furthermore, due to being aware about the need for women's education, families start to make efforts to send their children to places of higher education. As Nobel laureate Ms. Malala Yousafzai also points it out, education breaks the cycle of poverty, provides new vitality in the life of women and children, and brings change to rural life itself.

Poverty is not only a rural problem, but also a severe issue in urban areas too. Many children suffer from malnutrition and health problems while they have limited chances for education. Since poverty is prone to have effects over generations, the intergenerational cycle of poverty has to be broken. Simultaneously to providing livelihood support with nutrition and health in mind, we need to assist families and foster

fundamental trust towards other human beings. Additionally, with regard to families with multiple problems, the supportive role of the community is indispensable. We need to respond and protect children and families through organized support networks. Finally, the role education has the capacity to play an extremely important role for children who are in essence the future of society.

I said that social work is a profession that brings change to people's lives. I would like to emphasize that it is necessary this year to engage in activities that aim for grander goals to promote world peace and the dignity of people by building consensus between a diversity of sectors. "Promoting the dignity and worth of people" is the main topic in this year's World Social Work Day.

In their role in the world, I believe that social workers can fulfill their duty as mediators and have diverse and important functions in many collaborative initiatives between various sectors and professionals. Social workers not only bring change to people's lives, but they indeed promote the dignity and worth of people while they act as change agents and change society or whenever they fulfill their functions as mediators and promote multi-sector collaborations. Promotion of the dignity and worth of people is the theme of this year's World Social Work Day. To promote the dignity and worth of people, I think we must collaborate with various sectors and professional all over the world and bring change to people's lives as well as society itself.

Let us celebrate Worlds Social Work Day together with social workers from around the world! Happy World Social Work Day to you all!

Mariko Kimura,
President, IFSW-AP