

Migrant Resource Centres: An Initial Assessment

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Publisher: International Organization for Migration
17 route des Morillons
1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
Tel: +41.22.717 91 11
Fax: +41.22.798 61 50
E-mail: hq@iom.int
Internet: <http://www.iom.int>

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Migrant Resource Centres: An Initial Assessment

Paul Tacon and Elizabeth Warn
International Organization for Migration

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AESCO	–	America España Solidaridad y Cooperacion
CIAMI	–	Centro de Información y Atención sobre Migración Internacional
CIGEM	–	Centre d'Information et Gestion des Migrations
CLMC	–	Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre
CNAI	–	Centro Nacional de Apoio ao Imigrante
FWRC	–	Filipino Overseas Workers Resource Centres
GFMD	–	Global Forum on Migration and Development
IGO	–	Intergovernmental organization
IOM	–	International Organization for Migration
IRCLM	–	Information and Resource Centre for Labour Migrants
MCDEM	–	Maison des Congolais de l'Etranger et des Migrants
MIC	–	Migration Information Centre
MRC	–	Migrant Resource Centre
MSC	–	Migrant Services Centre
NGO	–	Non-governmental organization

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This rapid assessment considers the work of Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in the context of Round Table 2, “Migrant integration, reintegration and circulation for development”, of the 2009 Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) in Athens. Although there has been notable growth in recent years in the number of MRCs, defined here as physical structures that provide services to migrants which facilitate and empower them to migrate in a legal, voluntary, orderly and protected fashion, there has been no attempt thus far to assess the impact of these MRCs on migration management goals. This assessment does not aim to provide a comprehensive report of the work of MRCs. However, in connection with the work of 17 different MRCs around the world, the assessment does aim to provide an overview of good practices in empowering migrants to facilitate development and ensure better self-protection.

In relation to *empowering migrants for development*, good practices among the MRCs studied demonstrate the important role they play in providing migrants with information on how their migration, remittances and return plans can be linked to development.

In relation to *providing services which enable migrants to protect themselves*, the MRCs covered in this assessment employ a range of good practices in gathering and actively distributing information to enable migrants to exercise their rights and prevent their exploitation. Moreover, a number of MRCs also provide services that ensure migrants are able to access to their rights.

In addition to studying good practices in these areas, the assessment has also examined institutional issues, such as the set-up procedures employed by MRCs and their strategies for achieving sustainability over time.

The assessment finds that the MRCs studied undertake a range of tasks which are important in harnessing migration for development, as well as in empowering migrants for protection. It argues that MRCs should consider their work from the perspective of supporting migration for development, and that their expertise would be helpful to governments and other actors in the formulation and implementation of migration and development strategies and programmes. The role played by MRCs therefore deserves recognition, both in the context of the GFMD process and beyond.

The further development of these Centres can be assisted by the sharing of information and practices among MRCs themselves, as well as between MRCs and other stakeholders. More research and consideration of tools such as job-matching

mechanisms would help MRCs push their work forward and provide even more comprehensive and effective services.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) have established Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) and other similar facilities in both countries of origin and destination. This interest in MRCs represents a recognition of the support they provide in migration management. There is a consensus that migration should be managed so that it occurs in a safe, orderly and humane manner, and is for “the benefit of countries of origin and destination, and of migrants and their families” (OSCE-IOM-ILO, 2006: 23). MRCs support this objective by empowering migrants¹ to migrate in a regular and protected way, fulfilling their obligations and receiving their rights and thus avoiding the vulnerabilities to trafficking and exploitation associated with irregular migration. This protected, regular migration is key to promoting the links between migration and development.

As there is currently no commonly agreed definition of an MRC, for the purposes of this assessment, MRCs have been defined as physical structures which provide services directly to migrants to facilitate and promote their recourse to legal, voluntary, orderly and protected migration.² MRCs aim to serve as reference points in normal migration processes. The focus of this assessment does not cover services which operate solely as Web- or telephone-based services. Although these tools are very useful and often make up an integral part of the spectrum of MRC services, they do not in themselves represent the full potential range of MRC activities, especially in relation to empowering migrants for development.³

Although they go by different names,⁴ reflecting the diversity of actors involved in their set-up and functioning and the objectives that they serve, MRCs share a number of key features. Principally, they provide an independent and impartial structure through which male and female migrants can obtain accurate information on: legal migration procedures; the rights and responsibilities that migrants have throughout the migration process; and information on how to protect themselves so that migration is a positive experience.

In providing this service, MRCs support a number of key policy objectives, directly or otherwise. These objectives include:

- prevention of irregular migration;
- facilitation of legal migration;
- protection of regular and irregular migrants;
- promotion of sustainable, voluntary return (where relevant);
- integration of migrants into the country of destination (where relevant);
- promotion of the links between migration and development.

Although most MRCs were not established with development in mind, some are beginning to focus on how their work can help empower migrants to contribute to development in countries of origin as well as in host countries. This is in line with growing recognition that migration can contribute to development, which is conceptualized in this paper as a process which “connotes human, economic and social growth” (GFMD Background Paper for RT 2.2, Athens 2009: 2). This growth can take place at the individual, local or national level.

Migration has the potential to contribute to the human development of migrants, their families and, indirectly, their communities. It opens up new opportunities in terms of investment in socio-economic improvement and empowerment, through the establishment of job-creating businesses or necessary infrastructure, as well as by adding to the skills available to communities.

In order to empower migrants to participate in development, an active approach is required. Migrants should be provided with information, training and advice which will enable them to fully unleash the potential to contribute to development that safe migration provides them. This empowerment goes beyond the economic sphere, and includes information and training in aspects that impact the well-being of migrants, for example, in relation to health promotion and gender-related issues. In taking this broad approach, this assessment takes a first step in showing how MRCs can play an important role in the development of systems of mobility which ensure that migration is mutually beneficial to all involved.

Despite the important growth in the number of MRCs worldwide and interest in the services they provide, to date no examination has been undertaken to identify good practices in the work carried out by these MRCs. “Good practices”, in this context, follow the definition provided by the European Commission’s Web Site on Integration, namely, “strategies, approaches and/or activities that have been shown through research and evaluation to be effective, efficient, sustainable and/or transferable, and to reliably lead to a desired result” (European Commission, n.d.). However, the definition used in this paper also includes practices with new and innovative aspects that can be considered for further evaluation, and those that include a wide range of stakeholders and a mix of governmental, non-governmental or private actors, and/or have been shown to have benefits beyond the national context. This broader definition of good practices also enables the inclusion of emerging practices whose impacts have yet to be seen, but which show potential directions for future work.

This rapid assessment takes a first step in addressing this gap; it provides an outline of what selected MRCs are doing in relation to empowering migrants for development and protection, and what they themselves have identified as “good practices” in their

work. Specifically, it ascertains how MRCs empower migrants for development in their countries of origin, as well as which elements of MRCs provide effective services that enable male and female migrants to protect themselves and enjoy their rights. This rapid assessment also examines how MRCs have been set up and how they have become sustainable. Good practices were identified in individual areas of MRCs' work, rather than attempting to identify MRCs which show good practice across all areas.⁵ This assessment generally does not provide multiple examples of the same good practice as its purpose is to be illustrative; see Appendix B for a full list of services provided by each MRC. Finally, this rapid assessment does not aim to provide a definitive or comprehensive overview; rather, it aims to serve as a basis for more comprehensive evaluation and study of these MRCs in the future.

With these limitations in mind, the assessment outlines in Section 1 the methodology used in gathering information, before going on to briefly discuss the history of MRCs. In Section 2, the assessment shows what MRCs aim to accomplish in relation to empowering migrants – that is, to link migration with development and enable migrants to protect themselves. It also shows good practices by MRCs in order to achieve this goal. Section 3 looks at the processes through which these MRCs are set up and sustainability is assured. Section 4 lists recommendations for the establishment and functioning of current and future MRCs.

Objectives and methodology of the current study

A number of MRCs were identified through an internal analysis of the MRCs managed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) itself. In addition to this, other MRCs were identified through Web-based research and by consulting reports on migration issues which mentioned MRCs. IOM field staff were contacted to assist in the identification process. Efforts were made to ensure that the study had a wide and balanced representation of geographical regions, countries of origin and host countries, and actors involved in the management of MRCs (namely NGOs, IGOs and governments).

A list of criteria in relation to good practices in identified areas of MRCs' work was developed. Based on this list, questionnaires were developed for managers to gain insight into the different activities of their respective MRCs. The managers identified good practices in the services they deliver to migrants in relation to empowerment for development and protection, their institutional structures, and how they have attempted to achieve sustainability.

Depending on respondents' preferences, responses to the questionnaires were gathered through telephone or e-mail interviews with managers of MRCs in 12 different countries.⁶ The examples are therefore dependent on the good faith of the respondents.⁷ Unless otherwise stated, the information in the sections below is based on the answers gathered in the interviews.

In addition, a separate questionnaire was sent out to governmental and other stakeholders, who had been identified by respondents from the MRCs themselves, in order to gauge their perspectives on the impact of the work of MRCs.⁸ Where possible, statistics and other information have been gathered from MRCs. Owing to time and resource constraints it was not possible to assess the impact and importance of these services according to clients' responses.⁹ It is also likely that a number of MRCs equally worthy of study were not identified due to limitations in the identification process.

A brief history of MRCs

Structures and physical centres providing support for migrants have existed for some time. However, the exact origins of centres explicitly referred to as MRCs are unclear. It would seem that some of the earliest MRCs were founded in Australia, where two "experimental" Centres "provid[ing] migrants with settlement information and ... promot[ing] community development" were set up in 1976 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2003: 224).¹⁰

Since the establishment of what appear to be the first MRCs in Australia, MRCs have been developed in a number of different countries and contexts, in countries of origin as well as those of destination, and reflecting the specific situations of each country. In the mid-1980s, for example, the Government of the Philippines began to set up what would later be called the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Resource Centre in Singapore, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, in recognition of the need for support of the large numbers of Filipinos working in these countries. Later on in 1994, Caritas Lebanon established a Centre in Beirut to respond to the needs of particularly vulnerable refugees and migrants (Caritas, n.d.). At the turn of the century, realizing that the issue of irregular migration could be linked to a lack of information on the part of migrants, a number of countries of origin such as Albania began to seek assistance to ensure that migrants were aware of the means through which they could migrate legally.

The *Centro de Información y Atención sobre Migración Internacional* (CIAMI, or Centre for Information and Attention on International Migration) in Colombia and the Migrant Services Centre in Sri Lanka were set up by trade unions that recognized that

their mission to protect the rights of workers had an international dimension, as large numbers were travelling abroad for work. The Maison des Congolais de l'Etranger et des Migrants (MCDEM, or the House of Overseas Congolese and Migrants) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was set up in partnership with countries of destination with the shared goal of reducing irregular migration, promoting regular migration and developing links between migration and development. From IOM's perspective, the sharing of experiences and success stories from various MRCs has proved their worth, and has meant that their popularity has spread. The result is that MRCs can now be found in all continents and in a variety of country contexts.¹¹

2. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

Having outlined in general terms the growth of MRCs, this paper outlines how MRCs envision their work, and provides examples of good practices in the two main areas of (1) empowerment for development and (2) empowerment for self-protection.

2.1 Services empowering migrants for development

MRCs and development

The potential for migration (including, where appropriate, the voluntary return of migrants) to contribute to development is increasingly well-recognized (see, for example, UN 2008). Migrants can contribute not only their remittances to country-of-origin development but also their skills: through temporary, long-term or virtual¹² return to their countries of origin, migrants can use and pass on their skills to promote development.

Migrants are often concerned with improving the situation of their families and communities of origin, as shown by the vast size of remittance flows from North to South (and from South to South). Moreover, they are often enthusiastic about undertaking philanthropic activities or engaging in business in their countries of origin. In recognition of migration's potential to contribute to development, countries of origin and destination, NGOs and IGOs are increasingly developing programmes to link migration and return to development. These programmes include circular migration schemes, which enable migrants to move between countries of origin and destination, to the benefit of countries of origin and destination, as well as the migrants themselves.

However, an obstacle to effectively linking migration to development is the lack of information among migrants themselves on potential means of leveraging their migration, return, or remittances for the development of their countries of origin. In terms of remittances, for instance, knowledge gaps on affordable money transfer mechanisms particularly affect women's remitting capacity, as they tend to send less money but do so more frequently than their male counterparts, and are thus disproportionately impacted by transfer fees. Moreover, as health is a precursor to development, lack of information on possible health risks linked to migration or how to access migrant-friendly health services can lead to health problems which prevent migrants from reaching their full development potential. Traditional information-dissemination networks advertising migration-for-development opportunities may also exclude potential participants. In particular, outreach to women migrants or

women living in remote areas in countries of origin can be difficult through traditional methods, because they often work in unregulated and informal sectors with little access to professional networks and trade unions.

MRCs, given their closeness to migrant communities, are therefore well-placed to provide potential and actual migrants and returnees with information on how they can link their migration plans to the appropriate development goals of their countries of origin. By providing information on the benefits of linking migration to development, MRCs enable prospective migrants to consider their migration within a broader framework, building direct links between migration and development.

MRCs can also provide training that builds the capacity of migrants and migrant organizations to plan and undertake self-directed and -managed interventions for country-of-origin development. Such training can encompass issues such as project development and financial management, either directly in connection with development-related activities, or as part of a general programme of migrant organization capacity-building. MRCs can also serve as a location for diaspora organizations to meet and coordinate their activities for country-of-origin development, or they can provide access to virtual space, such as an Internet discussion forum. Such spaces provide diaspora organizations interested in country-of-origin development with the means to discuss their ideas and work on the development of initiatives.

In addition to these directly developmental services, MRCs can also provide services that enable their clients to effectively participate in the labour market in their country of destination. Highly qualified migrants, in particular, are often employed in jobs in countries of destination which do not match their actual skill and qualification level; this can be due to lack of knowledge of the local labour market situation or isolation from networks that enable candidates to find appropriate jobs. This phenomenon of “de-skilling” is not only a barrier to migrants’ individual human development; it is also important in the context of the migration and development nexus. Migrants are unable to acquire new skills or develop existing ones, preventing them from finding appropriate employment, capacity-building or entrepreneurial opportunities on their return. This is particularly true for migrant women, who often face discrimination (as women and as migrants) and gender-segregated labour markets. Through job training and referral, MRCs can assist migrants to develop and gain recognition of their existing skills and learn new ones, improving their capacity to find appropriate work.

MRCs may also assist migrants in their job searches. By helping migrants to find work that empowers them to develop their personal skills, MRCs not only provide a valuable service for migrants themselves, but also help prepare them to participate in the development of their country of origin.

Although direct involvement in development-related activities is an emerging practice among MRCs, some good practices can already be seen in this area. Moreover, a number of MRCs provide services that indirectly support and empower their clients to engage in development-related practices. These activities are outlined below.

Textbox 1: Criteria for good practices in empowering migrants for development

- a) Integration into development plans
- b) Remittances and investment
 - i) Information gathering, provision and dissemination on transfer costs
 - ii) Partnerships for remittance facilitation
 - iii) Information on investment opportunities
- c) Employment-related assistance
 - i) Job-matching
 - ii) Training
 - iii) Recognition of qualifications
- d) Building diaspora capacities and links
 - i) Promoting involvement in migration for development projects
 - ii) Indirectly building diaspora capacities

a) Integration into development plans

The impact of MRCs on development can be best supported where MRCs are integrated into national or other development frameworks. Integrating MRCs into these frameworks will enable them to take a more development-friendly approach and align their activities with wider poverty reduction and development goals. Although this is an aspect that has not been highly developed in MRCs, the Centre d'Information et Gestion des Migrations (CIGEM, or Centre for Information and Management of Migration) in Mali has been conceived within the framework of the Africa-European Union (EU) Partnership on migration, mobility and employment agreed at the Africa-EU Summit in 2007, which aims, inter alia, to “ensure that migration and employment works for sustainable development” (EC, 2007). Thus, CIGEM has been conceived so as to be able to develop its activities to work coherently towards identified development priorities.

b) Remittances and investment

i) Information gathering, provision and dissemination on transfer costs

The systematic gathering and provision of information on remittances is yet to be considered a core feature of the work of many MRCs. However, it is an emerging practice. The Information and Resource Centre for Labour Migrants (IRCLMs) in Tajikistan has been innovative in systematically gathering and integrating information

on remittances as part of their work, including information on remittances in the brochures and leaflets they provide to clients. MCDEM in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently investigating how it can provide information on low-cost remittance transfer services to migrants. These practices ensure that clients are able to learn how to use the most efficient options for transferring money to their countries of origin, maximizing the potential for remittances to be invested to support social or productive investment.

ii) Partnerships for remittance facilitation

Beyond providing information on the costs of remittances, some MRCs also engage with providers directly to advocate for reductions in the costs of transfers. Perhaps the MRCs with the most comprehensive vision in this area are the Filipino Overseas Workers Resource Centres (FWRCs), which are encouraged to not only gather information on cheaper remittance transfer options, but also to identify and engage with local money transfer agencies in order to reduce costs and speed up transfers. These practices are shared among FWRCs to provide advice and encouragement to other Centres in the network to take similar action. The FWRCs' links to the government also enable them to negotiate cost-reducing bilateral agreements with service providers. This has proved to be effective in reducing the costs of remittances for migrants in a number of contexts: for example, the FWRC in Libya was able to provide this service to its clients, facilitating their remittance transfers to the Philippines.

iii) Information on investment opportunities

MRCs can facilitate the use of remittances for productive investments by providing information on opportunities for making such investments. A good practice in this area is shown by FWRCs, which provide comprehensive information on philanthropic investment opportunities in the Philippines for migrants and their families. FWRCs encourage temporary contractual workers from the same regions in the Philippines to pool their resources to fund the construction of classrooms in their home regions. According to the respondent from the Philippines, this programme has proved to be popular.

The Congolese MCDEM, meanwhile, provides information on business-related investment opportunities for returnees and migrants, to promote the involvement of the diaspora in the development of productive infrastructure in the private sector. This represents the successful conceptualization and integration of an MRC's work into broader frameworks of investment and development, although it is too early to be able to judge the impact of this measure.

c) Employment-related assistance

i) Job-matching

Although it is not always conceptualized as a contribution to development, providing support for clients' attempts to find employment and acquire skills is a key part of the work of many MRCs. By assisting clients to find decent work in countries of origin and destination that provide them with an opportunity to develop their skills and increase their salaries, clients are empowered and their potential to support development processes through financial and social remittances (such as skills transfers) is enhanced. Currently, this assistance tends to be provided in an indirect manner, especially in the absence of concrete multilateral or bilateral agreements providing recruitment support mechanisms.

Support is provided through assistance in migrants' and returnees' job searches: the MCDEM in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, has a job portal on its website,¹³ with links to job websites both in-country and abroad. The portal enables MCDEM's clients to view available jobs and apply for them. The Migration Information Centre in Croatia¹⁴ includes information on quotas open to Croatians in countries of destination, enabling clients to target their migration projects towards specific positions. The Centre's location in the offices of the Croatian Employment Service Counselling Centre also facilitates the process of client referral to assist their job searches within Croatia. Migrants returning to the Philippines, meanwhile, are able to benefit from job-matching schemes which use databases of vacancies to provide returnees with information on relevant job opportunities, providing concrete support for job searches.

ii) Training

MRCs also provide support for clients' training, either through referral to training facilities and financial support for training, or through direct provision of training. This training is most effective when it is conceived holistically, as part of a broad plan of support for the client's career path. This support aims to ensure that migrants are able to develop and use their skills to find appropriate work in their country of destination and to contribute to their human development. The Migration Information Centre (MIC) in Slovakia shows good practice in this area. After an intensive programme of personalized counselling and interviews with migrants to develop a personal development plan to identify appropriate courses, the MIC provides grants to migrants for job-related training. Staff follow migrants' progress and help them establish links with employers. The process is evaluated by staff at the end of the course to ensure that appropriate training has been provided. The training provided

can include vocational courses, language courses and specialized training (such as in book-keeping or information technology). These grants have proved to be popular: 33 clients (10 females and 23 males) were accepted for these grants between April and September this year, suggesting that they meet the real needs of migrants.¹⁵ Such a holistic approach could also include training with an explicit developmental focus.

The Migration Information Centre in Croatia has also been effective in the provision of job-related training. Facilitating this process is the location of the Centre at the Centre of Counselling of the Croatian Employment Services (CES), enabling easy referral of clients to the training services of the CES.

MRCs in countries of origin also provide similar support to returnees in order to ensure their successful reintegration into the local context, and where relevant, to support entrepreneurship. This is a particular focus of the Migrant Services Centre (MSC) in Sri Lanka, which shows good practice by focusing training on gender-specific reintegration needs. The MSC focuses its activities particularly on female returnees who worked previously as domestic workers (as opposed to male temporary contractual workers who often work in construction while abroad), whose skills are not in demand in Sri Lanka. It therefore aims to re-skill these workers to work in the local context. As a result, 82 per cent of returnees (largely women) who participate in the MSC's training courses are able to find employment.

iii) Recognition of qualifications

In addition to direct support for migrants, MRCs also play an important, if indirect, role in ensuring that migrants' qualifications are recognized wherever they are. Lack of recognition of qualifications can be an important factor preventing migrants and returnees from accessing employment that matches their skill sets. Aware of this problem, a number of MRCs have been negotiating for the recognition of foreign qualifications in their respective countries: the Centro Nacional de Apoio ao Imigrante (CNAI, or National Immigrant Support Centre) in Portugal, for example, supports government schemes for the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, while the MCDDEM is involved in similar discussions with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that returnees' qualifications are also recognized in this context. In Slovakia, where a system of qualification recognition is already in place, the MIC provides support to clients going through the process of having their qualifications recognized. In doing this, MRCs effectively empower clients by assisting them to find decent work in line with their qualifications.

d) Building diaspora capacities and links

i) Promoting involvement in migration-for-development projects

The MRCs which have been most active in this area have been the FWRCs. These MRCs host a number of co-development initiatives which engage Filipino community groups as partners, assisting migrant organizations to build their capacities and promoting their engagement in migration-for-development initiatives when they are judged capable of undertaking such activities. This shows good practice in engaging and empowering diaspora groups in countries of destination to participate in development processes. As a result, a number of co-development projects involving migrants have been undertaken.

Although the practice of engaging with the diaspora has yet to be taken up by a large number of actors, this area is being developed. In September 2009, the CIGEM in Mali launched a series of initiatives aiming to involve Malians residing abroad in co-development projects, within the framework of a broad EC-funded diaspora engagement programme. It also hosted the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Networks (TOKTEN) programme for Mali in its premises. Other MRCs, such as the Lebanese Caritas Lebanon Migrant Centre (CLMC) and the Congolese MCDEM also aim to involve themselves in activities linking migration and development. The MCDEM, in particular, in addition to maintaining links with diaspora groups such as the Kinshasa-based diaspora-linked NGO "Entreprendre-CEDITA", organized the "Forum Economique de la Diaspora Congolaise" (The Economic Forum of the Congolese Diaspora) in August 2009, to promote dialogue between the government and around 400 members of the diaspora to facilitate their investment in the country (AllAfrica.com, 2009). This forum is an innovative means of paving the way for greater diaspora engagement in the country's development, by involving the diaspora themselves in identifying the obstacles and issues they face.

Finally, MRCs' role as meeting points for migrants also provides organizations promoting migration-for-development initiatives with important opportunities to advertise their activities to potential participants. According to the IOM office in Lisbon, the Portuguese CNAI shows good practice in this area. It was able to use its position as a reference point for migrants, trusted and used by a large proportion of the target group, to assist outreach for the IOM "DIAS De Cabo Verde" initiative. This initiative aims to mobilize the human, social and professional resources of the Cape Verdean diaspora for the development of their country of origin.¹⁶ The CNAI advertises the initiative through the Centre and thereby facilitates the work of identifying and engaging diaspora members in its other initiatives. The CNAI also

provides information and initial interviews for migrants who stand to benefit from IOM's Assisted Voluntary Return projects. The Tajik IRCLMs also show good practice in this area, as they provide information on IOM projects that focus on the investment of remittances in social infrastructure, contributing effectively to the outreach efforts of such projects. These examples show how MRCs have been effective in gathering migrants and proposing practical means of contributing to development. They show how other MRCs could also assist other organizations in the implementation of migration-for-development initiatives.

ii) Indirectly building diaspora capacities

While they may not be directly linked to migration-for-development initiatives, a number of MRCs provide support for migrant communities and associations to build their organizational capacities. The Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre (Spectrum MRC) in Australia plays an important role in this respect, providing training for migrant community groups so that they can register themselves legally and apply independently for grants and projects. Moreover, Spectrum MRC itself serves as a useful base for these associations, providing in-kind resources such as meeting spaces. This support ensures that migrants and their associations are able to participate fully and independently in the associative sphere in a sustainable way, which is a prerequisite for their participation in migration-for-development activities. The MIC in Slovakia and the MSC in Sri Lanka also provide training on organizational issues such as project development and financial literacy. These MRCs therefore show good practices in empowering diaspora groups to participate in associative activities in general. Such practices can also be brought to bear to help diaspora groups work on development issues.

2.2 Services empowering migrants for protection

Having considered MRCs' impacts on empowering migrants to contribute to development, the assessment now turns to how MRCs assist migrants in protecting themselves. It was noted during the GFMD in Manila in October 2008 that migrants who are able to exercise their rights are better able contribute to development in origin and destination countries (GFMD 2008: 7). Protected and informed migrants are, for example, able to take up decent jobs that will enable them to earn money for themselves and to send to their countries of origin. They can also develop their skills and take up opportunities in their countries of origin and destination. From a broad human development perspective, they are also empowered to take actions to reduce their vulnerabilities in relation to health, for example.

The study of MRCs' work in protection is therefore important in understanding their impact on development. A key goal of MRCs' work has been to provide services to empower migrants to protect themselves. An important aspect of this empowerment is the provision of accurate and realistic information and advice to assist migrants in making informed decisions as to: whether or not to migrate; the implications of migration; the risks of irregular migration; how to migrate safely; their rights; the risks to their health and well-being; where to migrate; under what circumstances; and the necessary conditions for migration.

These services are provided in recognition of the fact that migrants' ability to access this information on their own can often be constrained: it is often difficult to find up-to-date guidance on how to migrate through regular migration routes. Furthermore, information on rights and obligations linked to migration are seldom presented accessibly and in a single place. Moreover, legislation and procedures are often subject to regular changes, and peoples' perceptions may be coloured by inaccurate or misleading information provided through networks, by unscrupulous employment agencies, human traffickers or other third parties (Home Office, 2002).

As a result of this difficulty in accessing up-to-date, impartial and accurate information, migrants or potential migrants are often not aware of their rights (particularly their rights in relation to employment, the labour market and access to public services), or of the possibilities and procedures for regular migration (which can lead to migrants turning to irregular means to migrate or remain in a country of destination). Such an information gap can therefore lead to the use of irregular means of migration, and to migrants (regular and irregular) being vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

MRCs use a number of means, such as individualized legal counselling delivered at dedicated offices, hotlines and websites, to address this information gap, enabling people to make informed choices about migration based on information that gives them a realistic impression of what it entails. Such information is important throughout the migration process:

- Before leaving the country of origin: support from MRCs can ensure that migrants are able to apply for and obtain (or have applied for and obtained) the correct documentation and understand the implications of their status.
- In host countries: migrants can be provided with information and advice on safe migration,¹⁷ and referred to relevant services and provided with appropriate assistance if: their rights are violated; they have difficulties in accessing services; they are being exploited by their employers; or if their

movement is restricted. For irregular migrants, the services provided can ensure that they are aware of their ability to access services and their options in relation to voluntary return.

- Finally, where relevant, during the return and reintegration process: migrants are supported in understanding and dealing with the legal, social and economic changes that may have taken place in their countries, communities and families during their time in the country of destination.

The range of information gathered varies from MRC to MRC, depending on its capacity and interests. A common thread is that MRCs collect information on migration-related laws and procedures, such as requirements for entry and residence for different types of status. MRCs also provide information relating to countries of destination, such as access to health and other social services, information on NGOs and other important actors in the local context, relevant migration health issues such as HIV prevention,¹⁸ and cultural expectations.

MRCs also provide services that help migrants directly resolve their problems, such as pro bono legal counselling and on-site provision of health care and employer conciliation to assist in dispute resolution. Where MRCs are not able to provide services directly, they can provide migrants with referrals to other governmental and non-governmental organizations which can assist.

The core role of MRCs in ensuring migrants' empowerment for protection is to provide migrants with information that will help them to move in a regular, informed manner. However, the provision of additional services that enable clients to protect themselves is also important. This element is even more important in the context of migrant workers engaged in domestic services and living with their employers, as these workers are exposed to greater risk of verbal, physical and sexual violence. Activities to promote and protect the health of migrants are particularly important, as healthy migrants are more productive members of the societies in which they live.

Despite the different actors involved in the set-up and running of the MRCs studied, they all provide a range of services to assist migrants' empowerment for protection – from identifying needs, obtaining relevant information and disseminating it to clients, ensuring that the largest possible number of people are aware of how MRCs can help them, to assistance in filling in visa applications, providing emergency accommodation, and referring migrants to appropriate health services and other service providers.

Textbox 2: Criteria for good practices in services empowering migrants for protection

- a) Information-gathering on migration issues
- b) Outreach and information dissemination
 - i) Use of media
 - ii) Physical outreach and local contact
 - iii) Location
 - iv) Service accessibility through hotlines, websites and extended working hours
- c) Provision of individualized counselling and support services
 - i) Individualized counselling
 - ii) Direct provision of relevant services

a) Information-gathering on migration issues

In order to provide these services of empowerment for protection for migrants, MRCs must have the capacity to gather information on a range of topics, such as relevant laws and procedures relating to migration and migrants' rights and responsibilities, as well as the ability to keep up with any changes to these procedures.

The means through which MRCs gather information differ, depending on the particular context in which they operate. Where MRCs are represented in governmental committees related to migration (such as in Sri Lanka, Portugal, Lebanon, and Australia), they are automatically informed of any legislative or other relevant changes, guaranteeing these MRCs' ability to provide accurate and up-to-date information. In Portugal, the CNAI is able to leverage its governmental links to ensure that staff are also trained on issues relating to any changes in the law, so that they are able to understand and explain them to clients.

However, for MRCs which do not enjoy such privileged access, or for which information on procedures has to be gathered from a number of countries, these Centres have developed other means to ensure that their information is up-to-date. Membership of organizations with an international presence is used effectively by a number of MRCs: for example, the Migrant Service Centres in the Western Balkans share information on any legislative changes that have taken place in the different countries of the region. These MSCs also receive information from IOM staff in countries of destination. Where MRCs are not able to benefit from these international linkages, they can find information by using formal and informal relationships with embassies in countries of origin and destination. For instance, the Congolese MCDEM has focal points in most of its embassies of countries of destination to ensure that they are updated of relevant changes in country-of-origin procedures, and can pass this information on to clients.

The Migrant Service Centres in the Western Balkans also provide a good example of how consistency can be maintained in information gathering, as they have developed a common process covering the topics on which information should be collected and the sources to be used. This structures the information-gathering process to ensure that essential topics¹⁹ are covered for each country of destination identified. Respondents also noted that it was essential to train staff to gather information that could meet the individual requests of clients.

b) Outreach and information dissemination

MRCs need to make as many potential clients as possible aware of their services and they should have the capacity to disseminate this information to as wide a range of potential and actual clients as possible. Such outreach requires the consideration of a number of issues relating to the target audience and the client base. Although word of mouth is effective and was credited by a number of respondents²⁰ as a factor leading to increasing numbers of clients, practical considerations such as gender, age, education, and membership of organizations and networks have implications for the strategies and sources that migrants use to access information, their ability to access information and the kinds of information they will be looking for.

i) Use of media

MRCs have undertaken active outreach through advertisements in different kinds of media, including newspapers, organization newsletters, radio and television. For example, the Spectrum MRC in Australia runs advertisements on the Special Broadcasting Service, a television channel that caters for migrant communities, ensuring that its outreach is efficiently aimed at the target communities.²¹ The Sportele Migracioni in Albania has also aired advertisements on the main national television channels to advertise its services to as wide a target audience as possible.

In addition to advertisements, CLMC in Lebanon, CIAMI in Colombia and CNAI in Portugal all have specific programming on local and national radio (and television, in the case of CNAI) which explains and promotes their work in addition to focusing on migrant-related issues. Respondents from CIAMI said that their weekly Friday-night radio programme is particularly effective in reaching out to new clients, as they receive most clients on Mondays.²²

ii) Physical outreach and local contact

MRC staff also physically work in areas where they are likely to encounter potential clients, in particular in remote or inaccessible areas or areas of high immigration or

emigration pressure. MRCs undertake outreach at important community events (such as fiestas held by Filipino migrants, or trade union-organized events in Sri Lanka). In Tajikistan, meanwhile, Tajik IRCLMs hold mobile information and consultation sessions to overcome the physical isolation of communities. This is a particularly effective practice, as the staff's physical presence allows them to tailor the information provided to specific audiences: for example, while the IRCLMs provide information for (mostly male) returnees in the winter outreach sessions, during the summer information is mostly tailored to the needs of (mostly female and young) populations left behind. Relevant information is thus directly provided to migrants, empowering them to take appropriate actions to better protect themselves.

In Slovakia and Portugal, cultural mediators and collaborators drawn from the different migrant communities play key roles in the outreach to migrant communities, leveraging their position in and familiarity with these communities to actively go out and provide migrants with information about MRCs as well as consultative services. In Lebanon, the CLMC maintains a presence in the airport and provides informational leaflets for new arrivals in the main languages of the migrants (such as Sinhalese, Tagalog, Amharic and Nepalese). These methods of active outreach ensure that potential clients are informed about MRCs and even counselled, without them having to actively search for such information and counselling. The practices identified here therefore enable the MRCs to reach a wide range of migrants and overcome factors that potentially isolate certain kinds of clients from accessing information, as is particularly the case with the secluded nature of domestic work.

iii) Location

The location of an MRC is important in making its services and information accessible, both to clients and potential partners. A network of MRCs is a useful tool to assist in this process: although it is important for an MRC to have a presence in capital cities, where relevant institutions are located, local MRCs in specific areas of high emigration pressure or in areas of high immigration help make the centres accessible to the populations most likely to require their services. With this in mind, the MRCs run by the Colombian NGO America España Solidaridad y Cooperacion (AESCO, or America-Spain Solidarity and Cooperation) have been established in areas identified through preliminary research as zones of high emigration pressure, in order to ensure accessibility. Moreover, in addition to this consideration, the Portuguese CNAI is deliberately located in an area easily accessible to public transport – an important consideration for migrants.

iv) Service accessibility through hotlines, websites and extended working hours

MRCs have telephone information lines to serve potential clients who may not have physical access to the centres. Some MRCs, such as the Congolese MCDEM, the Slovak MIC and the Colombian AESCO Centres, also have their own websites and means for clients to e-mail their enquiries. These services complement MRCs' physical presence, enabling migrants, regardless of their physical location, to learn about MRCs and the services they offer and to access the information they require. The SOS-Immigrant helpline run by the Portuguese CNAI enables migrants to ask CNAI staff questions in their main languages: Portuguese, English, and Russian (Alta Comissariado Para A Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural, n.d.). The helpline received over 85,000 calls in 2007, with the majority of respondents surveyed expressing a good level of satisfaction with the responses received (IOM, 2008: 132-134). The FWRCs also often maintain these hotlines, as do the Centres in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Slovakia, and Lebanon. They are particularly helpful in situations in which clients' mobility may be restricted. Figures from the Slovak MIC also suggest that these complementary means of accessing the Centre's services are particularly beneficial for female clients: between April and September of this year, although only 32 women received in-person legal counselling (compared to 70 men), much e-mail- and telephone-based counselling (129 out of 243 consultations) was provided to women.

The provision of services outside normal office hours also enables MRCs to provide migrants with immediate support in emergency situations and access to normal services, without migrants having to miss work. The Filipino FWRCs show particularly good practices in this respect, as they are required to be available to migrants at all times, on public holidays and weekends as well as working days.

c) Provision of individualized counselling and support services

i) Individualized counselling

Most MRCs provide individualized support and counselling; the Lebanese CLMC identified an individualized approach as the basis for its philosophy of support. Such an approach recognizes that, although some issues may be generic ones (for example, questions relating to migrants' access to services), the highly complex nature of migration means that individual migrants often present particular cases which require individual attention and advice. It is thus important to ensure that MRCs are able to see beyond generic issues to understand the particular situation of individual migrants.

According to the respondent from the Portuguese CNAI, the provision of individualized, subsidized or free legal advice is a service highly appreciated by clients.

Indeed, for a number of MRCs, such as the MIC in Slovakia, the CLMC in Lebanon and the IRCLMs in Tajikistan, the provision of such advice and legal assistance is a core aspect of their work. Staff are trained to help migrants follow the appropriate legal procedures throughout the migration process (including regularization processes). They also provide pro bono assistance for migrants who need help accessing their rights (such as assistance in bringing court cases and providing conciliation in the case of unpaid wages, or where changing jobs requires a legal process, such as in Lebanon). These practices are effective in ensuring that migrants are able to learn about their rights as well as obtain support in exercising them where necessary.

It is therefore important to promote a culture of listening to enable clients to explain their situations fully. This has been facilitated in the Portuguese CNAI by the use of cultural mediators who can provide services in an empathetic manner, reflecting their shared experiences, as well as by the intervention of professionals such as the psychologists who are employed by the AESCO-run MRCs in Colombia. Both enable clients to access the required information and services.

ii) Direct provision of relevant services

While the above practices support migrants in protecting themselves, some MRCs also provide services directly to migrants in order to promote their protection.²³ Indeed, the MRCs that have been in operation the longest are the ones currently able to provide the widest range of services: the Spectrum MRC and the FWRCs. Both institutions have extensive experience in assisting migrants, and their services have expanded to meet the wide range of migrant needs.

Beyond legal assistance, some MRCs such as the FWRCs also provide services relating to physical and mental health, including psychosocial counselling and on-site medical assistance. The FWRCs also maintain shelters for clients (primarily women) in particular need. This includes migrants who have absconded from their employment, or have been imprisoned in private dwellings or on work sites by their employers or agencies, as well as those who have been abused; had their contracts terminated illegally or been recruited illegally; and are facing homelessness (Department of Labour and Employment, n.d.). The shelters provide migrants with a safe place to stay until their cases are resolved.

Other MRCs also provide different forms of emergency accommodation. The emergency housing provided by Spectrum MRC, for example, is linked to broader support for clients to improve their situations sustainably. This is good practice in providing support which aims to sustainably resolve clients' emergencies. Meanwhile

the MSC in Sri Lanka and the Bienvenido a Casa (Welcome Home) Centre in Colombia provide temporary accommodation for returnees unable to directly return home.

3. PROCESSES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Having studied the different good practices in empowering migrants for development and protection, it is also useful to study the institutional set-up of MRCs to see how this enables them to support the above-mentioned goals effectively and guarantee their sustainability over time. Some MRCs are run directly by governments; others, by NGOs. The involvement of intergovernmental organizations such as IOM has also proved important in a number of cases.²⁴ The involvement of different actors has important implications for the objectives of an MRC, its relationship to development and protection, the resources and expertise available to it, and its sustainability.

3.1 Set-up

Textbox 3: Criteria for good set-up practices

- a) Undertaking a needs assessment
- b) Maintaining contacts with client populations
- c) Networks and partnerships
 - i) International networks
 - ii) Mechanisms for referral to other services

a) Undertaking a needs assessment

The motivations underlying the set-up of MRCs, as noted above, vary according to the migration context in the country of the MRC. Determinants of MRCs' goals and focus include the migration context of the country or area in question and the different migration-related conceptions, assumptions and policy objectives of the various countries and organizations involved in their running. The different MRCs share the fact that they respond to an identified need, which to date has not been addressed in their respective countries, in relation to providing services for migrants. This helps ensure that the MRC is set up to complement, not replace, other services in the local context.

Complementarity can best be ensured through practices such as undertaking needs assessments and feasibility studies to map the existing context into which the MRC will fit. Prior to going into operation, the MIC in Slovakia commissioned a needs assessment to provide a baseline for its work. The assessment used qualitative research methods to work with migrants to identify their experience of migration to Slovakia, their levels of knowledge of Slovak institutions, their needs in relation to employment, barriers, and cultural issues, among others (Department of Social and

Biological Communication, 2006). This ensured that the MIC's services met the needs of its clients effectively.

IOM carried out a feasibility study in Mali as part of the set-up process for CIGEM; this study identified existing, relevant initiatives and institutional gaps, providing baseline data. This can be highlighted as a good practice as it helped ensure that CIGEM would be able to focus its efforts appropriately, filling gaps and working in partnership with other institutions, to make services relevant to its users, as well as to the broader society (IOM, 2007).

b) Maintaining contacts with client populations

In order to ensure that clients are able to participate in development processes and protect themselves, it is important to ensure, as far as possible, that MRCs are able to continually and effectively identify the needs and interests of migrants, both those that are broadly applicable as well as those that relate to particular, individual cases. In order for MRCs to be effective in this, a flexible and participatory approach is required, reflecting the need to respond to real needs and issues which, given the often-changing nature of migration rules and procedures, are subject to change. Such an approach was found to be a constant across the MRCs studied.

In particular, gender sensitivity in identifying potential clients and in assessing their issues can both improve MRCs' outreach and service provision. It is important for partnerships to be established with migrant organizations in countries of destination, including women's associations, and with organizations representing the families of migrants in countries of origin. Such partnerships enable MRCs to ensure that they are able to win confidence among migrant communities and are able to remain up-to-date with the issues that concern them, as well as help promote MRCs' visibility in these communities. By remaining relevant to the changing needs of their client bases, MRCs also work towards the goal of ensuring their sustainability by becoming a normal reference point for migrants and returnees in the migration process.

In order to remain in touch with migrant communities throughout its work, the Slovak MIC has employed cultural mediators, a strategy which has also been successful in maintaining contact with the client population in the context of the Portuguese CNAI. These mediators are able to act as two-way conduits of information; through their position of trust and day-to-day involvement in the lives of migrant communities, they can provide MRCs with updates on the situation of these communities, as well as providing the latter with information on the work of MRCs. At the CNAI, the cultural mediators also work as frontline staff: their experience of having gone through the same procedures as their clients ensures that they are able to better understand clients'

concerns.²⁵ Client involvement in the running of the MRCs is a means to ensure that they are responsive over the long term to the needs of their clients.

Some MRCs use other equally effective methods to maintain lines of communication with the communities they serve. The Migrant Workers Associations set up by the MSC in Sri Lanka represent the families of migrant workers and returnees in different localities, and are regularly consulted by six mobilizers who ensure a regular flow of communication in both directions. Through these contacts, the MSC is able to remain up-to-date not only with the needs of these communities but also of migrants abroad. The MCDEM in Congo and the IRCLMs in Tajikistan use electronic means to maintain this contact with migrants both within the country and outside, providing a means through which issues are raised and questions are asked. Clients who come to MCDEM are given a service monitoring form which also enables MCDEM to identify trends in needs identified by migrants, and adjust their services accordingly. The Spectrum MRC and the CLMC also facilitate regular focus groups to provide a forum for migrants to outline their needs and guide service development. All of these structures show practices that managers have identified as successful in ensuring that MRCs are aware of the changing situations and needs of their clients in countries of origin and destination. These practices could be carried out by other MRCs where possible and can be described as good practices.

c) Networks and partnerships

Given the cross-cutting nature of migration across policy areas and countries, MRCs need to know how to intervene in a number of different legal, procedural and sociocultural issues in countries of origin and destination. MRCs in countries of origin and destination often need to develop relationships with and find information from non-governmental and other actors (such as NGOs, employers and remittance transfer providers) who may also be able to provide, for example, services to protect migrants and run projects linking migration and development. The methods deemed appropriate will depend on the particular context in which the MRC operates; however, formal and informal networking is an important tool in ensuring that MRCs are able to provide up-to-date and accurate information relating to conditions and opportunities in both countries of origin and destination.

i) International networks

Diverse practices can be identified, depending on the nature of an MRC and the resources available to it: for example, MRCs run by IOM, such as the Migrant Service

Centres in the Western Balkans and the IRCLMs in Tajikistan, are able to draw on the expertise of colleagues in countries of destination to gather and exchange information, ensuring that these MRCs are able to provide migrants with the most up-to-date and accurate information on migration and migration-for-development opportunities. Meanwhile, AESCO's presence in both countries of origin and destination can be highlighted as another good practice in this area, as it enables the organization to provide effective support to migrants in both locations. Finally, while the parent organization of the Sri Lankan MSC does not have such an international presence, it has developed an innovative approach to networking: it has negotiated agreements with partner organizations in countries of destination (such as the General Federation of Jordanian Trade Unions) to support the protection of Sri Lankan workers in these countries, leveraging their common interests and involvement in the International Trade Union Confederation to ensure MSC clients' access to services. These MRCs therefore show good practice by using their networks and partnerships at the international level to enhance their ability to provide their clients with the necessary information and services.

ii) Mechanisms for referral to other services

Partnerships are also important at the local level. Through such partnerships, MRCs with more limited resources can refer clients to other services. For example, the Slovak MIC's informal partnership with the Human Rights League of Slovakia has proved effective in ensuring that clients can access legal representation. The Albanian Sportele Migracioni is also able to refer clients to NGOs who can provide appropriate vocational training, empowering them for development.

3.2 Sustainability

Textbox 4: Criteria for good practices in ensuring sustainability

- a) Integration into government structures
- b) Sustainability for independent centres
- c) Capacity-building of partners and stakeholders
 - i) Assisting governments to formulate and meet their wider migration policy objectives
 - ii) Assisting non-governmental actors to meet migration management goals

When reference to MRCs is embedded as a normal part of the process of migrating, then MRCs can be said to support the migration management goals of orderly and regular migration. However, this process requires time, so that migrants can gain confidence in the MRC and the services it provides. The sustainability of the actions undertaken by the MRCs is therefore important.

This has been identified as a challenge by many MRCs, especially where funding is linked to short-term projects. However, there are a number of practices which have ensured that MRCs are able to sustainably provide services to their clients.

a) Integration into government structures

As noted above, integration into government structures can also help ensure that MRCs' activities are coherent with broader government development strategies and frameworks. The integration of MRCs into government structures also means that they are included in nationally planned and defined long-term funding plans, which can ensure that they will be able to provide their services sustainably. The CNAI is particularly interesting in this regard, as it has recently registered as a public institution, giving it a certain independence and financial and institutional security. This is not the only means of achieving sustainability, but is good practice in the context of government-run MRCs.

The MRCs which are set up under projects by non-governmental actors have developed means of securing the long-term viability of at least the delivery of core services. IOM-run projects, such as the MCDEM and the Migrant Service Centres in the Balkans, aim to ensure that they will be integrated into governmental structures at the end of their projects, when external funding sources will have been exhausted. The MCDEM has already secured a commitment from the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that its costs will be included in the budget for 2010. The Albanian Sportele Migracioni, meanwhile, have signed Memoranda of Understanding with the government to ensure that their functions will continue after the end of current project funding.

b) Sustainability for independent centres

Where this integration into governmental structures is not possible or desirable, sustainability has still been achieved through other means.²⁶ Membership of larger organizations (such as trade unions) or networks assures MRCs such as the **Colombian CIAMI** and the **MSC in Sri Lanka** some level of core funding from parent or partner organizations, enabling them to operate with sustainable funding sources.

Particularly noteworthy in this area are the activities of the **Spectrum MRC**: although it is an independent MRC, it has nonetheless expanded its services over time, diversifying its sources of funding to include different government departments, as well as covering the costs of other services by charging clients for certain services, such as immigration assistance, which supports those going through family reunification and other procedures. The staff respondents noted that the lack of stable funding sources had meant that some services had had to be discontinued after funds ran out, an issue which can be problematic in maintaining clients' confidence in the service. However, the Centre actively sought funding from different sources, guaranteeing financial sustainability in the core services at least.

c) Capacity-building of partners and stakeholders

i) Assisting governments to formulate and meet their wider migration policy objectives

Ensuring that migration contributes to development and takes place in a protected fashion requires a holistic, cross-sector vision of migration which MRCs, through their regular and direct contact with migrants and understanding of their needs and the challenges they face, can help provide to governments. This can be achieved by supporting policy formulation and implementation. Australian MRCs such as the **Spectrum MRC**, for example, support governmental goals of integration of long-term migrants, after diversification of the countries of origin of migrants has taken place, driven by the liberalization of migration policy. Similarly, the **Migrant Service Centres in the Western Balkans** aim to promote the policy goal of supporting the legal emigration of citizens of these countries in a context of previously high rates of irregular migration. In certain contexts, MRCs operate within and support the framework of particular migration-related agreements, such as European Mobility Partnerships, through which nationals of certain countries of origin (such as Cape Verde and Moldova) enjoy facilitated temporary migration access to European countries of destination, or circular migration arrangements.

A number of MRCs provide this support and expertise to governments through different means. The participation of representatives of MRCs in national committees on migration issues, for example, ensures that their expertise and understanding is brought to the policy-making arena. For example, the **MSC in Sri Lanka** has been an active partner in the development and implementation of the country's national labour migration policy, while the **Malian CIGEM** has been instrumental in setting up a working group on return and reinsertion, bringing together the government, civil society and other stakeholders to discuss this issue. It also contributed to the establishment of a national working group on legal migration.

In countries of destination, meanwhile, where there are important cultural differences between migrants and the host society, MRCs can also become experts in ensuring effective intercultural understanding and communication to facilitate service design and delivery. Such understanding and expertise can be passed on, formally or informally, to governments, building their capacities to effectively design and deliver services. The **Spectrum MRC in Australia** provides this assistance to governments and agencies. In partnership with migrant communities it also provides “community profiling” services, which help the government and service providers to gain a better understanding of the specific make-up of the different communities they serve, including specific issues and needs that the communities have, and the means through which they can be approached. These profiling services assist local authorities to engage with migrant communities, building confidence among the communities themselves in these services.

MRCs such as the **Migrant Service Centres in the Western Balkans**, meanwhile, systematically gather information on the profiles of their users, a practice which supports the government by providing an overview of the profiles of the migrants (emigrants and immigrants) that use these services, including, inter alia, their gender, employment status, skill level, reasons for migration, and preferred countries of destination (Albanian Socio-Economic Think Tank and IOM, 2006).²⁷

The **FWRCs**, managed by the Overseas Workers Welfare Agency, provide vital information for the Government of the Philippines by directly relaying information on the conditions and issues faced by Filipinos abroad to a central clearing house in Manila. They thus assist the government’s policy development processes in the fields of migrant protection and migrant empowerment for development.

ii) Assisting non-governmental actors to meet migration management goals

Migration management, although a government-led and -directed process, also involves non-governmental stakeholders, such as employment agencies and employers. These actors’ compliance with government policies is essential to ensure that migrants are empowered for development and protection: employers, for example, play a key role in providing migrants with decent jobs in which they can acquire skills and avoid exploitation. It is therefore important for MRCs to work with these actors, building their capacities to assist governmental migration management goals and effectively address the specific challenges faced by migrants.

The **Tajik IRCLMs** provide an example of good practice in this area: they have been involved in training and providing technical assistance to Tajikistan’s Private Employment Agencies to ensure that they understand their obligations and are able to

carry out their work to support migrants' rights effectively. The Tajik IRCLMs have also trained staff at Jamoat Resource Centres, a locally organized NGO, to provide information and consultation services to migrant households, ensuring that they are also able to support migration management goals.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MRCs around the world are currently engaged in a wide range of innovative practices to protect, support and empower migrants. While many MRCs are still in their early stages, they are increasingly considering how their work can enhance the benefits migration can bring to development. Already, a number of their practices are helping to ensure that migrants' capacity to participate in these processes is increased. MRCs are able to: assist clients in facilitating remittance transfers at lower cost; advise them on investment opportunities in their countries of origin; and involve them in migration-for-development initiatives. Moreover, MRCs are involved in assisting migrants' human development, helping migrants find fulfilling work and building the capacities of their organizations.

This work has been undertaken in addition to MRCs' work on empowering migrants with information and capacity to protect themselves through informed, regular and orderly migration. A number of good practices can be identified in this area, in relation to: information gathering; outreach and dissemination strategies to make this information accessible to migrants; and the provision of counselling and support services. MRCs have succeeded in making themselves relevant to the local context, and many have found effective means of not only maintaining financial sustainability, but also ensuring that they are a reference point of expertise and support for migrants and other stakeholders.

Moving forward, a number of recommendations for MRCs, governments, international organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders can be made:

Recommendations for services empowering migrants for development

1. Most MRCs do not see their work within the framework of empowering migrants for development. A more explicit focus on migration for development in the activities of MRCs would enable them to provide more focused support in this area. This would be particularly effective in relation to training, where development-related project management training could be of particular benefit.
2. Inherent in the development potential of any migrant is his or her well-being, which is linked to his or her living and working conditions, as well as the information received throughout the migration process. MRCs should work with countries of origin and destination to protect and invest in the well-

being of migrants. Information on how to protect their health for example can lead to healthier migrant workers in countries of origin and destination, which is of benefit to all.

3. At its 2010 meeting in Mexico, the GFMD could consider devoting a session during Civil Society Day to the subject of MRCs, and invite MRCs as participants. This could represent the start of MRCs' continuous engagement in international dialogue on migration and development.
4. MRCs could also assist in helping to build links between diasporas and countries of origin, by taking part in or initiating co-development-type activities to engage diasporas for development. These activities could include programmes similar to the Return of Qualified Nationals or Migration for Development in Africa (MIDA) programmes.
5. MRCs should be given greater attention and consideration by development actors and donors.

Recommendations for services empowering migrants for protection

6. MRCs' work should include, wherever possible, the engagement of the wider community through activities such as training and awareness-raising on migrants' rights and responsibilities. Beyond migrants and governments, employers and the society at large are important stakeholders in ensuring that migrants are able to access and enjoy their rights. They are therefore key actors in creating a strong culture of respect for migrants' rights.
7. Some MRCs have good practices in relation to gender-specific needs. However, increased sensitivity to problems that many women migrants and returnees face, such as their vulnerability to exploitation, and physical and social violence, as well as greater understanding of how services can be made accessible and tailored to the needs of female and male clients, would enable MRCs to more efficiently meet their needs for protection. Greater gender-sensitivity in assessing the needs of migrants would allow for more targeted and efficient protection of male and female migrants and would help harness migrant women's participation in migration and development activities.
8. Given that health is a precursor to development, activities to promote and protect the health of migrants within MRCs should be strengthened. Migrants should be empowered to protect their own health, and should be given the knowledge to improve their health literacy and health-seeking behaviour. Health prevention is more effective (and less expensive) than dealing with the negative health impacts of migration in countries of destination.
9. A strategy that appears to be particularly effective is to involve clients in the activities of MRCs, for example by engaging them as cultural facilitators, or

through regular consultations with representative committees of migrants and their families. This aspect of MRCs' work should be strengthened wherever possible.

Recommendations for set-up and sustainability

10. There is no single “ideal” model for an MRC. The specifics of each MRC will depend on the broader policy context. Studies to collect baseline data against which the activities of MRCs can be judged can be an important tool in identifying the institutional landscape into which they will fit, identifying gaps and stakeholders, as well as the needs of the potential clients themselves.
11. Contacts with governments of host countries and MRCs in countries of origin could be developed, enabling MRCs to provide information on the profiles, expectations and needs of migrants.

General recommendations

12. Where appropriate, governments should consider setting up, or supporting the set-up of, MRCs to assist in the fulfilment of their migration and development-related goals. The establishment of MRCs could also be considered as part of national or regional development strategies. Governments' leverage, resources, and contacts could enable MRCs to carry out activities sustainably in countries of origin and destination alike.
13. Where MRCs already exist, governments should consider MRCs as stakeholders in migration policy development and implementation processes, especially where these relate to migration and development and protection issues. This reflects the expertise that MRCs can bring to the debate on these questions.
14. More research and evaluation of the work of MRCs is needed to better identify the benefits they bring, as well as areas for improvement.
 - a. Longitudinal studies examining the direct impact of MRCs on migrants, particularly in relation to their empowerment for development and protection over time, would help clarify which practices are particularly effective.
 - b. Studies focused on the human development dimension of MRCs, such as the impact of health prevention and health referral activities, would help document positive benefits and could be important for advocacy with governments towards improving access and protection of all migrants.
15. Greater networking between MRCs around the world would be of great benefit, facilitating the sharing of information related to legal procedures,

as well as the cross-fertilization of good practices and transnational practices for migrant protection and empowerment. A knowledge platform similar to the European Commission-United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative could be a useful tool for this purpose, providing an e-mail distribution list through which questions can be asked of experts in different countries, as well as online forums and blogs to promote sharing of experience and information.²⁸

16. MRCs could benefit from tools and support that enable them to identify concrete job and study opportunities for migrants in countries of destination and returnees in countries of origin. Such tools could follow the example of the European EURES portal enabling prospective migrants to search for work or scholarship opportunities abroad, and providing tools for employers to search for employees.²⁹ Such tools could also enable them to identify and keep updated lists of fraudulent employment or migration agencies.
17. Where concrete circular mobility schemes are being developed, the establishment of MRCs could be considered as an important part of this process in order to direct and support the process of recruitment, travel, and return and reintegration.³⁰

5. APPENDIX

Appendix A: Matrix of good practices outlined in the assessment

Centre	Services empowering migrants for development						Services empowering migrants for protection			
	Remittances and investment		Employment-related assistance			Building diaspora capacities and links		Information-gathering on migration issues	Outreach and information dissemination	
	Information gathering and dissemination on transfer costs	Partnerships for remittance facilitation	Information on investment options	Job-matching	Training	Recognition of qualifications	Promoting involvement in migration-for-development projects	Indirectly building diaspora capacities	Use of media	Physical outreach and local contact
Sportele Migracioni, Albania	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Australia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
America-España Solidaridad y Cooperación, Colombia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bienvenido a Casa, Colombia	Currently investigating this option	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Centro de Información y Atención sobre Migración Internacional, Colombia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-
Migrant Information Centre, Croatia	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Maison des Congolais de l'Étranger et des Migrants, Democratic Republic of the Congo	Currently investigating this option	-	✓	-	-	✓	Currently investigating this option	-	-	-
Caritas Lebanon Migration Centre, Lebanon	-	-	-	-	-	-	Currently investigating this option	-	✓	✓
Centre d'information et de Gestion des Migrants, Mali	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-
Filipino Workers' Resource Centres, Philippines	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	✓
Centro Nacional de Apoio ao Imigrante, Portugal	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓
Migration Information Centre, Slovakia	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
Migrant Services Centre, Sri Lanka	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-
Information and Resource Centres for Labour Migrants, Tajikistan	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓

	Set-up						Sustainability					
	Location	Service accessibility	Provision of individualized counselling and support services		Undertaking a needs assessment	Maintaining contacts with client populations	Networks and partnerships		Integration into government structures	Sustainability for independent centres	Capacity-building of partners and stakeholders	
			Provision of individualized support and counselling	Direct provision of relevant services			International networks	Mechanisms for referral to other services			Assisting governments to formulate and meet their wider migration policy objectives	Assisting non-governmental actors to meet migration management goals
Sportlele Migracioni, Albania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Australia	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-
America-España Solidaridad y Cooperación, Colombia	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-
Bienvenido a Casa, Colombia	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Centro de Información y Atención sobre Migración Internacional, Colombia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	-
Migrant Information Centre, Croatia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-
Maison des Congolais de l'Étranger et des Migrants, Democratic Republic of the Congo	-	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-
Caritas Lebanon Migration Centre, Lebanon	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-
Centre d'Information et de Gestion des Migrations, Mali	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Filipino Workers' Resource Centres, Philippines	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Centro Nacional de Apoio ao Imigrante, Portugal	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	-
Migration Information Centre, Slovakia	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-
Migrant Services Centre, Sri Lanka	-	-	-	-	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-
Information and Resource Centres for Labour Migrants, Tajikistan	-	-	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	-	-	-	✓

Appendix B: Services provided by Migrant Resource Centres

The following tables outline the main findings from each of the MRCs studied as part of the research for this rapid assessment. The tables give a brief outline of the history and nature of the MRCs, website details for further information, a listing of the different practices identified by the respondent(s) from each MRC during the interview, and a brief outline of some of the challenges they noted. Where practices have been highlighted in bold, it indicates that this practice is mentioned in the main body of the assessment, in Sections 2 and 3.

Sportele Migracioni, Sarande, Albania

General information	
Centre name	Sportele Migracioni, Sarande, Albania
Centre type	IOM; to be handed over to the Government of Albania
Established	2008
Location(s)	Saranda, Albania (part of a network of 14 Centres in the country)
Funding sources	European Community Aeneas fund, with co-funding from the governments of Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary and Liechtenstein
Website	http://www.migrantservicecentres.org/
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Partnerships to provide employment-related training
	Provision of information/referral to returnees
	Registration of clients in the Albanian Registry of Emigrants
	Referral to employment-related training for potential emigrants
Services empowering migrants for protection	Partnerships with local civil society for referral services; NGOs refer clients to the MRC
	Use of a range of media for outreach
	Use of active outreach methods
	Methodology to ensure the consistent gathering and provision of information
Set-up	Involvement in an international network of MRCs, facilitating cross-country cooperation in information-gathering
	Partnerships with local civil society for referral services
Sustainability	Procedures to ensure the integration and continuation of services into government structures at the end of the project
Challenges	Lack of legal migration opportunities for migration

Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre, Australia

General information	
Centre name	Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
Centre type	Non-governmental centre
Date established	Founded in 1980; incorporated in 1984
Location(s)	Preston, Victoria State, Australia
Funding sources	Mostly governmental funding (local and national); some costs covered by fees charged for migration agency services
Website	www.spectrumvic.org.au
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Community capacity-building
	Job-related training
	Financial support to clients for training
	Base for diaspora activities
Services empowering migrants for protection	Focus groups for needs identification
	Housing support for homeless clients
	Outreach through a wide range of media
Set-up	Diversification of funding sources
	Membership of network of Australian MRCs
	Partnerships with other actors for service delivery
Sustainability	Support for local government authorities in profiling local migrant groups
	Capacity building of other actors for service delivery
	Advocacy for mainstreaming of migration issues
	Staff recruited from migrant communities
Challenges	Projectized funding and different requirements from different donors, as well as high levels of competition for limited funding

America-España Solidaridad y Cooperación, Colombia

General information	
Centre name	America-España Solidaridad y Cooperación
Centre type	Non-governmental centre
Established	2002
Location(s)	3 offices in Colombia; a headquarters in Spain, and Centres in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia
Funding sources	Spanish decentralized cooperation, contributions from other organizations in the same field, services offered at social prices for the community
Website	http://www.aesco-ong.org/ (Spanish only)
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Employment-related training in country of origin and destination
	Micro-credit for entrepreneurial activities
Services empowering migrants for protection	Research to ensure location of MRCs near populations in need
	Use of e-mail and Internet forums to remain in contact with migrants abroad
	Promoting culture of listening among migrants
	Active outreach to target communities
	Information gathering and dissemination
Set-up	Presence in both countries of origin and destination, enabling protection and co-development activities in both
Sustainability	Developing a coherent vision of co-development along an identified migration route
Challenges	Lack of funds
	Disconnect in policy-making in countries of origin and destination

Bienvenido a Casa, Colombia

General information	
Centre name	Bienvenido a Casa
Centre type	IOM, in partnership with the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Mayorality of Bogotá
Established	2009
Location(s)	Bogotá initially, although it is hoped that this pilot model will be extended elsewhere
Funding sources	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mayorality of Bogotá, IOM
Website	N/A
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	In the process of creating information sheets on remittances
	Referral to services for employment- and entrepreneurship-related training
	Contacts maintained with local and international development actors
Services empowering migrants for protection	Use of a wide range of local and international media for outreach, as well as having a presence on social networking sites, such as "Red Es Colombia"
	Provision of emergency accommodation, transport
Set-up	Partnerships with local civil society for referral services
	Conceptualized within a regional development strategy
	Learning from examples of other MRCs in operation
Sustainability	Capacity-building and sensitization of local service providers about returnee issues
Challenges	The project has not been able to benefit from pre-existing research as it is tackling an area which has not been greatly considered
	Lack of funding

Centro de Información y Atención sobre Migración Internacional, Colombia

General information	
Centre name	Centro de Información y Atención sobre Migración Internacional
Centre type	Non-governmental centre
Established	2008
Location(s)	Head office in Bogotá; 23 regional offices
Funding sources	Ministry of Social Protection, Confederación General del Trabajo (CGT), IOM
Website	http://www.cgcolombia.org/actualidad.html
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Provision of information on remittances on an individual basis
Services empowering migrants for protection	Use of a wide range of media for outreach
	Personalized attention
	Provision of specialist mental health support
	Provision of information leaflets on countries of destination
	Maintenance of contact with Colombians abroad
Set-up	Partnerships with local organizations
Sustainability	Membership of a larger body ensures financial sustainability
	Advocacy for migration-related changes to the law
Challenges	Lack of policies on migration and return to support the work of the MRC

Migration Information Centre, Croatia

General information	
Centre name	Migration Information Centre, Croatia
Centre type	IOM; to be handed over to the Government of Croatia
Established	2008
Location(s)	Located in the Counselling Centre of the Croatian Employment Service, Zagreb; however, the Croatian Employment Service intends to establish 3 new Centres at its own expense
Funding sources	European Community Aeneas fund, along with co-funding from the governments of Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary and Liechtenstein
Website	http://www.migrantservicecentres.org/
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Job-matching through information on employment quotas in countries of destination
	Partnerships to provide employment-related training
	Referral to state banks for information on remittances
Services empowering migrants for protection	Methodology to ensure the consistent gathering and provision of information
	Use of a range of media for outreach
	Provision of a telephone helpline and counselling via e-mail
	Information provided on Assisted Voluntary Return options
Set-up	Involvement in an international network of MRCs, facilitating cross-country cooperation in information-gathering
	MRC conceived in relation to the country's eventual integration into the EURES framework
	Partnerships with local civil society for referral services
Sustainability	Procedures to ensure the integration and continuation of services into government structures at the end of the project
	Systematic profiling of clients
	Capacity-building of other actors on migration issues
Challenges	Project parameters have constrained the extension of services somewhat

Maison des Congolais de l'Etranger et des Migrants, Democratic Republic of the Congo

General information	
Centre name	Maison des Congolais de l'Etranger et des Migrants
Centre type	IOM; to be handed over to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
Established	2009
Location(s)	Currently, one office in Kinshasa, although additional offices in the regions are planned
Funding sources	Government of Switzerland and Government of the United Kingdom
Website	http://www.mcdem.cd/
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Investigating means to include information on remittances
	Integration into national development strategies
	Information on investment opportunities in the DRC
	Provision of a job portal for job searches
	Involvement in discussions on qualification recognition
	Organization of migration and development-related events to link the diaspora and the country of origin
	Referral to local employment and job-matching services
	Training to improve livelihoods of populations at risk of irregular migration
	Assistance with administrative procedures linked to small-medium enterprise creation
Services empowering migrants for protection	Use of e-mail and Internet forums to remain in contact with migrants abroad
	Systematic monitoring of clients' needs
	Focal points in embassies to facilitate information-gathering
	Information campaigns against irregular migration
Set-up	Local partnerships for service delivery and referral
	Learning from examples of other MRCs in operation
Sustainability	Integration into government budget planning structures
Challenges	Limitations of budget
	Location of the MRC in government facilities initially caused distrust among potential users, who are suspicious of public authorities

Caritas Lebanon Migrants Centre, Lebanon

General information	
Centre name	Caritas Lebanon Migrants Centre
Centre type	Non-governmental centre
Established	1994
Location(s)	Head office in Beirut, Lebanon; nine regional centres, in addition to a team at the main detention centre for migrants facing deportation and a presence at Beirut airport
Funding sources	Projectized funding from the European Commission, the Catholic Relief Service, International Catholic Migration Commission, and the Office to Monitor Trafficking in Persons (G/TIP)
Website	http://www.caritasmigrant.org.lb/
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	The MRC is working to develop its projects in the area of migration for development
	Job-related training
	Base for diaspora activities
Services empowering migrants for protection	Permanent presence at the detention centre for migrants waiting to be deported or released
	Information provision on procedures related to migration
	Active outreach (including at the airport for new arrivals) and use of a wide range of media
	Provision of a hotline
	Focus groups for needs identification
	Individualized support and counselling
	Referral to public hospitals and financial support
Set-up	Provision of shelter facilities
	Representation on government committees
	Partnerships with country of origin structures (including embassies)
Sustainability	Partnerships with a wide range of relevant actors
	Active search for projects
Challenges	Lack of funds
	Lack of recognition by authorities
	Generalized lack of awareness on the issue of migrant rights

Centre d'Information et de Gestion des Migrations, Mali

General information	
Centre name	Centre d'Information et de Gestion des Migrations
Centre type	Non-governmental centre, supported by the European Commission and working in concert with the Government of Mali
Established	October 2008
Location(s)	Bamako, Mali; foreseeable development of services in the regions (job-training, NGO training, dissemination of information, awareness-raising campaigns on the risks of irregular migration)
Funding sources	EC European Development Fund
Website	http://www.cigem.org/
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Launching a co-development project
	Conceived of in the context of Euro-African dialogue on migration and development
	Involvement (where legal frameworks permit) in small-scale recruitment of migrants for work abroad
	Support for returnees' professional development, regardless of the manner of their return
	Assistance with job searches and keep information on job opportunities abroad
	Employment-related training
Services empowering migrants for protection	Use of telephone to remain in contact with migrants abroad
	Information campaigns against irregular migration
	Personalized services, attention and information provision pertaining to the conditions of legal migration
	Launched call for proposals for civil society organizations to upgrade services/assistance to returned migrants throughout the country; set up of a working group on return and re-insertion
Set-up	Undertaking of an initial needs assessment to understand needs and the institutional environment in the local context
	Local partnership with civil society organizations, especially in relation to information campaigns against irregular migration, assistance to returnees and in referral to the MRC
Sustainability	Aims to build the capacities of government services to assist them to fulfil their missions
Challenges	Risk of being spread too thinly across different areas
	Pressure of expectations
	Issues relating to the image of the MRC
	Difficulty of promoting legal migration where few possibilities for it exist
	Somewhat confused institutional environment

Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Workers Resource Centres, various countries

General information	
Centre name	Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipino Workers Resource Centres
Centre type	Governmental centres
Established	1986
Location(s)	Currently, 21 Centres around the world: 6 in Asia (Hong Kong SAR, Republic of Korea, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Singapore); 13 in the Middle East (Riyadh, Jeddah and Alkhobar in Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria); 1 in Europe; 1 in Saipan. By law, an FWRC can be set up in any country where there are more than 20,000 overseas Filipino workers
Funding sources	Government funding and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (a quasi-governmental institution funded by employers' contributions). Some host governments offer in-kind contributions, as do some community groups
Website	http://www.owwa.gov.ph/
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Gathering information on and negotiating for lower-cost remittance transfers
	Provision of comprehensive information on investment opportunities in the Philippines
	Coordination of co-development activities
	Capacity-building of diaspora associations
	Job-matching services for return and emigration
	Preparation of migrants for return and reintegration in the country of destination (supported in the Philippines by a National Reintegration Centre)
	Training for entrepreneurship on return
	Skills recognition schemes
Services empowering migrants for protection	Maintenance of hotlines and 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week operating hours
	Shelters for migrants in distress
	Proactive outreach
	Use of a range of media for outreach
	Formation of family circles to help migrant families support one another through the absence and return of family members
Set-up	Partnerships with local migrant communities as well as governments and other actors for protection and development purposes
	Strong central coordination from Manila
Sustainability	Information provided to the Government of the Philippines on conditions and issues faced by Filipinos in countries of destination
Challenges	Ensuring the use of the FWRCs by as many potential clients as possible
	Ensuring the appropriate use of migrants' savings and skills
	Finding resources to expand services to meet needs

Centro Nacional de Apoio ao Imigrante, Portugal

General information	
Centre name	Centro Nacional de Apoio ao Imigrante
Centre type	Governmental centre
Established	2002
Location(s)	Main office in Lisbon; other offices in Porto and Faro, as well as 85 local centres which provide information and referral to the national centres. There is also a Centre linked to the CNAI in Cape Verde
Funding sources	Government funding
Website	www.acidi.gov.pt/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=1093 (Portuguese only); see also http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt/ (English and Portuguese)
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Support for recognition of qualifications
	Acting as a site for the promotion of migration-for-development and Assisted Voluntary Return programmes
	Employment support office providing training information and micro-credit for entrepreneurship development
Services empowering migrants for protection	Use of cultural mediators as frontline staff
	Active outreach through a range of media and physical contact
	Location chosen for accessibility
	Provision of a telephone helpline
	Culture of listening
	Access to free legal counselling
	Provision of services to migrants in distress
Active process of informing migrants on legislative changes	
Set-up	Involvement in government committees on migration
	Dialogue with country-of-origin authorities
	Support from relevant government departments to train staff on changes in the law
Sustainability	Registration as a public institution
Challenges	Client diversity can make it difficult to support all migrants in their own languages
	There can be long waiting times for access to services

Migration Information Centre, Slovakia

General information	
Centre name	Migration Information Centre
Centre type	IOM
Established	Initially established 2006; services temporarily halted due to funding issues in early 2009; re-opened in March 2009
Location(s)	Main office in Bratislava; another office in Košice
Funding sources	European Community, through the European Integration Funding; the Slovak Ministry of Interior provides some co-funding
Website	http://mic.iom.sk/en/home.html
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Provision of grants, referral and support for employment-related training
	Support for re-qualification
	Training on project development and financial literacy planned
Services empowering migrants for protection	Active outreach through a range of media and physical contact
	Maintenance of hotline
	Access to free legal counselling
	Undertaking of an initial needs assessment to understand needs and the institutional environment in the local context
	Use of cultural mediators to provide links with migrant communities and disseminate information
	Counselling and assistance on issues relating to access to rights
Information and counselling provided on Assisted Voluntary Return options	
Set-up	Partnerships with local civil society for referral services
Sustainability	Developing and implementing overlapping, multi-year projects
Challenges	Sustainability has been difficult to assure, as is the expansion of services

Migrant Services Centre, Sri Lanka

General information	
Centre name	Migrant Services Centre
Centre type	Non-governmental centre
Established	1990
Location(s)	Head office in Dehiwela; there are also 15 branch offices around the country
Funding sources	The American Solidarity Center and other foreign trade unions
Website	http://www.eureka.lk/migrant/
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Referral to banks for clients interested in questions relating to remittances
	Work-related re-training assistance for returnees
	Capacity-building of migrant organizations
	Assistance in having locally-obtained qualifications recognized abroad
	Maintenance of informal diaspora contacts
Services empowering migrants for protection	Agreements with foreign trade unions to provide services to clients in countries of destination
	Close contacts with target groups through migrant worker associations
	Active outreach
	Use of a wide range of media for outreach
	Provision of a hotline and long opening hours
	Provision of emergency accommodation
	Support in accessing local financial services
	Revolving fund to support entrepreneurial activities
Set-up	Leveraging membership of international networks
	Local partnerships
Sustainability	Representation on government committees dealing with migration
	Membership of a larger body ensures financial sustainability
	Capacity-building of local service providers
Challenges	Attitude of the government prioritizes economic benefits of migration over the rights and protection of migrants

Information and Resource Centres for Labour Migrants, Tajikistan

General information	
Centre name	Information and Resource Centres for Labour Migrants
Centre type	IOM, in partnership with local NGOs
Established	2003
Location(s)	Main office located in Dushanbe, Tajikistan; 6 regional centres, and a permanent presence at airports and railway stations
Funding sources	Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), European Commission (EC), UNDP
Website	http://www.migrant.tj/ (Russian only)
Services provided	
Services empowering migrants for development	Provision of information on remittances and investment opportunities
	Partnerships with remittance providers
	Capacity-building of local training facilities
	Referral to employment training facilities
	Partnerships with migration-for-development projects
	Links with diaspora organizations
Services empowering migrants for protection	Contact with migrants in countries of destination
	Mobile consultation sessions, adapted to different client groups
	Personalized legal counselling
Set-up	Leveraging membership of an international organization to gather information
	Local partnerships for referral
	Learning from other examples (Philippines)
Sustainability	Capacity-building of diaspora organizations
	Partnerships with local development actors
	Capacity-building of private employment agencies
Challenges	Lack of funding

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ENDNOTES

1. “Migrant” will be used throughout this paper to refer to both potential and actual migrants for the sake of brevity. The term “migrant” has been used as it denotes a range of different migration statuses, including permanent migration. According to the Glossary on Migration, the definition of a migrant refers to “persons, and family members, moving to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospect for themselves or their family” (IOM, 2004: 40). It includes migrants in an irregular, as well as a regular situation.
2. The services offered by these structures, it should be noted, are also available to migrants in an irregular situation.
3. Welfare officers and halfway houses, given their role in providing such personalized and intense support, are however included in this definition. This definition does not, however, include those Centres which provide reception and humanitarian services to forcibly returned migrants; although the work of these Centres has impacts on development, their primary focus is on dealing with the consequences of irregular migration rather than the promotion of regular migration.
4. Such Centres may be called, inter alia, Migrant Service Centres, Migrant Assistance Centres, Centres for Migrant Advice, Migrant Information Centres, or Migrant Worker Centres. For simplicity, Migrant Resource Centre or MRC will be used throughout this assessment.
5. This reflects the context-specificity of many of the services and structures of the different MRCs, which makes it difficult to judge an MRC in relation to another. In addition, limitations in the scope of the paper mean that it is not possible to showcase all MRCs which have similar good practices.
6. See Appendix B for details on all the Centres studied.
7. Moreover, given the wide range of experiences, it was difficult to capture fully all of the experiences of the different Centres.
8. A list of these stakeholders can be found in the bibliography.
9. It is also conceivable that the identification of stakeholders by Centre managers themselves introduces an element of potential bias and limits the range of views surveyed by this study.
10. This was expanded following the proposal by the “Galbally Report” in 1978 to establish migrant resource centres in recognition of the changing, increasingly diverse face of migration to Australia. By 1981, 19 centres had been established, of which 16 were still in operation in 2003, often run on a voluntary basis although working in close cooperation with local and national government (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2003).
11. IOM alone runs Migrant Resource Centres in Africa, Europe, Asia and South America.

12. “Virtual return” describes the situation by which migrants are able to contribute to development without physically returning to their countries of origin.
13. For more information, see http://www.mcdem.cd/emploi_etr.php
14. This Centre has been set up in the context of the 2006 AENEAS-funded project “Capacity Building, Information and Awareness Raising towards Promoting Orderly Migration in the Western Balkans”. Although the Centres founded under this project are generically called “Migrant Service Centres”, individual Centres in different countries have been named differently; hence the Centre in Croatia is called the “Migration Information Centre”, and the Centres in Albania are the “Sportele Migracioni”.
15. Figures supplied by the MIC Slovakia. Unfortunately there is no data as to whether these migrants have been able to find work following the assistance provided by the MIC.
16. For more information, see : <http://www.diasdecaboverde.org/Default.aspx>
17. For an example of safe migration advice, see <http://www.migrantinfo.org.ua/?lng=eng&menu=rest&tbl=usefull&submenu=6>
18. While migration in and of itself is not a health risk, the conditions of the migration process may create specific health vulnerabilities. Migrants must be aware of this and be prepared to protect themselves.
19. These include: general conditions of entry and stay into the country(ies) of destination; immigration legislation in countries of origin and destination; visa information and country-of-origin embassy address; residence and work permits requirements, documentation, links to websites, forms, responsible authorities; job search websites; existing quota systems, bilateral or multilateral labour/migration agreements between countries of origin and destination where applicable; study options in the country of destination (conditions of entry, residence, right to work if applicable, graduate and post-graduate scholarships); family reunification in the country of destination: conditions of entry and stay; medical services and social insurance obligations, rights and options in the country of destination; support services offered to migrants by public agencies, NGOs, trade unions, hotlines (also for victims of trafficking), contact details and websites in countries of destination; citizenship requirements; return (assistance with voluntary return, legal provisions regarding forced return).
20. For example, the MIC in Slovakia and the CIGEM in Mali.
21. Such media can be particularly useful where literacy among target groups is an issue.
22. Unfortunately, in the absence of an evaluation and the opportunity to discuss this with clients themselves, this trend cannot be verified.
23. Those MRCs which do not provide these services directly generally offer referral to services which can.

24. In this latter case, however, the aim is generally to hand over the running of the Centre to other organizations in the long run.
25. It should be noted that even where “cultural mediator” positions are not formalized or made explicit, many Centres (for example the Spectrum MRC in Australia) often make specific efforts to hire staff from the communities with which they work.
26. It is notable that some of the longest-standing Centres studied here – the Spectrum MRC, the CLMC and the MSC in Sri Lanka – are NGO-run centres, suggesting that sustainability is not entirely dependent on integration into government structures.
27. Although this data should be treated with some caution, as it only represents findings from a proportion of the population who migrate, it is of some use nonetheless. A separate study under the same project (the Aeneas-funded Capacity Building, Information and Awareness Raising towards Promoting Orderly Migration in the Western Balkans) aims to study the propensity to migrate among the general population.
28. IOM has just instituted an internal mailing list to enable this exchange between IOM-run Centres. For more on the JMDI, see <http://www.migration4development.org/>
29. The Integrated Migration Information System set up by the Egyptian Ministry of Manpower and Emigration, which enables job-matching between Egypt and Italy is another prospective model.
30. The Malian CIGEM has already been involved in this process, facilitating the temporary migration of 29 Malian workers to the Canary Islands.

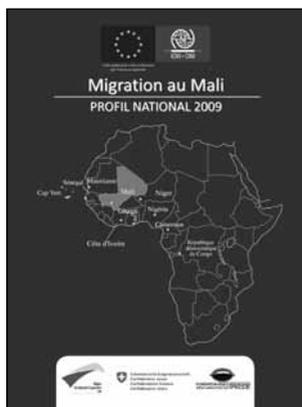
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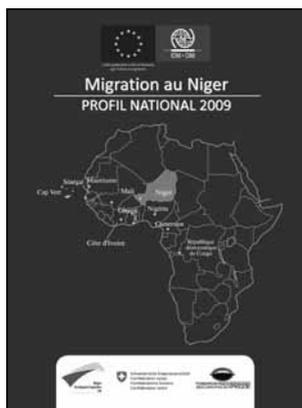
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While there has been significant growth in the number of Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in recent years, there has been no attempt to date to examine the impact of these centres on migration management goals. This study aims to help bridge the gap by providing an overview of good practices employed by MRCs to help migrants move to their destinations in a legal, voluntary, orderly and protected manner.

This assessment covers the work of 17 MRCs in Albania, Australia, Colombia, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lebanon, Mali, the Philippines, Portugal, Slovakia, Sri Lanka and Tajikistan. It focuses on the role of MRCs in empowering migrants for development and self-protection. The assessment also covers MRCs' strategies for ensuring their smooth operation and long-term sustainability.

The study shows that MRCs are increasingly working to build the capacities of migrants to contribute to country-of-origin development. Efforts by MRCs to facilitate low-cost remittance transfers, offer investment advice and assist migrants in their search for appropriate jobs support this goal. In addition, MRCs are also actively helping migrants to protect themselves, by providing information on migrant rights, the risks and consequences of migration and related laws and procedures, as well as legal counselling, dispute-resolution assistance and referrals to health and other social services.



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