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► Operations Manual for Migrant Workers Resource Centres in the East and Horn of Africa (EHoA)



► **Operations Manual for
Migrant Workers Resource
Centres in the East and
Horn of Africa (EHoA)**

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► Foreword

Migrant workers are integral to the economies and societies of the East and Horn of Africa region. Through their labour, skills, and resilience, they contribute significantly to economic growth. Migrant workers are integral to the economies and societies of the East and Horn of Africa (EHOA) region. support livelihoods through remittances and help address labour market needs across multiple sectors. Yet despite these important contributions, many migrant workers continue to face vulnerabilities throughout the migration cycle, including exploitative recruitment practices, wage theft, inadequate workplace protections, gender-based violence, and limited access to reintegration support upon return. These challenges are particularly pronounced in a region shaped by limited formal employment opportunities, protracted displacement situations, and rapidly evolving labour market demands.

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated, multi-stakeholder action grounded in a shared commitment to the rights, dignity, and protection of migrant workers. Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) play a critical role in advancing safe, regular, and orderly labour migration. By providing reliable pre-departure information, legal assistance, psychosocial support, grievance handling mechanisms, referral services, and reintegration support. MRCs serve as essential bridges between migrant workers and the government institutions, trade unions, civil society organizations, and international partners working to strengthen migration governance.

Across the East and Horn of Africa, MRCs have expanded in both number and institutional diversity in recent years. However, the absence of a standardized regional operations framework has resulted in considerable variations in service delivery, governance arrangements, staffing structures and institutional capacity. At the same time, newly established and existing centres continue to face significant operational challenges, including security constraints, limited financial sustainability, and human resource gaps. These realities underscore the urgent need for a harmonized regional approach that promotes quality, consistency, and effectiveness while remaining adaptable to national contexts and institutional mandates.

This *Operational Guideline for Migrant Resource Centres in Africa* responds directly to that need. The manual provides a practical and adaptable framework for the establishment and operation of MRCs across the region. It is designed to support centres in delivering consistent, rights-based, and high-quality services aligned with international labour standards, human rights principles, and recognized good practices. The manual covers key operational areas, including governance and management structures, service delivery models, case management procedures, staff capacity development, monitoring and evaluation systems, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

The development of this manual reflects consultation with MRC managers and staff in selected African and Asian Countries including government counterparts, trade unions, civil society organizations, and development partners. Most importantly, it draws on the valuable perspectives and lived experiences shared by migrant workers themselves, whose voices remain central to strengthening responsive and effective support systems.

The ILO is proud to support this initiative as part of its commitment to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG), the Global Compact for Migration, and the broader objective of promoting decent work and protecting the rights of all workers, including migrant workers. We trust this manual will serve as a valuable resource for MRC practitioners, policymakers, and migration stakeholders across the region, contributing to stronger migration governance systems and helping ensure that labour migration becomes a pathway to opportunity, protection, and dignity for all.

Ndaba, Khumbula

Director,
ILO Country Office for Djibouti, Ethiopia,
Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan Special Representative to the AU and UNECA



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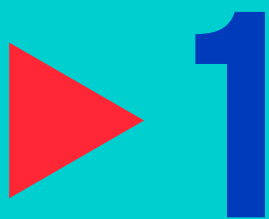
► Acronyms

BLMA	Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements
COTU	Central Organization of Trade Unions
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DEI	Diversity, Equality and Inclusion
DNH	Do No Harm
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HTS	Hotels, Food, Tourism, Supermarkets & Allied Workers' Union
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MRC	Migrant Workers Resource Centre
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEA	National Employment Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NOTU	National Organisation of Trade Unions
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PrEAs	Private Employment Agencies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations

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Introduction



What is a Migrant Worker Resource Centre?

Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs) are support structures designed to provide assistance to migrant workers at various stages of their migration journey. These centres serve as information hubs, service providers and referral mechanisms to ensure that migrant workers have access to accurate information, legal assistance, psychosocial support and reintegration services.

MRCs vary widely in their structure and operations, depending on the country, institutional setup, and available resources. Some MRCs in East Africa are run by government agencies, while others are managed by trade unions. It can also happen that MRCs are run by civil society organisations (CSOs).

MRCs typically aim to:

- **Provide information to potential migrant workers and deliver pre-departure orientation**, ensuring that they understand their rights, obligations and legal pathways for migration.
- **Assist with grievance mechanisms, legal aid, and case management** for migrant workers who face challenges with their employers, experience exploitation or abuse.
- **Offer reintegration support to returning migrant workers**, such as providing counselling services and information about employment or training opportunities and linking them with relevant actors.
- **Act as liaisons between migrants and government agencies, trade unions, and other relevant stakeholders** to improve migration governance.

While providing information is their primary function, MRCs, in practice, deliver different types of services depending on the local context and on their capacities. The type of clients they serve varies as well: many MRCs in East Africa primarily serve prospective migrant workers (e.g., individuals planning to go abroad for work purposes). Most MRCs also provide support to returnees (for example, individuals who migrated for work purposes and came back). In most cases, migrant workers are nationals of the country where the MRC is based. However, MRCs may also provide services to inbound migrant workers (for example migrant workers arriving from other countries).

MRC services should be designed to equitably meet the diverse needs of all migrant workers, including women and men, rural and urban populations, youth and older persons, people with disabilities, those with low literacy and both low- and high-skilled workers. Inclusive programming means ensuring that no group is left out of outreach, information provision, or service delivery.

► International organisations' role in supporting MRCs

The **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** has supported governments in establishing and running MRCs globally as part of its comprehensive approach to facilitating safe and orderly migration. IOM-assisted MRCs function as one-stop information and referral centres, providing migrants with accurate information on legal migration procedures, risks of irregular migration, rights and responsibilities, and available services for pre-departure, on-arrival and return assistance. They may also offer vocational and language training, job-matching support, and information on remittances and health services. More information on these centres can be found [here](#). IOM also provides resources for MRCs available [here](#).

The **International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)** has provided technical and financial support for MRCs under programmes such as the EU-funded Silk Routes and Central Asia initiatives. ICMPD has worked closely with national governments to establish MRCs within government premises in countries including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. These centres focus on raising awareness about regular and irregular migration, delivering counselling and pre-departure briefings, supporting return and reintegration, and engaging communities and stakeholders through outreach and capacity building activities. More information on these centres can be found [here](#).

Purpose of the manual

Across the East and Horn of Africa, MRCs play a crucial role in supporting migrant workers at different stages of their migration journey. However, there is currently no standardized operations framework across MRCs in the region. While some centres have developed their own operational procedures, they vary significantly in service delivery, institutional setup, and capacity.

At the national level, Ethiopia is the only country in the region with an established operations manual, developed in 2019. However, other countries lack a formalized framework. As new MRCs are being established and existing ones face challenges related to security, funding sustainability, and staffing shortages, there is a growing need for a harmonized regional approach to strengthen their effectiveness.

In this context, this Regional Operations Manual serves as a guiding framework for the establishment, operation and management of MRCs across the East and Horn of Africa region. Given the diverse migration dynamics in the region, this manual provides a standardized yet adaptable approach to enhance service delivery, governance, and sustainability of MRCs.

The manual aims to:

- **Strengthen the capacity** of existing MRCs by providing clear operational guidelines on MRC governance, service delivery, and sustainability tailored to the regional context.
- **Ensure consistency in service provision** so that all MRCs, regardless of size or institutional setup, adhere to best practices in migrant worker protection.
- **Support the establishment of new MRCs** by providing clear guidance on setup, staffing and service provision.
- **Support MRC staff** by equipping them with tools, templates, and standardized procedures to improve service provision, case management, outreach and monitoring & evaluation.
- **Align MRC operations** with national policies and international labour standards, including ILO standards and guidance, the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and other regional migration frameworks.
- **Enhance collaboration** among government agencies, trade unions, civil society organisations (CSOs) and international organisations to ensure a coordinated approach to migration governance.

This manual is a practical resource for MRC staff, policymakers and key migration stakeholders. While the guidelines provided are regionally harmonized, each MRC is encouraged to adapt them to their specific national and institutional contexts, ensuring relevance and effectiveness in addressing migrant workers' needs.

Target audience

The primary users of this manual include:

- **MRC managers and staff** to provide structured guidance on operations, service delivery and case management.
- **Government agencies**, in particular, ministries of labour, migration and social affairs, which oversee labour migration governance.
- **Trade unions and employers' organizations** to facilitate cooperation in addressing workers' rights and employment conditions.
- **Civil society organizations and NGOs** that provide legal aid, health services, economic empowerment support, advocacy and other direct support services to migrant workers.
- **Migrant workers and their families** to ensure they have access to accurate and up-to-date information about migration pathways, rights, and available support services.

Guiding principles

The operations of MRCs are based on several core principles that align with international labour standards and human rights frameworks:

- ▶ **Rights-based approach:** MRCs operate under a framework that upholds the dignity, rights and protection of migrant workers in accordance with ILO Conventions and international human rights instruments.
- ▶ **Inclusivity and gender sensitivity:** Services must be accessible to all migrant workers, regardless of sex, nationality, ethnicity or legal status. Special attention must be given to the needs of women, youth, persons with disabilities and marginalized communities.
- ▶ **Contextual relevance:** MRCs should be adapted to the specific legal, economic and social contexts of the countries they operate in, ensuring that services are practical and relevant.
- ▶ **Partnership and collaboration:** Effective MRC operations require strong partnerships between government agencies, trade unions, NGOs and international organisations to provide comprehensive support services.
- ▶ **Sustainability and capacity strengthening:** MRCs should implement long-term strategies for sustainability, including financial planning, staff training and institutional support mechanisms.

Structure of the manual

The manual is organized into **ten sections**, each covering a critical aspect of MRC operations and service delivery:

1. **Introduction:** Overview of MRCs, their purpose and guiding principles.
2. **Establishing a Migrant Worker Resource Centre:** Steps to set up an MRC, including location selection, staffing and infrastructure needs.
3. **Governance and management:** Management structures, partnership models and sustainability strategies.
4. **Service delivery:** Core services provided by MRCs, including information provision, case management and reintegration support.
5. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Tools and frameworks for documenting cases, assessing MRC performance and improving services.
6. **Capacity strengthening and staff training:** Guidelines on training priorities and skill development for MRC staff.
7. **Sustainability and resilience:** Strategies for ensuring long-term operational sustainability, including financial planning and digital innovation.
8. **Communication and outreach:** Methods for engaging migrant workers and raising awareness of MRC services.
9. **Legal and policy frameworks:** Overview of relevant international and national migration policies.
10. **Annexes and resources:** Tools, templates and FAQs for MRC operations.

▶ 2

Establishing a Migrant Worker Resource Centre



MRCs in East and the Horn of Africa are still a relatively new model, but they have significant potential to address the needs of migrant workers in the region. The establishment of MRCs is critical in a region where large numbers of migrant workers face challenges in accessing reliable information and support services throughout the migration cycle, from pre-departure to return and reintegration.

This section aims to provide practical guidance on establishing and operationalizing MRCs in diverse contexts within the East and Horn of Africa region. It will address key steps and considerations, including:

- Key functions of an MRC
- Target groups (clients) of an MRC
- Selecting an appropriate location
- Registration
- Physical infrastructure and resource needs
- Staffing and human resources
- Governance

► MRCs in countries of origin and of destination

MRCs can be established in both countries of origin and countries of destination. In countries of origin, they provide prospective migrants with essential information to support informed decision-making and reduce the risks linked to irregular migration. They also provide support to returned migrant workers, such as counselling and linkages with training, employment and business opportunities. In countries of destination, MRCs can offer protection and support.

In East Africa, some MRCs mainly serve migrants planning to migrate. Others receive migrants from neighbouring countries who come to work (for example, in Somalia and South Sudan). The type of services offered will vary depending on the profile of the migrants, but all MRCs must be prepared to meet the needs of different types of clients.

In the future, setting up MRCs in countries where large numbers of East African migrant workers travel for employment, such as the Gulf countries, could help address some of the challenges faced by migrant workers.

Key functions of an MRC

The services to focus on depend on the local context and the needs of migrant workers in the region where the MRC is located, as well as the resources available. While the MRC may initially focus on delivering basic support, expanding its scope can become a future objective. That being said, it is important to keep in mind the core services typically provided by MRCs¹:

Pre-departure orientation and information

Pre-departure orientation is the number one mission of an MRC. MRCs provide critical information to prospective migrant workers to support informed decision-making and reduce vulnerabilities linked to irregular migration. This includes explaining the difference between regular and irregular migration and the processes required to migrate regularly for work purposes. Staff must be able to clearly communicate the procedures, rights, obligations and working and living conditions in the country of destination.

¹ ILO (2024) ILO Brief. ILO Guidance Note on Migrant Worker Resource Centres (MRCs). <https://www.ilo.org/publications/ilo-guidance-note-migrant-worker-resource-centres-mrcs>

Given the complexity of issues related to labour migration, this task requires a solid understanding of labour migration frameworks and the ability to provide up-to-date, accurate information. Building this capacity within the MRC team is essential to ensuring effective service delivery. Pre-departure orientation may cover topics such as recruitment processes, contract terms, workers' rights, grievance mechanisms and health and safety guidelines. It should also include information about licensed private recruitment agencies and how to identify and avoid illegal recruitment practices.

Counselling and case management

MRCs provide individual and family counselling to address personal concerns, decision-making challenges and mental health issues. In many MRCs in East Africa, most migrant workers visiting the centres are women, including returnees. Women migrant workers often face specific challenges, such as gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation during their migration journey. Domestic workers are particularly at risk because they are often excluded from the full scope of the labour law, reside in their employer's house and face restrictions on their movement. Men migrant workers may also experience violence at work or if they have experienced detention, and may be subject to specific occupational, safety and health risks, including, for example, in the fishing or construction sectors. Other migrant groups, such as people with disabilities, youth, older persons, or those in remote or rural areas, may also face barriers to accessing services or be exposed to unique vulnerabilities that affect their well-being.

Both men and women migrant workers might face difficult times when returning, due to a lack of resources, family problems, or issues related to traumatic or exploitative experiences during migration, such as violence, abuse or severe working conditions. MRC staff need to be prepared to handle these cases sensitively (see guidance documents in the annex) and refer them to appropriate specialized services when necessary. An inclusive, non-discriminatory approach is critical to ensure all migrant workers feel welcome, seen, and supported.

► Referral mechanisms

MRCs maintain a network of referral partners to direct migrant workers to specialized services, including legal aid, health services, or employment opportunities. Establishing and maintaining these partnerships is essential for effective service delivery.

► Skills development and training

MRCs can provide or facilitate access to skills development training, including language courses, entrepreneurship programmes and skills training, as well as financial literacy. This supports both potential migrant workers and returnees in improving their employment prospects.

► Protection and access to justice

MRCs play a role in facilitating access to justice for migrant workers by providing accurate information on legal rights and connecting them with legal aid and dispute resolution mechanisms. They also support workers facing exploitation or abuse, offering direct assistance or referrals where necessary. To do so, MRCs may also provide in-house paralegal support to handle labour-related complaints or direct migrants to external legal services when needed.

► Return and reintegration support

MRCs assist returning migrant workers in reintegrating into their communities by providing job matching services in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders, skills recognition, and psycho-social support. They may also help facilitate family and community reintegration by supporting the rebuilding of family relationships, engaging in discussions to reduce stigma associated with migration, such as misconceptions about failure, detention, or work abroad, and encouraging community acceptance through dialogue and outreach activities.

► Community outreach, advocacy and social dialogue

In addition to operating within the MRC, outreach activities such as campaigns, social media and radio broadcasts help raise awareness about migrant rights and the services available at MRCs. MRCs may also engage in advocacy efforts to improve national labour migration policies.

In some contexts, MRCs are recognized actors within national social dialogue mechanisms and may participate in discussions on labour migration, including through tripartite platforms involving governments, employers and workers' organizations.

► **Emergency support**

In certain cases, MRCs may serve as the first point of contact for migrant workers in distress. While MRCs are not designed to provide humanitarian assistance, they should be equipped with basic information and referral systems to guide migrants in emergencies, such as sudden deportation, conflict or abuse.



► **Key Principles for MRC Operations**

From the onset, understanding the key priorities of an MRC is essential to ensure effective and responsive service delivery.

► **A labour rights-centred approach**

The core mission of an MRC is to provide accurate and accessible information about migrant workers' rights and fair recruitment. Since migration-related issues are often complex and evolving, all staff should receive proper training to ensure they provide up-to-date and accurate information.

► **Identify the profile of migrant workers in the area**

MRCs should assess the specific profiles and needs of migrant workers they serve, such as whether they are prospective migrants, returnees, migrant workers currently employed, or transit migrants, to tailor services accordingly. Understanding the profile helps the MRC anticipate needs and connect workers to the right services.

► **Work with others: referral systems**

MRCs cannot meet all the needs of migrant workers on their own. Establishing strong referral systems early in the process allows MRCs to direct migrant workers to specialized services (for example, healthcare, legal aid, psychosocial support) that the centre may not be able to provide directly. Building partnerships with local organizations is key to ensuring comprehensive support.

Target groups (clients) of an MRC

MRCs serve diverse migrant worker populations, depending on the local context. MRCs may be visited by clients who have heard about the centre directly, as well as those referred by other entities, such as humanitarian organizations, government agencies, or diplomatic missions. Although the MRC being established may initially be intended to receive primarily a certain group of migrants (such as prospective migrant workers), it may later begin to serve individuals with a wider range of profiles, which is why it is important to be prepared.

Ensuring that staff are trained to handle diverse profiles and to provide multilingual services when needed will be essential. Typical profiles of migrant workers include:

- Inbound migrant workers (for example, individuals who migrated to the country where the MRC is based)
- Prospective migrant workers, including:
 - Those in the pre-decision phase (considering migration or local employment)

- Those in the pre-departure phase (who have decided to migrate and are preparing, for example, engaging with recruitment agencies, undergoing Pre-Departure Orientation Training, or covering related fees)
- Returnees, including deportees
- Migrant workers currently posted abroad (through phone or online contacts)
- Transit migrants
- Victims of trafficking and smuggling
- Families of migrant workers

Type of clients	Possible needs
Inbound migrant workers (MRC in a country of destination)	► Information on local labour laws and rights ► Support in cases of discrimination or exploitation ► Information about access to health and housing ► Language and cultural orientation
Prospective migrant workers	► Information on legal migration processes, documentation requirements and recruitment agencies ► Pre-departure orientation (for example, contract terms, rights and responsibilities, working and living conditions) ► Health and safety guidelines ► Language and cultural orientation
Returnees and deportees	► Reintegration support (for example, employment services, financial literacy, business start-up) ► Psychosocial support (for example, counselling for trauma, family reunification) ► Health and social services referrals ► Legal assistance (for example, claims for unpaid wages)
Migrant workers currently posted abroad (virtual connection)	► Access to labour rights information in destination countries ► Support in cases of exploitation or contract violations ► Connection with embassies or consulates (for example, labour attachés) ► Access to emergency support or shelter
Transit migrants	► Information on safe labour migration and risks along the migration route (for example, trafficking, violence) ► Referrals to health services, protection and emergency services ► Legal and documentation advice ► Psychosocial support
Families of migrant workers	► Psychosocial support (for example, dealing with family separation, financial pressure) ► Financial literacy, planning and remittance management ► Legal assistance ► Access to health and social services

MRCs may also be visited by minors (such as child migrants or children of migrant workers), people with specific vulnerabilities (such as survivors of gender-based violence, trafficking or exploitation) and migrants from different nationalities and language backgrounds. MRC staff should be trained on how to address these situations in a professional manner. Refer to guidelines in annex for guidance on the reception of migrants having experienced violence, trauma-informed case management and child protection.

Selecting an appropriate location

The location of an MRC is a critical factor in ensuring that migrant workers feel safe and comfortable accessing its services. The centre should be located in a safe and secure area, ideally with access to transportation and other essential services.

The table below summarises some of the considerations to have in mind when establishing an MRC:

Geographic location	► Accessibility for migrant workers (for example, located near transportation hubs such as bus stations, train stations or major roads) ► Close to areas with high concentrations of migrant workers (for example, markets, industrial zones or areas with recruitment agencies) ► Proximity to other support services (for example, legal aid, health facilities, NGOs and government offices)
Safety and security	► The location must be in a safe area ► Clear signage and preferably lighting for security at night ► Private areas for confidential discussions and counselling
Visibility and perception	► The centre should be easily recognisable as a welcoming space for migrant workers ► Ensure the centre is not associated with stigma or suspicion ► Neutral and non-political location (for example, in some contexts, being next to a government or police building might deter migrants from visiting, especially migrant workers in irregular situations).
Infrastructure requirements	► A physical space large enough to accommodate both visitors and staff ► A separate counselling room to ensure confidentiality and privacy ► Rooms equipped for training or learning sessions (for example, with seating, whiteboards or projectors) ► Adequate restroom and hygiene facilities ► Availability of ICT (for example, internet, computers, phones) to provide services
Accessibility	► Open during hours that match the working hours of the target population ► Disability-friendly (for example, avoid stairs, accessible restrooms) ► Multilingual signs and staff to accommodate migrant workers from different backgrounds
Flexibility and multi-use potential	► The centre should have the flexibility to accommodate training sessions, meetings and workshops ► In some cases, the MRC can double as a community centre or a youth centre, depending on local needs and opportunities

Registration

Before establishing an MRC, it is essential to clarify the legal and operational status of the centre within the national context. The process of registration varies depending on the country's institutional setup.

In some countries, MRCs may be registered as government-run facilities under the authority of a specific ministry (for example, Ministry of Labour or Ministry of Social Affairs). In other contexts, the MRC may operate under the umbrella of a trade union or an NGO, which may require different registration procedures.

To ensure compliance with national regulations and avoid future legal or operational issues, consider the following steps during registration:

- Identify the legal status of the centre (for example, government facility, NGO-run, or trade union-supported).
- Engage with relevant stakeholders such as government ministries, local authorities and social partners to clarify the registration requirements.
- Secure any necessary permits or licences to legally operate the centre.
- Secure land or facility access. Securing land rights or a property deed may be required. This includes confirming ownership or lease agreements and clarifying the terms of use (for example, whether the land or facility is government-owned or rented).
- Ensure the registration includes clear definitions of the centre's mandate, governance structure and scope of services.

Physical infrastructure and resource needs

An MRC requires a functional and well-equipped physical space to provide effective services to migrant workers. While the scale and resources of each MRC will depend on the local context and available funding, there are essential infrastructure and equipment requirements that must be in place to ensure smooth operations and a safe, welcoming environment for migrant workers. Below are the minimum physical and ICT requirements to establish a fully operational MRC.

Unlike a typical office, an MRC is a space that must be functional, welcoming, clean and secure for migrant workers. At a minimum, the following infrastructure and resources should be in place:

1. Reception space and equipment

An MRC should be composed of at least two separate areas:

- A **dedicated reception area** where migrant workers can check in and ask for assistance.
- A **private consultation room** to ensure confidentiality during counselling sessions.

Ideally, one of these rooms should also be adaptable for group training or learning activities (for example, financial literacy, digital skills, pre-departure sessions).

The rooms should be equipped, at a minimum, with basic furniture, such as:

- Desk and chair for staff.
- Chairs and benches for visitors.
- Lockable cabinets or shelves for secure storage of documents and materials. Secure data storage (for example, locked cabinets) is essential for confidentiality and data collection.

In addition to this, day-to-day operations require essential equipment, especially IT, such as:

- Computers (at least one for staff use).
- Printer, scanner, photocopier and shredder.
- Internet connection to support communication and virtual services.
- Telephone and mobile phone for outreach and follow-ups.
- Security equipment (for example, surveillance camera, alarm system, or secure locks)
- First aid kit

Lastly, an important dimension to consider is **safety and accessibility**, including:

- Secure access to the facility (for example surveillance where appropriate).
- Proper lighting.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities.
- Signage in multiple languages.



► **Good practices – Providing separate spaces for reception, consultations and counselling**

Thanks to the ILO's support, HTS-MRC in Uganda renovated one large room into two to accommodate an additional office. The MRC is now composed of a protected outside area with chairs where migrant workers can wait, an office equipped with two desks and several chairs where case workers can provide information, and a separate private office that can be used for counselling.



► **Figure 1 HTS MRC, Kampala, Uganda**



► **Figure 2 COTU MRC, Nairobi, Kenya**



► **Figure 3 MRC, Arecka, Ethiopia**

2. Information and communication materials

In addition, MRCs should be equipped with information and communication materials on migrant rights and available services. This can include:

- Posters and brochures
- Display boards with key contact numbers



► Figure 4 Brochures and flyers, HTS MRC Uganda



► Figure 5 Roll up, HTS MRC Uganda

It is important to keep in mind that these materials should be up-to-date. A disadvantage of brochures is that they may remain in the community, but after a while, the information might no longer be accurate. Therefore, it is better to provide information that might change on posters within the MRC and limit brochures to information that is less likely to change (for example, migrant rights, key messages on regular vs irregular migration).

Information should also be available in relevant languages to ensure accessibility for all migrant workers. Additionally, where possible, audio and visual formats should be considered to accommodate workers with limited literacy.

Staffing and human resources

The capacity of an MRC to deliver services highly depends on the availability, expertise and capacity of its staff. Staffing decisions are crucial to the success and sustainability of the centre. Ensuring that the right people with the right skills are in place will help build trust with migrant workers and enable effective service delivery. This section outlines key staffing requirements and considerations for establishing and running a successful MRC.

1. Securing dedicated personnel

An MRC should have at least one **full-time staff member** responsible for overseeing the daily operations and managing the centre. In addition, having dedicated case workers to address migrant workers' needs ensures that individual concerns are properly handled and support is tailored to specific challenges.

While having full-time staff is preferable, part-time staff or volunteers can be used to complement the team based on available resources and service demands.

In some contexts, however, MRCs are managed by existing government or union staff who take on the additional responsibility of managing the centre. In such cases, clearly defining roles and responsibilities is essential to avoid operational gaps.

2. Right profile and expertise

The effectiveness of an MRC depends on having staff with the right profile and expertise. Staff should have a mix of technical knowledge and interpersonal skills, including:

- **Knowledge of regular migration and labour rights:** understanding the processes and legal frameworks governing migration, including recruitment, employment and reintegration.
- **Experience with case management:** including working with vulnerable populations, handling crisis situations and providing counselling and case management with a trauma-informed approach. This includes groups with specific needs such as minors, GBV survivors, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals or those with low literacy levels or from rural or marginalized communities.
- **Strong communication and interpersonal skills:** building trust and rapport with migrant workers is essential. Staff should be trained to listen actively and treat migrants with respect and sensitivity.
- **Cultural sensitivity and adaptability:** understanding the diverse backgrounds of migrant workers and providing tailored support.

MRC staff should receive regular training to strengthen their technical knowledge and service delivery skills. Training topics should include migration law in countries of origin and key countries of destination, labour rights, counselling techniques, case management and data protection. Staff should also be trained to identify and respond to signs of exploitation and abuse, including gender-based violence (see guidance document on addressing the needs of migrant workers victims of violence in Annex). Specific guidance on capacity strengthening is available in Section 6.

Ongoing professional development and peer learning opportunities should be encouraged to help staff stay up-to-date with changing migration trends and policies.

3. Gender-balanced and diverse teams

MRCs should aim to maintain a balanced and diverse team to create a welcoming and safe environment for all migrant workers. As several MRCs primarily receive women migrant workers, **having both male and female staff** is crucial, as women migrant workers, particularly returnees, may feel more comfortable discussing sensitive issues such as gender-based violence and sexual exploitation with a female staff member.

In addition, recruiting staff with **diverse language skills** is highly beneficial, especially in regions where migrant workers speak multiple languages or dialects. Alternatively, arrangements should be made to translate when required. This can include recruiting migrant workers as volunteers to provide translation services when needed. Returning migrant workers can be a valuable asset to MRC teams, as their direct experience enables them to relate to clients' challenges and build trust more easily with communities.

Lastly, staff should reflect the cultural and social diversity of the community to foster trust and better communication with migrant workers.

4. Staff well-being and support

Several MRCs in the region have raised concerns that staff are sometimes affected by the difficult situations they have to deal with. Given the challenging nature of working with migrant workers, some of whom have faced traumatic experiences, providing staff with adequate support and resources is essential to prevent burnout and maintain motivation.

It is important to provide access to **mental health support** and to encourage **peer support** within the team (for example, care for the carers).

Governance

MRCs can be established under different governance models depending on the national context, available resources and the structure of the labour migration system. While all models can be effective, each has specific advantages and drawbacks. Choosing the appropriate model will depend on the country's institutional framework and the needs of migrant workers.

1. Government-led MRCs

Government-led MRCs are usually housed within relevant ministries or government agencies, such as labour departments. They benefit from institutional legitimacy and access to government resources and services, but they may face bureaucratic limitations and funding constraints.

Advantages:

- Strong institutional backing and alignment with national policies.
- Easier access to national data and resources.
- Greater potential for long-term sustainability if integrated into government structures.



Drawbacks:

- Bureaucratic processes can slow decision-making and flexibility.
- Insufficient funding and staff turnover may disrupt service continuity.
- Some migrant workers, particularly those with irregular status, may perceive government-run MRCs as unsafe or untrustworthy, leading to reluctance in seeking support.



► Example of successful government-led MRCs: the Philippines

In the Philippines, local government units (LGUs) have been engaged by the ILO country office, specifically under two ILO development cooperation projects, the Bridging Recruitment to Reintegration in Migration Governance (BRIDGE) Programme and the Safe and Fair (SAF) Programme, to assist in setting up and running their own MRCs.

More information is available here:

- [Bridging Recruitment to Reintegration in Migration Governance: Philippines \(BRIDGE\)](#)
- [Safe and Fair: Realising women migrant workers' rights and opportunities in the ASEAN region](#)

2. Trade-union led MRCs

Trade union-led MRCs are typically managed by trade unions or worker organizations. They tend to have strong connections with migrant worker communities and can provide specialised legal assistance and advocacy. However, they often face resource limitations and funding instability.

Advantages:

- Close relationship with migrant workers and understanding of their needs.
- Strong focus on worker rights and advocacy.
- Flexibility in service delivery and direct engagement with communities.
- Ability to engage in social dialogue with employers and government stakeholders.
- Potential for strong institutional backing, which can support long-term sustainability.
- Provide spaces and opportunities to organise or strengthen trade unions.



Drawbacks:

- Dependence on external funding and limited financial sustainability.
- Limited reach beyond the trade union's network.
- Risk of limited institutional support from the government.



► Example of successful trade union-led MRCs: Tunisia

In Tunisia, UGTT (Tunisian General Labour Union) manages nine MRCs through its network of local offices, providing services and support to migrant workers despite financial and logistical challenges. This exemplifies the role of trade unions in protecting migrant workers' rights. In 2025, with the support of the FAIR III and THAMM Plus projects, UGTT validated a set of guiding principles for the protection of migrant workers' rights, reinforcing its commitment through structured social dialogue.

3. CSO-led MRCs

CSO-led MRCs are run by non-governmental organisations or community-based groups. They often have greater operational flexibility and a strong focus on migrant rights, but may struggle with funding and long-term sustainability.

Advantages:

- Flexibility and responsiveness to local needs.
- Strong focus on vulnerable populations and ability to build trust with migrant workers, particularly those with irregular status or from marginalized communities.
- Ability to provide innovative and tailored services.



Drawbacks:

- Funding challenges and financial instability.
- Possible lack of institutional support from government structures.
- Limited or no opportunities for engaging in formal social dialogue with government and employer representatives.
- Risk of limited recognition from government authorities



► Example of successful CSO-led MRCs: Singapore

HOME offers direct assistance to domestic workers who experience abuse and exploitation, including providing shelter for those in need of immediate support. HOME also provides employment advice and legal aid to migrant workers in Singapore and extends this support even after they have returned to their countries of origin. HOME is also actively involved in advocacy and public education on issues affecting migrant workers, helping to raise awareness about their rights and improving the broader policy environment for labour migration.

Reactivating an existing Migrant Worker Resource Centre

MRCs may face challenges and crises: global pandemics such as COVID-19, extreme weather events, as well as conflict, can disrupt the operations of the MRC. It has been observed that MRCs had to shut down for a while and later had to resume activity.

Reactivating an MRC after a period of closure due to a crisis, such as a pandemic, conflict, or natural disaster, requires a structured and well-planned approach. Below are the key steps to consider:

1. Assess the situation

Ensure safety is the priority. Evaluate whether it is safe to resume operations for both staff and clients.

- Are there ongoing security risks (for example, conflict, unrest, or natural hazards)?
- Are the premises secure and accessible?
- Is the political or social climate stable enough to safely reopen the centre?

If the crisis involved health conditions, ensure that the health and safety conditions meet minimum standards before reopening. If the centre closed due to a pandemic, check that health protocols (for example, mask-wearing, social distancing) can be implemented.

2. Assess damage and losses

Conduct a thorough assessment of the MRC's physical infrastructure and equipment:

- Are the premises damaged or compromised (for example, broken windows, leaking roof)?
- Is any critical equipment (for example, computers, phones, printers) missing or destroyed?
- Are furniture and office supplies still in working order?

In addition, assess the status of key resources, including client records and data security, communication systems (for example, internet, phone lines) and availability of printed materials and outreach documents.

3. Identify steps and resources needed to resume operations

Prioritise needs. Develop a clear action plan to resume operations based on the urgency of identified needs:

- Repair and replace damaged infrastructure and equipment
- Restore data systems and communication lines
- Replenish essential supplies (for example, stationery, outreach materials)

This should include a realistic timeline. Develop a phased reopening plan, starting with critical services first and gradually scaling up to full operations, assigning clear responsibilities to staff and partners. Make sure to build flexibility into the plan to adjust based on evolving circumstances.

4. Communicate with key partners and coordinate with relevant actors

Inform key stakeholders about the reopening plan, including relevant government agencies, trade unions, civil society organisations, community leaders and local influencers.

Coordinate support and seek assistance for infrastructure repair, funding for resources, and capacity building where needed.

Lastly, engage with migrant worker communities to inform them of the reopening and the services available.

5. Document lessons learned

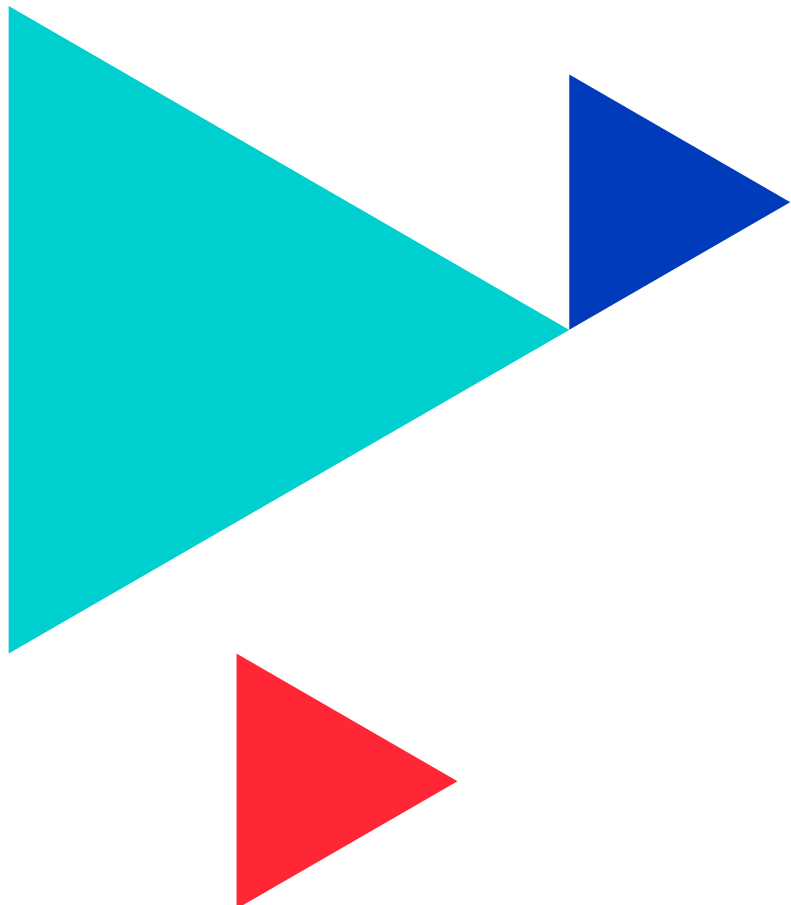
Conduct a post-reopening review to evaluate the reactivation process (for example what worked well and what were the challenges? How could the process be improved in the future? Are additional safety measures needed to prevent future disruptions?).

Develop contingency plans based on the lessons learned to strengthen the centre's resilience to future crises.



► **Key considerations**

- **Location:** Is the MRC accessible to the target population? Is it perceived as a safe space?
- **Staffing:** Do you have the right team in place? Do you need full-time staff or part-timers? Can volunteers complement the team?
- **Registration:** What legal requirements apply? Have you secured the necessary permits or land rights?
- **Infrastructure:** Does the MRC have the basic infrastructure to operate effectively (for example, computers, internet, storage)?
- **Governance:** Who is responsible for overseeing the MRC? Is there a clear reporting line and plan in place?
- **Resources:** How will the MRC be funded initially and in the long term?





OPENING AN MRC – BEST PRACTICES

1. Include migrant workers in the establishment and operation of the MRC

- Migrant workers are the primary beneficiaries of MRC services, and their involvement from the outset is critical to ensuring that the services provided are relevant and responsive to their actual needs.
- Encourage the participation of migrant workers in the planning, design and monitoring of MRC activities. Their insights and feedback will help improve service delivery and foster a sense of ownership and trust within the migrant community.
- One way to operationalize this principle consists in establishing a **Migrant Worker Advisory Committee** composed of representatives from different migrant groups to provide direct input into the governance and management of the centre. In contexts where such a committee is not feasible, MRCs may consider including migrant worker representatives on an existing governance board or committee, to ensure their voices are still meaningfully integrated into decision-making.

2. Foster collaboration between MRCs in countries of origin and destination

- Migration often involves a multi-country journey, and challenges can arise at each stage of the process. MRCs in both countries of origin and destination can enhance service delivery by coordinating their efforts and sharing information.
- For example, if MRCs in Mogadishu and Juba receive Ugandans, Kenyans and Ethiopians, developing relationships between these centres can help provide consistent information and support throughout the migration cycle.
- Joint training, exchange programmes for staff and data-sharing mechanisms between MRCs in different countries can strengthen service quality and ensure a more coordinated response to migrant workers' needs.

3. Build teams of migrant volunteers

- Establishing teams of migrant volunteers can enhance outreach, increase trust within the migrant community and ensure that the services offered are culturally sensitive and relevant.
- Volunteers can play a critical role in raising awareness about MRC services within migrant communities and provide peer-to-peer support.
- Involving migrant workers as volunteers helps to strengthen the bond between the centre and the community it serves, fostering a greater sense of belonging and trust. Returnees, in particular, can play a vital role as volunteers due to their lived experience and credibility within migrant communities.

▶ 3

Governance and management



Strong governance provides a clear framework for decision-making, accountability, and oversight, while efficient management ensures that services are delivered consistently and resources are used effectively. This section outlines the key roles and responsibilities of MRC staff, the operational structure, and the importance of collaboration, cooperation and networking with government agencies, civil society organisations, social partners and other actors.

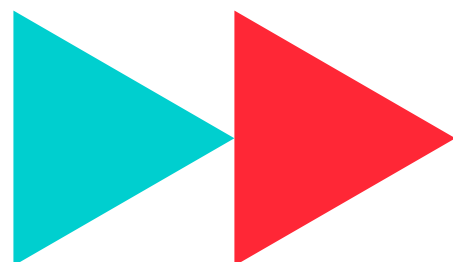
Management structure and staffing plan

An effective MRC requires a clear and well-organized management structure to ensure smooth operations, consistent service delivery and staff accountability. Establishing a structured hierarchy is essential for decision-making, coordination and the efficient use of resources. While the exact structure will depend on the size of the MRC, available funding and the model of operation (government-led, trade union-led, or CSO-led), certain core elements should be present in all MRCs.

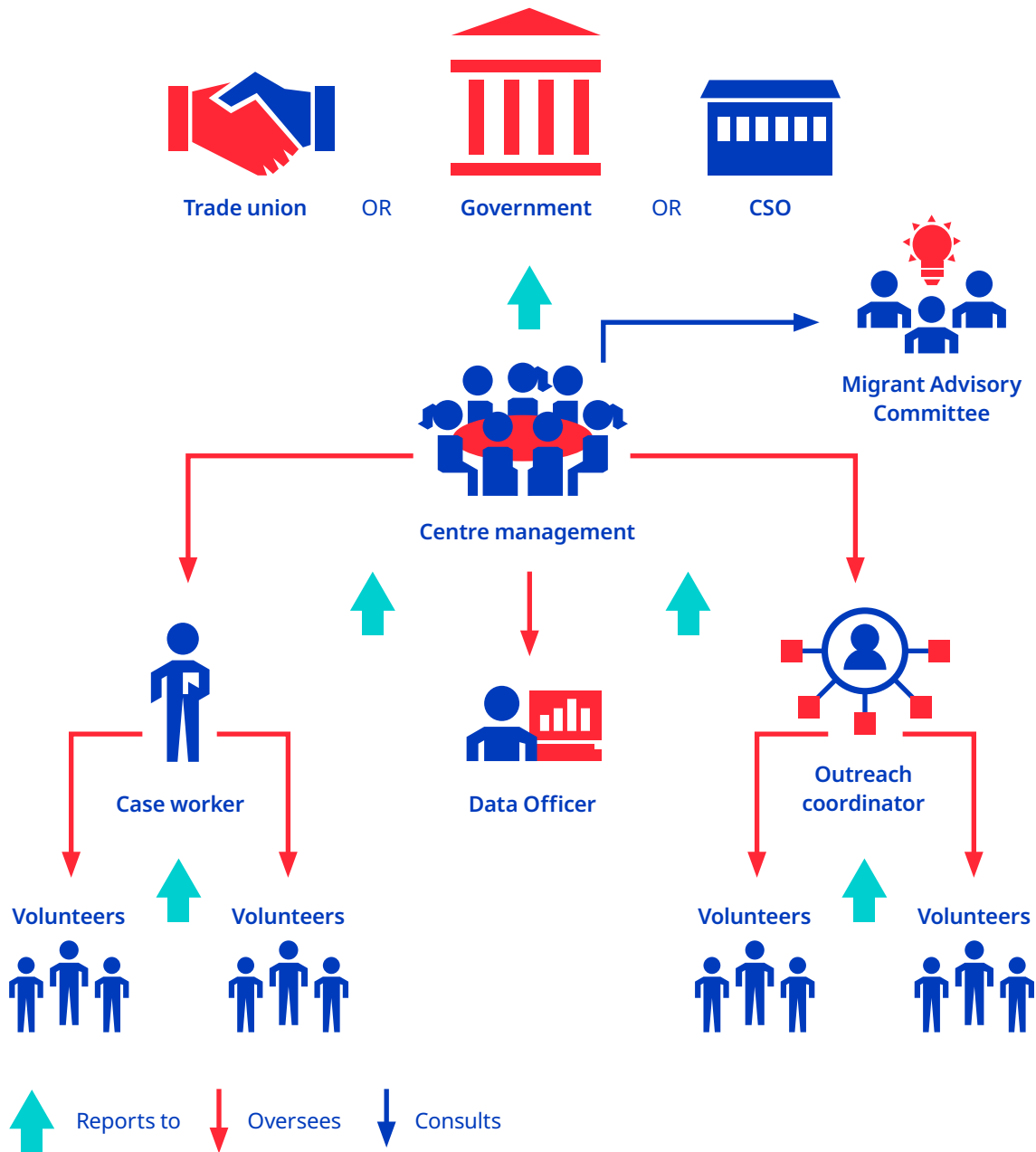
At the top of the structure, an **MRC Manager** should be appointed to oversee the overall operations of the MRC. The manager is responsible for strategic leadership, staff supervision, financial management and external relations. The manager should have a solid understanding of migration issues, labour rights and stakeholder engagement, as they will be the key point of contact for government agencies, trade unions, civil society organisations and donors (in particular development partners).

Below the manager, the structure should include a team of **case workers**. **The team should have** a balanced gender composition, ensuring meaningful representation of women, who are directly responsible for delivering services to migrant workers. Case workers should have specialized training in labour migration pathways, labour rights and employment laws, counselling and guidance, international labour standards, fair recruitment practices, psychosocial support and case management. They will handle individual cases, provide labour market information, counselling and guide migrant workers through available support services. Ideally, the team should be gender-balanced to address the specific needs of both men and women clients, including issues related to gender-based violence or exploitation.

Supporting the case workers, the structure should include a pool of **volunteers** who can assist with outreach activities, interpretation services, organizing workshops and events and providing peer support to migrant workers. Volunteers can play a key role in building trust with migrant communities and extending the centre's reach, particularly in remote areas. In some cases, former migrant workers can serve as volunteers, helping to create a peer-to-peer support network and fostering a sense of trust and belonging.



A possible **organogram** for a typical MRC might look like this:



Finally, **regular team meetings and reporting lines** should be established to facilitate information sharing and decision-making. The MRC Manager should ensure that all staff and volunteers are aligned with the centre's objectives and that feedback from staff and clients is regularly incorporated into the centre's operations to improve service quality and responsiveness.

Staffing plan

A clear staffing plan is essential to ensure the MRC has the right personnel in place to deliver services effectively. Staffing requirements will depend on the scale of the centre, the volume of migrant workers served and the complexity of the services provided. While some MRCs may rely on volunteers to complement the work of full-time and part-time staff, core positions must be filled by qualified professionals to ensure consistent and professional service delivery.

The table below provides an overview of key roles and the recommended qualifications and skills for each position:

Position	Qualifications	Core responsibilities
MRC manager	Degree in management, social work, social sciences and humanities; experience in managing similar centres or programmes. Fluency in the local language(s) and good command of English.	Oversee overall operations and report to management, coordinate with partners and ensure smooth service delivery.
Case worker	Degree in law, social work, psychology or humanities; experience in migration, such as labour rights and employment laws, international labour standards or social protection	Handle individual cases, provide legal and psychosocial counselling, and support referrals.
Data officer (If available)	Degree in data management, information systems, or statistics	Manage data collection, protection and reporting.
Finance and admin officer (If available)	Degree in accounting, economics, procurement or business management	Manage budgets, financial reports and procurement.
Outreach coordinator (can be a volunteer)	Background in community work, communications or advocacy	Build relationships with migrant communities and partners.
Volunteers	Basic training on migrant rights and MRC services	Assist with administrative tasks, peer support and awareness-raising.

A job description for the MRC manager and case worker positions is available in Annex.

Sustainability and funding

Ensuring the long-term sustainability and financial stability of an MRC is critical to its ability to deliver consistent and high-quality services to migrant workers. In some cases, MRCs are initially established with project-based funding, which often leads to challenges in maintaining operations once the initial funding ends. Sustainability and funding, therefore, require careful planning and efforts towards the diversification of resources. This section outlines key aspects to consider when developing a sustainable MRC model.

Financial requirements for MRCs and budget planning

MRCs need a stable financial base to provide uninterrupted services. Beyond the initial setup costs, a well-structured budget is essential for the long-term stability of the MRC. Budget planning should cover both fixed costs (salaries, rent, utilities) and variable costs (materials, transport, emergency assistance). A budget template is available in Annex.

Key budget components include:

- Human resources: Salaries for core staff, support staff, cleaning and security staff, as well as stipends for volunteers
- Office and operational costs: Rent (if any), utilities (water and electricity bills), insurance
- Equipment and supplies: Computers, furniture, phones, stationery, and so on.
- Service delivery costs: Training sessions, awareness campaigns
- Outreach and partnership costs: Travel, communication materials, stakeholder meetings

Include a buffer for unforeseen expenses and a plan for cost-sharing with partners where feasible.

Financial procedures should be linked to the existing financial policy, auditing and reporting system of the entity running the MRC (government institution, trade union or CSO).

Estimating the annual operating budget and developing a long-term financial plan are key to sustaining the centre's work. A realistic financial projection should consider funding from both internal sources (for example, government contributions, trade union dues) and external sources (for example, donor funding, project grants).

Resource diversification

To avoid dependency on a single funding source, MRCs should aim to diversify their resource base. Relying on a single government or trade union source is often insufficient to run operations, while relying solely on donor funding creates vulnerability when project-based funding ends. MRCs should explore the following diversification strategies:

- **Government funding:** Advocate for government support to cover core operating costs or staff salaries.
- **Private sector engagement:** Partner with private companies for funding or in-kind contributions (for example, IT equipment, transportation).
- **Community contributions:** Encourage local communities to contribute through volunteer work or financial support.
- **International organizations:** Seek project-based funding from ILO, IOM, other UN agencies, and development partners active in labour migration (GIZ, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, ICMPD).
- **Income-generating activities:** Explore social enterprise models such as hosting a business at the MRC premises or renting out meeting spaces.

A mix of public, private, and community-based funding streams provides greater resilience and allows the MRC to operate independently of short-term funding cycles. Effective monitoring and evaluation is key to obtaining resources and securing long-term support. Demonstrating positive results through clear data and impact reports will strengthen the MRC's case when approaching donors, government agencies, and other partners for funding or support. Further details on resources diversification are available in the Sustainability section (Section 7).



► Good practices – Diversifying resources

MRCs can explore creative ways to diversify their funding sources and reduce dependency on project-based funding by leveraging their physical space and position in the community. Examples include:

- **Community café or social enterprise:** Opening a small café, restaurant or bakery within the MRC can serve as both a source of income and a space for community engagement. It can also provide employment opportunities for migrant workers, such as returnees.
- **Renting space for events:** The MRC can rent out its meeting rooms or open spaces for workshops, training sessions, or local events when they are not in use. This can generate additional income and increase the centre's visibility in the community.
- **Recreational and social activities:** Hosting social events such as cultural evenings or community markets can create a sense of belonging while raising funds through entry fees or donations.
- **Training and skills development:** If the MRC offers training to a wider population (e.g., language courses, computer skills, vocational training), charging a small fee for some services (while maintaining free services for vulnerable groups) can help cover operational costs.
- **Partnering with local businesses:** Partnering with local businesses or organisations for sponsorship, joint events, or donations can provide financial and in-kind support.

Security and safety protocols of the MRC premises

Safety and security of the MRC premises are critical for both MRC staff and migrant workers. MRCs should have clear security protocols in place to protect against potential threats, ensure data confidentiality, and provide a safe working environment.

Key security considerations:

- **Physical security:** Secure entrances and locks and accessible gates.
- **Staff safety:** Ensure staff have access to panic buttons, in countries where such devices exist or emergency contacts.
- **Data security:** Sensitive data should be stored in password-protected systems.

► How to password-protect a file in two clicks?

While using Microsoft Office suite (including Word and Excel files), you can set up a password to access a file by following these two steps:

- Go to **File > Info > Protect Document > Encrypt with Password**.
- Type a password, press **OK**, type it again and press **OK** to confirm it.

A clear and well-communicated security protocol should be developed and regularly updated and regular security training for staff and volunteers on how to handle emergency situations should be provided. The security threats vary significantly from one area to another. They might be related to attacks from armed groups, or a high intensity conflict affecting a region. Security protocols must therefore be tailored to the local context. Key components of the protocol include:

- **Access:** Only authorized staff and clients should have access to the MRC. Visitor logs should be maintained and identity checks should be conducted where appropriate.
- **Emergency procedures:** Emergency contact lists and basic first aid kits should be in place and clearly visible to staff and clients.
- **Confidentiality and data protection:** Strict guidelines on handling sensitive data should be implemented to protect migrant workers' information.
- **Staff and client safety:** A code of conduct should be established to address potential conflicts or disruptive behaviour within the centre. A security officer or responsible staff member should be designated to handle such situations.
- **Event and public access management:** If the MRC is used for revenue-generating activities (for example, renting space for events, opening a café, and so on), specific security measures should be introduced to separate public areas from private spaces where casework and confidential support services are provided. Clear signage and restricted access to staff-only zones should be implemented.
- **Community engagement and awareness:** Work with local law enforcement and community leaders to ensure that the MRC is recognised as a safe space and to develop coordinated responses to security issues when they arise.



► **Good practices – Sharing experiences for risk mitigation**

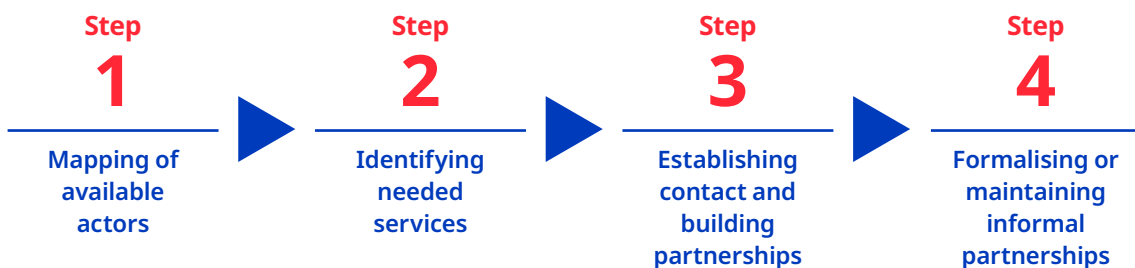
Organising a regional meeting for MRCs can provide an opportunity to share best practices, identify common risks, and discuss how different MRCs mitigate these risks. This collective learning can help improve the security framework of each MRC.

Dedicated security training could also be organised, facilitated by organisations with expertise in security systems and protocols. This can enhance staff preparedness and response to security issues.

Partnerships and networking

Partnerships and networking are fundamental to the success of MRCs. Yet, in many cases, this aspect is underdeveloped, either due to a lack of time or because of the limited availability of relevant organisations and service providers in the local context. However, building a strong network of partners is critical, as no single organisation or centre can provide the full range of services needed by migrant workers. Developing partnerships ensures that migrant workers receive comprehensive support that goes beyond the direct capacity of the MRC.

The visual below outlines the suggested process to develop partnerships, including referrals:



Step 1: Mapping of available actors

The first step in establishing effective partnerships is conducting a thorough mapping of local actors and stakeholders who could provide direct or indirect support to migrant workers. This includes:

- Government institutions (for example, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, social services)
- CSOs and NGOs, including migrant-led organisations and human rights groups
- Faith-based organisations and community groups
- International organisations (for example, ILO, IOM, other UN agencies)
- Trade unions and worker organisations
- Legal aid providers, health services, and mental health support providers
- Private sector actors (for example, recruitment agencies, employers, pre-departure orientation and training institutions)
- Migrant workers' families

A comprehensive stakeholder mapping will help MRCs identify who is currently providing services, where there are gaps, and where partnerships could be established or strengthened. The mapping exercise should also consider geographic coverage (for example, urban vs. rural) and any specific gaps in service delivery (for example, mental health, legal aid).

Step 2: Identifying needed services

In addition to mapping existing actors, the MRC should compile a list of needed services based on the needs observed among migrant workers. These needs can be identified through case management records, intake assessments, staff observations, community consultations, or informal feedback from volunteers and outreach activities. This may include:

- Legal support (for example, advice on contracts, rights, grievance mechanisms)
- Health care (including mental health)
- Shelter and emergency accommodation
- Training and skills development
- Psychosocial support (for example, trauma counselling)
- Job matching services
- Financial services
- Return and reintegration
- Labour market information
- Pre-departure orientation and training

Even if these services are not available locally, creating a list of gaps helps the MRC advocate for improved service provision. This list can be shared with government partners, local CSOs, or faith-based institutions to explore possibilities for new service development or referrals to other regions.

Step 3: Establishing contact and building partnerships

Once the mapping and needs analysis are complete, the next step is to actively engage with the identified stakeholders:

- **Reach out** to the stakeholder and request an initial meeting.
- **Present the mission and objectives** of the MRC, highlighting the types of services offered and the needs of migrant workers.
- **Provide a one-pager** or basic presentation of the MRC to leave with the stakeholder. This helps build credibility and provides a point of reference after the meeting.
- **Explain the areas of potential collaboration** and clearly outline the gaps that the MRC cannot address directly and how the stakeholders could contribute. These contacts also offer an opportunity for other actors to learn about the MRC's mission and may encourage them to refer migrant workers.

Step 4: Formalizing or maintaining informal partnerships

In most cases, partnerships remain informal, with mutual understanding on service provision and referrals. However, in some cases, it may be beneficial to formalise partnerships through:

- **Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs):** useful for ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities, particularly with government or large institutions. A sample MoU is available in Annex.
- **Referral agreements:** establishing clear protocols for referring migrant workers to external service providers. A sample referral form is available in Annex.
- **Joint initiatives:** partnering on specific projects, advocacy efforts, or capacity-building activities.

Further details are available on referrals in Section 4.

Ongoing relationship building

Partnership building is not a one-time exercise. It requires consistent follow-up and nurturing. MRCs should maintain regular contact with their partners, provide updates on their work and assess the effectiveness of the partnerships periodically. This helps strengthen trust and allows for adjustments to the partnership as the needs of migrant workers evolve.

Information data management

Effective information and data management is essential for the smooth operation of an MRC. Proper data management allows the MRC to track client interactions, identify trends in service needs, assess performance and improve decision-making. It also ensures that sensitive information is handled securely and in compliance with data protection standards.

Managing information effectively involves both *internal systems* (to track service delivery) and *external reporting* to partners, government agencies, social partners and donors. This section outlines key components of a strong information and data management system for an MRC. Also refer to the Monitoring and Evaluation section for further details on tools and guidelines to collect data and track progress.

Client registration and case management system

Each MRC should maintain a centralized database to register and track all client interactions. The system should allow case workers to document:

- Personal details (anonymized where necessary for protection)
- Type of services requested and provided
- Follow-up actions taken
- Referral outcomes (if applicable)

A good case management system allows MRC staff to provide tailored support and ensure continuity of care. It also helps identify trends in service needs and challenges faced by migrant workers. Refer to the Monitoring and Evaluation section (Section 5) for further details on client registration tools. An example of a client registration database is available in Annex.

Data protection and confidentiality

Protecting client data is critical, but these principles are often not well understood and applied in practice. MRCs should establish clear protocols for data protection, including:

- Secure access to client records (password-protected systems or locked filing cabinets)
- Restricting access to sensitive information to authorized staff only
- Anonymizing data when reporting to external partners
- Secure disposal of data when no longer needed

Data protection policies should align with national data protection laws and international standards. Staff should receive training on confidentiality and responsible data handling.

Reporting and analysis

MRCs should develop a system for regularly analyzing and reporting data to improve services and support fundraising efforts.

- Regular reporting to management and partners on the number of clients served, types of services provided, and key challenges.
- Disaggregated data by sex, age, nationality and type of service to identify specific gaps and needs.
- Feedback mechanisms to collect insights from clients and staff to adjust services as needed.

Refer to the Monitoring and Evaluation section (Section 5) for further details on client registration tools.

Technology use and challenges

While digital case management systems improve efficiency, not all MRCs will have reliable internet or technology infrastructure. MRCs in rural or remote areas may need to rely on paper-based systems or simple spreadsheets.

- Choose technology that suits the local context.
- Consider mobile-based systems for MRCs operating in areas with limited infrastructure.
- Ensure staff are trained to use technology effectively.

If a paper-based system is used, for example, due to power outages, MRC staff are encouraged to back it up with a computer system to ensure that the information remains safe and accessible in case the paper-based system is lost or damaged.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are at the core of an MRC's operations, as migrant workers can be in vulnerable situations and may face exploitation, discrimination and abuse. Ensuring that services are delivered in an ethical, professional and respectful manner is critical to building trust with clients and ensuring the credibility of the MRC.

This section outlines the key ethical principles that should guide the work of MRCs, including the responsibilities of staff, confidentiality and the importance of non-discrimination and informed consent.

1. Respect for dignity and non-discrimination

MRCs must treat all clients with dignity and respect, regardless of nationality, sex, legal status, religion, ethnicity or any other characteristic.

- All services should be provided on a non-discriminatory basis.
- Staff should be trained to provide gender-transformative and culturally appropriate support.
- Extra attention should be given to ensuring access to appropriate services for individuals and groups who often face exclusion or discrimination, including women, children, persons with disabilities and survivors of trafficking.

MRCs should have a clear anti-discrimination policy (see example in Annex) in place and provide staff with training on cultural sensitivity and inclusive service provision.

2. Informed consent

Clients should have a clear understanding of the services being provided and how their information will be used. Before gathering any personal data or referring a client to a service, staff must obtain informed consent.

- Consent should be provided by individuals voluntarily, without pressure or manipulation. Consent must be obtained directly from the individual concerned; staff should not rely on family members or community representatives to speak on behalf of others, particularly in cases involving gender or power imbalances.
- Clients must have the right to refuse services or withdraw consent at any time without negative consequences.
- For minors or persons with limited decision-making capacity, consent should be obtained from a legal guardian or trusted representative when possible.

Before collecting data or referring a client to a partner organization, staff should explain the purpose of the referral and seek the client's permission. In contexts where feasible, written informed consent forms can help formalize the process and improve accountability. However, MRCs should also consider literacy levels, privacy concerns and cultural sensitivities when deciding whether written or verbal consent is most appropriate.

3. Confidentiality and data protection

Confidentiality is essential to maintaining trust and ensuring the safety of clients.

- Staff should only collect the minimum amount of personal data necessary to provide services.
- Personal information should be stored securely and only accessed by authorized personnel.
- Staff should not discuss client cases outside the professional context.
- Reporting data to external partners or donors should be anonymized unless the client explicitly consents to sharing identifiable information.

4. Avoiding conflicts of interest

MRC staff and management must avoid any personal or financial conflicts of interest that could influence decision-making or service provision.

- Staff should disclose any personal or professional relationships with service providers, partners or other stakeholders, including recruiters.
- Staff should not accept gifts, payments or favours in exchange for preferential treatment.
- Decisions regarding service provision or referrals should be based on the client's best interests, not external pressure or personal gain.

5. Do No Harm

MRC staff must ensure that their actions and advice do not put clients at greater risk of harm.

- Staff should assess the potential risks associated with providing services or making referrals.
- If a client is at immediate risk of harm (for example, domestic violence, exploitation), staff should refer the client to appropriate protection services.
- Staff should ensure that returning migrants, particularly those who have experienced trauma, receive psychosocial support when needed.

If an undocumented migrant requests assistance, staff should not share information with government authorities without the client's consent, unless there is a legal obligation to do so.

6. Professional boundaries and ethical behaviour

MRC staff should maintain a professional relationship with clients and avoid becoming personally involved in their cases.

- Staff should not lend money to or accept money from clients.
- Staff should not engage in personal relationships with clients while they are receiving services.
- Staff should receive guidance on maintaining appropriate boundaries.

7. Accountability and transparency

MRCs should have a clear accountability framework to monitor staff behaviour and service provision.

- Establish a code of conduct for staff (see example in Annex) which outlines expected ethical behaviour.
- Create a complaints mechanism that allows clients to report unethical behaviour without fear of retaliation.
- Conduct regular internal reviews to assess adherence to ethical guidelines and improve service delivery.

MRCs should establish an anonymous feedback system (for example, suggestion box) and a formal process for investigating complaints.

► Good practices – Ensure ethical considerations are effectively understood



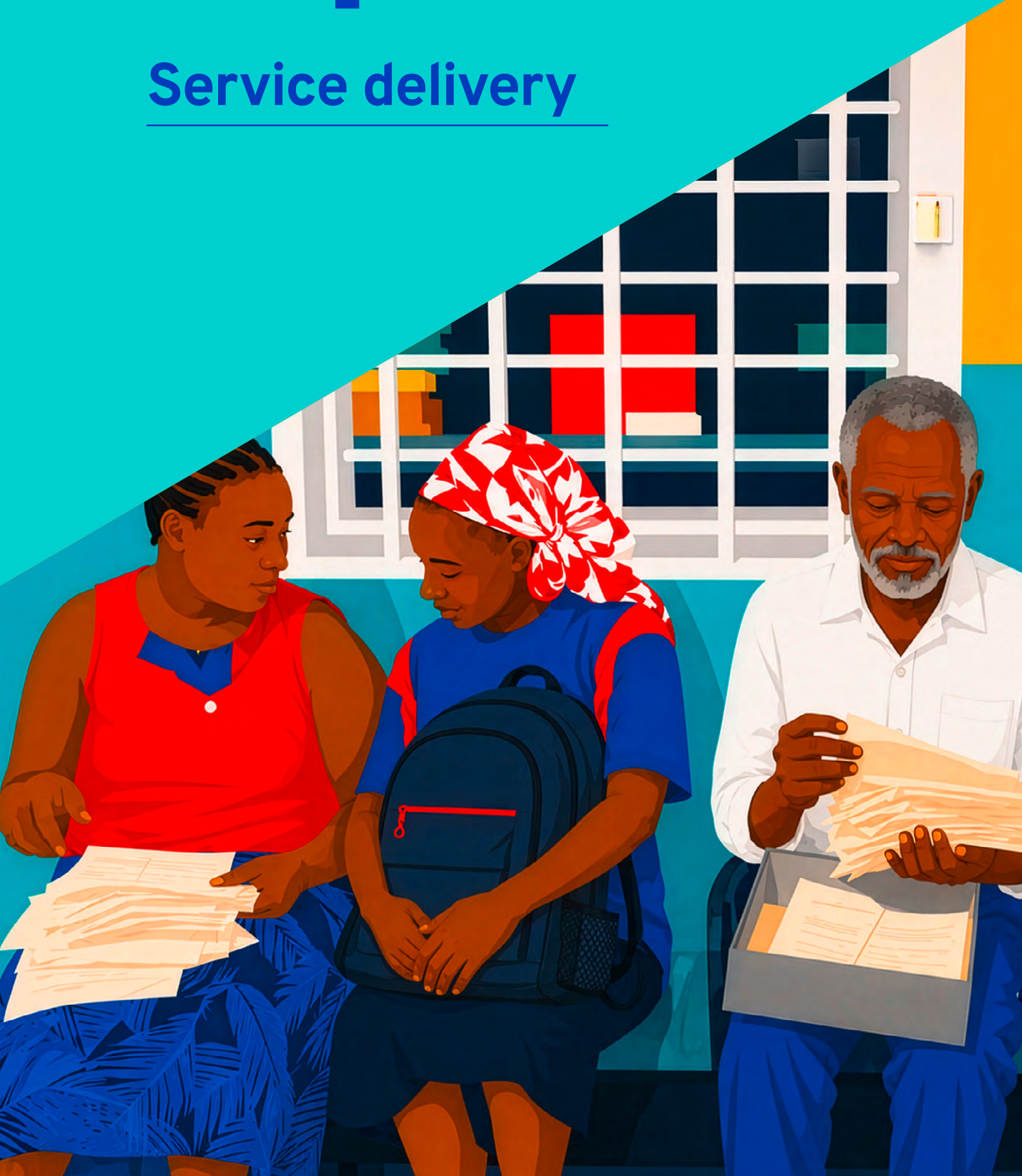
Provide staff with regular training on ethical guidelines and case management practices to ensure consistent adherence to ethical standards.

Incorporate ethical standards into staff performance evaluations and ongoing professional development.

Encourage migrant workers visiting the MRC to share feedback, including on staff ethical conduct.

▶ 4

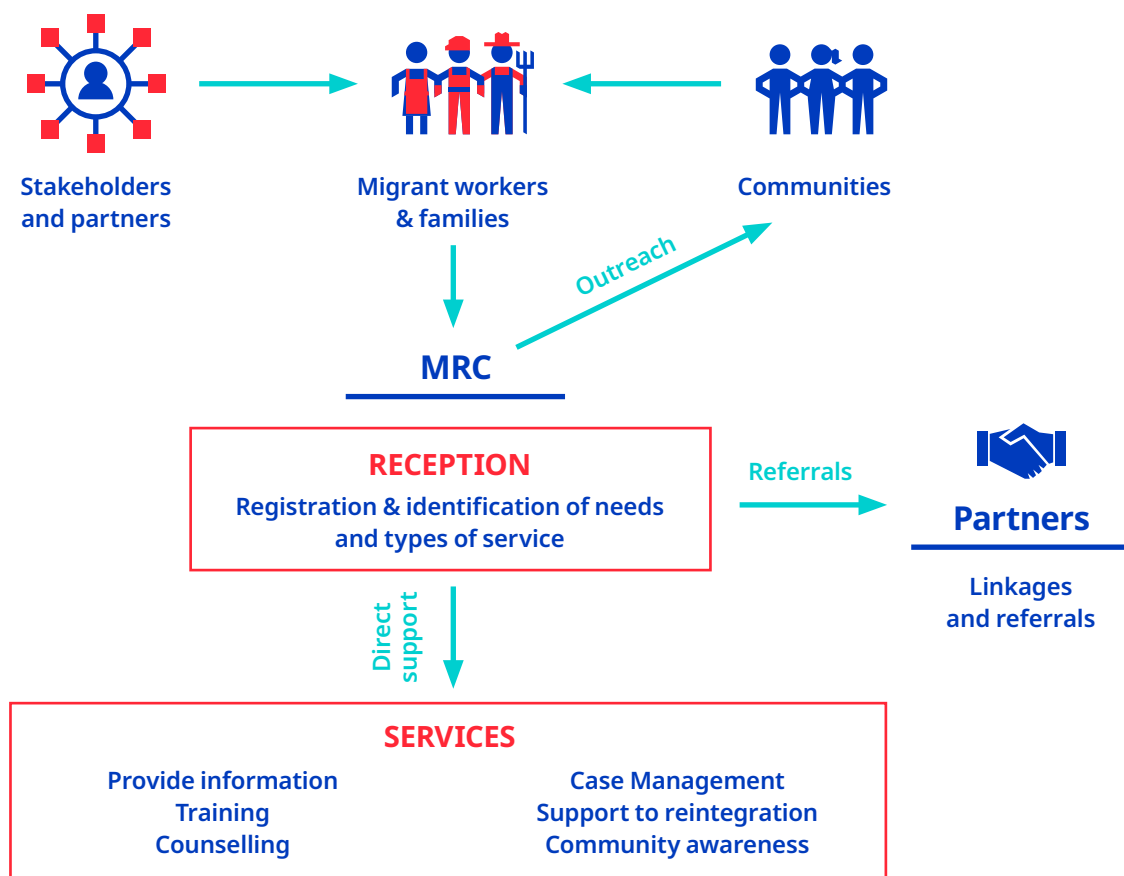
Service delivery



Effective service delivery is at the core of the MRC mission. MRCs are designed to provide direct, relevant and accessible support to migrant workers at all stages of the migration process, from pre-departure orientations, during transit, while abroad (including virtual support), post-arrival orientations, and upon return. Subsequently, service delivery in MRCs is guided by the principle of ensuring migrant-centred, comprehensive and responsive assistance that meets the evolving needs of migrant workers.

A well-functioning MRC service delivery model should be built on a structured and coordinated approach that considers the specific needs of the target population and the local context. This includes ensuring that services are tailored to the unique challenges faced by migrant workers in each region and that partnerships with government agencies, civil society organizations, trade unions, employers' associations, recruitment agencies, development partners and private sector actors are leveraged to maximize the impact and reach of services.

Below is an illustration of the operational framework for delivering effective services through an MRC:



Guiding principles

An MRC will benefit greatly from establishing and adhering to a clear set of guiding principles. These principles will serve as the foundation for delivering consistent, high-quality services to migrant workers and their families, ensuring that the MRC remains responsive, inclusive, and aligned with international standards and best practices. It is important that all MRC staff are trained and familiar with these principles to ensure they are consistently applied in service delivery.

Migrant-centred & migrant-driven approach

An MRC is first and foremost for migrants, providing a safe, accessible, and responsive environment where the needs, rights and priorities of migrant workers and their families come first. The MRC should be designed and operated with a clear focus on the migrant experience, ensuring that all services are tailored to the specific challenges and vulnerabilities that migrants face. This should be reflected in the MRC governance, meaning that migrant workers should be actively involved in decision-making processes and service delivery at the MRC.

In more advanced settings, an MRC can also be of migrants, meaning that the centre itself is managed and operated by migrant workers who have returned to their communities and have firsthand knowledge of the migration experience. This model not only builds trust with the migrant community but also strengthens the capacity of the MRC to address evolving needs effectively.

Rights-based approach

A rights-based approach places the fundamental rights and dignity of migrants at the centre of all MRC operations. MRCs must operate under the framework of international labour and human rights standards. All services should aim to empower migrant workers with knowledge of their rights and provide access to mechanisms for redress and protection.

Migrant workers and their families, regardless of their legal status, nationality, sex, age, ethnicity, language, religion or economic class, are entitled to protection and equal access to services. The MRC should ensure that all services and programmes are delivered in a way that recognizes and respects these rights, with a particular focus on individuals and groups who face systemic barriers to access, such as those from marginalized communities.

Adopting a rights-based approach also means aligning MRC services with international standards on human and labour rights, such as the ILO Conventions on migrant workers² and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.³ Ensuring that staff are trained on these standards and that service delivery is consistent with human rights principles is essential to maintaining the credibility and effectiveness of the MRC.

Comprehensive, multidimensional, coordinated and quality services

Migrants have diverse backgrounds, experiences and needs, which means that the services provided by the MRC must be equally diverse and adaptable. The MRC should aim to offer a comprehensive and multidimensional range of services and referrals that address not only immediate economic concerns but also social, psychological and health-related challenges.

The support provided should be designed to cover the entire migration cycle, from pre-departure to return and reintegration and be able to respond to the specific vulnerabilities of different migrant groups, including women, children, persons with disabilities and marginalized communities. In addition to the services directly provided by the MRC, strong partnership and coordination with external service providers is essential to address complex needs such as legal support, mental health care and protection from exploitation or violence.

Ensuring that the services are not only available but also delivered in a timely, fair, respectful and culturally appropriate manner is key. Quality assurance mechanisms, such as client feedback systems, service evaluation and staff training, should be in place to maintain high standards and adapt to changing needs over time.

Gender responsiveness

Migration is highly gendered, with women and men facing different challenges and vulnerabilities throughout the migration cycle. Women migrant workers from the East African region, for example,

² See ILO Conventions relevant to migrant workers, including [Convention No. 97](#) (Migration for Employment) and [Convention No. 143](#) (Migrant Workers – Supplementary Provisions).

³ See the UN International [Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families](#)

are often concentrated in domestic work, caregiving and the informal sector, where they are more exposed to exploitation, abuse, and violence. Men, on the other hand, are more frequently employed in construction, security, hospitality, the platform economy, agriculture and manufacturing, facing different sets of occupational hazards and labour rights violations.

An MRC should adopt a gender-responsive approach that considers the specific needs of migrant workers based on their gender, ethnicity and other intersecting characteristics. This means not only designing services that are inclusive and responsive but also training staff to handle gender-based issues sensitively and effectively.

At the operational level, this could involve ensuring that there is at least one woman case worker on staff, providing separate and private spaces for counselling and offering services specifically tailored to the needs of women migrant workers, such as support for survivors of gender-based violence or pregnancy-related healthcare. MRC staff should also be familiar with international human rights standards related to gender equality and protection from violence and exploitation.

It is also worth noting that although many MRCs currently receive more women migrant workers, particularly returnees, this trend may reflect barriers faced by men in accessing services, including social norms that discourage help-seeking. A gender-responsive approach also means identifying and addressing such gaps by adapting outreach strategies and ensuring services are visibly relevant and accessible to men migrant workers as well.

Leave no one behind

The principle of “Leave No One Behind” (LNOB) is a central promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of migration governance, this principle means that no migrant worker, regardless of their background or status, should be excluded from accessing services and protection. MRCs play a critical role in identifying and addressing the underlying barriers that prevent marginalized groups from accessing their rights and entitlements. This includes addressing discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, disability and socioeconomic status.

Operationalizing LNOB in an MRC context means creating inclusive services that reach those on the margins of society and ensuring that outreach efforts target hard-to-reach groups with particular needs. MRCs should strive to establish systems and mechanisms that promote equity and justice, ensuring that even the most disadvantaged migrants have access to essential services and support. This also involves advocating for policy changes that address systemic barriers to inclusion and protection.

Do No Harm

The Do No Harm (DNH) principle is closely linked to the LNOB principle. It requires that any action taken to improve the situation of migrant workers should not expose them to additional risks or create new vulnerabilities. Migrant workers often face multiple layers of vulnerability due to factors such as their immigration status and economic standing.

MRCs must assess the risks faced by different groups of migrants and tailor services accordingly to avoid reinforcing these vulnerabilities. For example, offering protection and support to victims of exploitation and gender-based violence requires sensitivity to the specific risks they face. Staff should be trained in identifying and mitigating risks, including through appropriate referral mechanisms and safeguarding measures. The goal is to create a safe environment where migrants feel supported without fear of retaliation, exploitation, or harm.

Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches

MRCs often operate within the framework of broader national and local governance structures. Given that they may have limited resources and operational capacity, MRCs should adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to maximize their reach and impact. This means working in coordination with government agencies at different levels, as well as with civil society organizations, trade unions, faith-based groups and the private sector.

An MRC should not aim to provide all services independently but rather position itself as a key actor within a larger network of service providers and advocacy groups. Developing partnerships with other actors ensures that the MRC can leverage existing resources and expertise, avoid duplication of efforts and deliver more comprehensive and sustainable services. This approach also enhances the visibility and credibility of the MRC, improving its ability to advocate for policy changes and increased funding support.

Client reception and management

A well-organized and professional reception process is critical to the success of an MRC. First impressions matter. How a client is welcomed and supported during their first visit will impact their trust and willingness to engage with the centre in the future. The reception process is not simply about greeting a client; it's about understanding their needs, ensuring they feel safe and respected and initiating the correct support pathways to address their concerns.

MRCs must be prepared to handle a variety of situations, including cases of abuse, exploitation and trauma. A well-managed reception process ensures that the right level of sensitivity, professionalism and expertise is applied from the first interaction.

Physical reception

The physical reception area is often the first point of contact for migrant workers. A structured process for receiving clients is essential to create a welcoming, professional and secure environment. The goal is to ensure that every client feels heard, understood and supported.

Key steps in the reception process

The essential steps can be summarised as follows:



1. Greeting and registration

Welcoming the client with warmth and respect is crucial to creating a positive first impression. The staff member at reception should introduce themselves and briefly explain the purpose and services of the MRC to help the client feel comfortable and informed. Ensure that the reception area is clean, comfortable and private to maintain confidentiality.

It is important to document the client's visit in a registration book or an electronic system to facilitate proper follow-up and data analysis (see sample Client card in Annex). Registration should be simple and straightforward: gather key details such as the client's name, unless they prefer to remain anonymous and later specify the nature of their inquiry and any services provided.

If the client wishes to remain anonymous, respect their preference and allow them to register under a pseudonym. Keeping accurate records helps the MRC assess its reach, evaluate the effectiveness of services and identify key trends in client needs.

2. Initial needs assessment

Begin the conversation with open and non-judgmental questions such as: *“How can we assist you?”* or *“What brings you to the centre?”*

If the client is hesitant, provide a general overview of the MRC’s services to help them feel comfortable. Actively listen to the client and avoid interrupting. Take notes on the client’s needs, but do not press for sensitive details if the client seems uncomfortable. If the client shows signs of distress, offer to provide support in a private room.

3. Determining the right case worker or service

After the initial assessment, direct the client to the appropriate case worker. In cases of trauma or GBV, offer the client the choice of speaking with a male or female staff member or volunteer.

If the case requires specialized support (for example, legal advice, mental health care), make an internal referral or prepare to reach out to an external partner.

Some clients may present with trauma or distress. In such cases, ensure that conversations take place in a confidential, safe and private space. Offer reassurance and emotional support without pushing the client to share details. If the client discloses experiences of GBV or exploitation, offer immediate emotional support and explain possible next steps (such as contacting law enforcement or healthcare).

4. Documenting the case

All cases should be recorded in the MRC’s case management system. Update the Client Card to record the client’s entire experience. If the case is ongoing, schedule a follow-up visit and provide the client with contact details for future support.

► Good practices – Adopting a professional attitude when receiving clients



Ensure that the reception area is welcoming, well-organized, clean and tidy

Maintain a calm and respectful tone at all times, even when clients are distressed or frustrated. Keep conversations confidential and avoid discussing cases where other clients might overhear.

If the client seems uncomfortable or threatened, offer to speak in a private room or with a staff member of their preferred gender.

5. Closing the interaction

Summarize the next steps to the client, making sure they understand what support will be provided. Thank the client and reassure them that the centre will continue to support them. If such resources are available at the MRC, provide the client with written materials about MRC services and contact details.

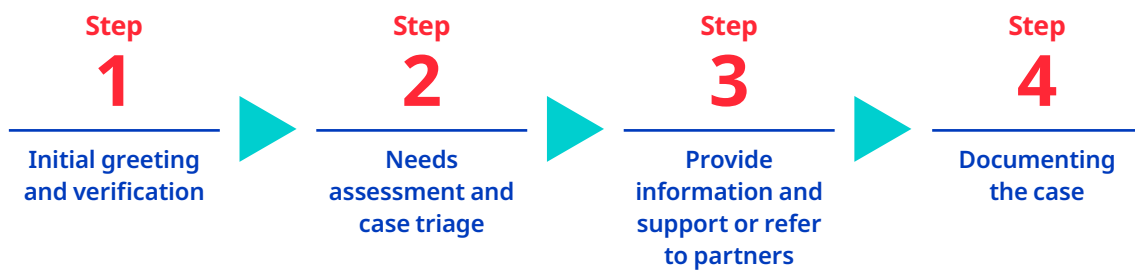
Toll line management

In Kenya, the NEA MRC offers a free toll-free line service that allows migrant workers to call for support, even from abroad. This service ensures that workers who face difficulties while working overseas can reach out to the MRC from their destination country for assistance. Similarly, in Uganda, HTS MRC leverages WhatsApp as a key communication tool, addressing Ugandan domestic workers' requests, ensuring accessibility even when physical visits are not possible. These practices facilitate essential communication for migrant workers in distress, especially in remote or restrictive environments.

Some MRCs in the region provide a toll-free line in addition to having a physical space. Providing a toll line is a good practice as not all migrant workers will be able to visit the MRC in person. In some cases, they may be working in remote areas or under strict employer control, making it difficult to access physical services. Migrant workers posted abroad might also contact the MRC of their country of origin for support. A toll-free phone line or helpline can provide essential remote support for migrant workers who cannot visit the centre directly.

Key steps in toll line management

Similar to a physical visit to the centre, phone calls should be handled in a systematic manner, following the following steps.



1. Initial greeting and verification

Answer calls promptly and introduce the MRC and the available services. Verify the client's identity if appropriate, while respecting privacy and confidentiality. Reassure the caller that their concerns will be handled confidentially and professionally.

If the toll line is set up to record calls, callers should be clearly informed at the start of the call (either through an automatic message or verbally) that the conversation is being recorded, in accordance with applicable data protection standards and consent practices.

2. Needs assessment and case triage

Listen carefully to the client's concerns without interruption. Ask clear, simple questions to understand the issue: *"What is your current situation?"* or *"What kind of support do you need?"* Assess the urgency of the case and prioritize cases involving violence, exploitation, or immediate harm. This process, known as triage, involves sorting cases based on their urgency to ensure those at highest risk receive immediate attention.

3. Provide information and support or refer to partners

Provide information about the client's rights and available support services. Offer guidance on how to handle specific issues (for example, unpaid wages, threats from employers). If the client needs follow-up action, schedule a return call or refer the case to a case worker.

If the MRC cannot provide the necessary support directly, refer the client to a trusted partner organization. Provide contact details and explain the referral process to the client. In cases involving medical emergencies or legal issues, consider contacting the relevant authorities directly (with the client's consent).

4. Document the case

Maintain a confidential record of the call and any actions taken. Follow-up with the client to monitor the outcome and ensure they received the necessary support. Keep track of referral outcomes to improve future case management.

Core services

MRCs should offer a comprehensive package of services tailored to the local context and the specific needs of the migrant population. This ensures that migrant workers and their families are supported at every stage of the migration cycle, from preparation for departure, transit, during employment abroad and upon return for reintegration.

To effectively deliver these services, each MRC should establish a clear and structured process detailing the services provided. A well-defined framework helps to ensure consistency in service delivery, supports monitoring and evaluation and allows for necessary adjustments based on evolving needs and challenges.

The example from Kenya's NEA-run MRC, which outlines various support and reintegration services, is a helpful reference for setting up such a framework.

► Figure 6 NEA MRC services



The key services that an MRC should provide are outlined below.

1. Information dissemination and counselling

Providing accurate and accessible information is a key service MRCs offer to migrant workers who are considering travelling abroad for work, seeking guidance on the migration process and trying to understand the risks and opportunities involved. While not all MRCs may receive such clients, staff should be well-prepared to address these types of inquiries when they arise.

In many East African countries, many prospective migrants visiting MRCs are young women who are interested in migrating to Gulf countries to work as domestic workers. However, this may reflect the visibility of certain migration patterns and does not necessarily capture the full picture, particularly of men who may migrate through less formal channels or into different sectors.

MRCs may encounter a variety of cases, including men and women seeking employment in different industries and destinations. Importantly, many people rely on limited or inaccurate information about migration. Informal brokers and middlemen are often active in communities, spreading incomplete or misleading information about job opportunities and recruitment procedures. MRCs have a critical role in providing accurate, updated and easy-to-understand information.

An effective information dissemination strategy ensures that migrants can make informed decisions about their migration journeys, avoid exploitation, and understand their rights and responsibilities both at home and abroad.

Objectives of information dissemination

The key goals of information dissemination and counselling are:

- Equip migrants with accurate and up-to-date information about the migration process.
- Provide migrants with the tools and knowledge to protect themselves from exploitation, including accurate information about recruitment practices and the risks associated with unethical brokers.
- Enable migrants to make informed decisions based on a realistic understanding of work and life abroad.
- Ensure that prospective migrants understand their legal rights, complaints and justice mechanisms and available support systems in both the country of origin and the country of destination.
- Provide information clearly, simple and easy to understand for people with different levels of literacy and language skills.
- Support returning migrants by giving them information about reintegration programmes and available support services.

It is also essential that all partners within the MRC network share consistent, validated information to ensure migrants receive coherent and accurate messages and to prevent confusion caused by conflicting guidance.

Key areas of information provision

The types of information that MRCs should provide to prospective and returning migrants include:

Topic	Issues
Regular vs. Irregular Migration	► Advantages of migrating through regular channels, for example, access to labour rights and legal protections; ability to access consular support and embassy services; reduced risk of exploitation and human trafficking. ► Risks of irregular migration, for example, higher risk of exploitation and abuse, greater barriers in accessing legal protection or formal complaint mechanisms, risk of detention and deportation in destination countries.
Recruitment and Employment Conditions	► How to identify a licensed recruitment agency and avoid illegal brokers. ► Requirement for a signed and translated employment contract before departure. ► Legal obligations of employers under labour laws and bilateral agreements. ► Information about regulations concerning the payment of recruitment fees and related costs, specifying who is responsible (for example, employer or worker), in line with national legislation. Some countries (for example, Ethiopia) provide detailed breakdowns of allowable fees. Migrants should also be encouraged to request and retain receipts for all payments made. ► Information about secure banking services and low-cost remittance options available in the country of destination. ► Overview of social protection entitlements in destination countries, such as access to health insurance, maternity benefits, or work injury compensation, where available.
Rights and protection in the destination country	► Labour rights and protections afforded to migrant workers in the countries of destination. ► Legal working hours, wages and benefits, rest days, sick leave entitlements, end of service and repatriation conditions. All of this information should be reflected in the employment contract, which should be signed and translated before departure. ► Right and procedure to terminate contracts and change employers where permitted by law. ► Access to healthcare and social protection, emergency services, and consular support.

Methods of information dissemination

There are multiple channels and methods that an MRC can use to effectively disseminate information, as shown in the visual below:

► **Figure 8 Methods of information dissemination**

Walk-in services at the MRC	Community outreach and engagement	Digital and media platforms	Coordination with local authorities and stakeholders	Peer and word-of-mouth networks
► Provide brochures, fact sheets, and posters about key aspects of migration. ► Maintain a resource centre where clients can access computers and phones to research migration-related issues. ► Ensure that staff are available for one-on-one counselling sessions.	► Organize community gatherings and workshops to raise awareness. ► Use schools, local government offices, and community centres to reach potential migrants. ► Partner with faith-based organizations, women's groups, and youth associations to increase outreach.	► Develop social media pages to share updates and alerts. ► Create short, easy-to-understand videos about the migration process. ► Use SMS messaging and WhatsApp groups to reach remote communities.	► Collaborate with local labour offices, police, and government agencies. ► Establish partnerships with licensed recruitment agencies and consular offices. ► Encourage local authorities to share accurate information about migration channels.	► Train returnees and experienced migrants to serve as resource persons. ► Encourage clients to share their positive experiences with others. ► Ensure that consistent and accurate information is being shared within the community.



► Key messages

It is essential to ensure that all visitors to the MRC receive consistent and accurate messages about migration. Staff should communicate the following key messages:

1. Be informed

- Migration can offer opportunities, but it also involves risks.
- Migrate through legal channels to reduce the risk of exploitation.

2. Migrating through regular channels is safer

- Migrant workers hired through regular means are more likely to benefit from legal protections, though risks may still exist.
- Regular migration improves access to support services.

3. Understand your rights and responsibilities

- Always sign a contract before departure.
- Keep copies of your employment contract and other important documents.

4. Protect yourself from exploitation

- Use only licensed recruitment agencies.
- Report any abuse or exploitation to the local authorities or MRC.

5. Plan for return and reintegration

- Save money and plan for life after migration.
- Develop skills that can be used in your home country.

While disseminating information, it is essential to:

- Ensure all information provided is consistent and fact-based.
- Keep staff updated on changing policies and labour laws.
- Maintain confidentiality and sensitivity in all client interactions.
- Provide information in multiple languages where needed and formats that are accessible for people with different levels of literacy and digital literacy.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of outreach activities and adjust strategies as necessary.



► Beware of online job scams and trafficking risks

Online job scams targeting young people in East Africa have been increasing in recent years. These scams often promise lucrative job opportunities abroad, particularly in sectors like hospitality, domestic work and retail, increasingly in qualified jobs like IT or accounting, only to lead to exploitation, trafficking, or forced involvement in illegal activities. Victims are often recruited through fraudulent job postings or online agencies that operate with no accountability or transparency.

Many of these scams originate from Asia, where online scam centres recruit individuals from Africa for fake or exploitative job offers. They use deceptive websites, social media platforms, and fake advertisements to lure individuals, particularly young job seekers, into believing they are being offered legitimate employment opportunities.

It is critical to raise awareness of these risks within communities. MRCs should conduct outreach and sensitization campaigns to inform young people about the dangers of online job scams. They should educate potential migrant workers about verifying job offers, the importance of using trusted recruitment agencies, and the need to consult with the MRC or government bodies before accepting any offers. Key points for information dissemination:

- Encourage migrant workers to be cautious about unsolicited job offers online, especially those requiring upfront payments or personal details.
- Advise potential migrants to only engage with reputable and accredited recruitment agencies.
- Highlight the risks associated with illegal activities, such as forced labour or trafficking, which may result from these scams.
- Promote the importance of using MRCs as a trusted resource for information and guidance on safe migration.

MRCs play an essential role in ensuring that migrants are aware of these risks, and they should continuously engage with local communities to prevent exploitation.

2. Pre-departure training

Pre-departure training is a critical component of the services offered by MRCs, equipping potential migrants with the knowledge, skills and resources needed to succeed and stay safe while working abroad. For many migrant workers, particularly those travelling for the first time, understanding the legal, social, and cultural environment of the destination country is essential for their protection and well-being.

In some countries, pre-departure training is a legal requirement. While MRCs do not directly implement these trainings, they can complement national efforts by reinforcing key messages and supporting migrants who may not have access to formal programmes.

MRCs play a key role in preparing migrant workers for departure by providing detailed information on working conditions, rights and responsibilities and the legal framework in both the country of origin and the country of destination. Many migrants face significant challenges upon arrival, including language barriers, cultural differences and misunderstandings about the terms of their contracts. Pre-departure training helps to reduce these risks by ensuring that migrants are well-informed and prepared before they leave their home country. A well-prepared migrant is more likely to avoid exploitation, manage challenges and have a more positive migration experience.

Planning for return is also an essential component of pre-departure training. Migrants should be made aware that return and reintegration are integral parts of the migration cycle. MRCs can support migrants by providing information on savings and financial planning, skills development opportunities abroad that will be valuable at home and available reintegration programmes and services in their country of origin. Encouraging migrants to consider long-term goals and exit strategies before departure can help ensure a smoother transition and reintegration experience upon return.

Objectives of pre-departure training

The primary objectives of pre-departure training are to:

- Ensure that migrants are aware of their rights and responsibilities under national and international labour standards.
- Equip migrants with the language and cultural skills needed to adapt to life in the destination country.
- Provide information on how to identify and avoid exploitation and abuse.
- Familiarize migrants with the terms of their employment contracts and working conditions.
- Provide practical advice on managing finances, accessing health services and seeking consular support abroad.
- Ensure that migrants are aware of the recruitment process and the fees and costs that are to be paid by the worker and those to be paid by the employer.
- Encourage migrants to plan for their return, including saving for the future, identifying skills that will be valuable at home and understanding available reintegration support in their country of origin.
- Ensure that migrants know how to seek help in case of emergencies or distress, including who to contact and how to access support services.

Key components of pre-departure training

Pre-departure training should cover several key areas to comprehensively prepare migrants for departure and employment:

Language and cultural training

- Provide training on the **language** of the destination country.
 - Basic communication skills (e.g., greetings, asking for help, understanding instructions).
 - Workplace terminology (e.g., terms related to work conditions, wages, sick leave).
- Inform migrants about the **cultural norms** of the destination country:
 - Dress code.
 - Religious practices and holidays.
 - Expected behaviour in public spaces.
- Explain the concept of **hierarchy** and **workplace culture** in the destination country.
- Highlight potential areas of **cultural conflict** and how to resolve them respectfully.

Legal rights and responsibilities

- Migrants should have a clear understanding of their legal status and labour rights before departure:
- Overview of the labour laws in the destination country.
- Standard working hours, rest days, sick leave entitlements, etc.
- Legal mechanisms for filing complaints in case of contract violations or mistreatment.
- Procedures for changing employers or terminating a contract.
- Understanding the **role of the recruitment agency and that of the embassy/consulate** and how to seek help in case of an emergency.

Contract review and understanding

- ▶ Migrants should be trained to:
 - ▶ Carefully **review and understand** the terms of their employment contract.
 - ▶ Salary, working hours, rest days, and sick leave entitlements.
 - ▶ Overtime pay and penalties for contract violations.
 - ▶ Payment schedules and deductions.
- ▶ Be aware of **hidden costs** that might not be legally permitted:
 - ▶ Recruitment fees.
 - ▶ Transportation costs.
 - ▶ Accommodation fees.
- ▶ Know their rights under **bilateral labour agreements** (if applicable) between the sending and receiving countries.

Health and safety

- ▶ Explain common **health issues** faced by migrant workers in the destination country (e.g.: heat stress, exposure to chemicals, respiratory problems due to poor ventilation or pollution)
- ▶ Encourage migrants to secure **medical insurance** and explain how to use it. Where relevant, also provide information about access to **social protection**, including health care, social security benefits, how to access available services, and the portability of entitlements across borders.
- ▶ Provide training on **occupational safety and health (OSH)**, including workplace hazard awareness, proper use of protective gear (in particular for domestic and construction workers), and rights and responsibilities under national OSH standards.
- ▶ Provide mental health support information (e.g.: How to manage stress and isolation, availability of counselling services)

Financial literacy and management

- ▶ Migrants should be trained in **basic financial management skills** to help them avoid exploitation and mismanagement of earnings:
 - ▶ Budgeting before departure and while working abroad.
 - ▶ Understanding foreign exchange rates and international money transfers.
 - ▶ How to avoid scams when sending remittances.
 - ▶ Encourage saving a portion of earnings for reintegration and post-return expenses.
 - ▶ Introduce basic entrepreneurship concepts, such as small business planning, financial goal setting, and identifying viable income-generating activities after return.

Dealing with challenges and emergencies

- ▶ Migrants should be trained to handle different types of challenges:
 - ▶ How to communicate with their employer about grievances or mistreatment.
 - ▶ How to seek help from consulates, MRCs, and NGOs if their rights are violated.
 - ▶ What to do in cases of emergency (e.g., health issues, abuse, accidents).
- ▶ Provide a list of emergency contacts:
 - ▶ Embassy or consulate
 - ▶ Agency in country of destination
 - ▶ Migrant support organisations
 - ▶ Trade unions and workers organisations

Return and reintegration planning

- ▶ Encourage migrants to start planning for their eventual return:
 - ▶ How to save money and manage remittances.
 - ▶ How to access skills training and business grants upon return.
 - ▶ How to access psychosocial and family reintegration support.

Practical considerations for pre-departure training

As the MRC plans to deliver pre-departure training:

- Ensure that training materials are available in **multiple languages** spoken by migrant workers.
- Use **practical examples** and role-playing to help migrants understand real-life scenarios.
- Provide **written handouts** with key information that migrants can take with them.
- Partner with **licensed recruitment agencies** and labour offices to provide updated information on working conditions and legal requirements.
- Organize **regular feedback sessions** with returning migrants to improve the quality of pre-departure training.
- If possible, invite returnees to share their experiences working abroad.



► Key messages

It is essential that all migrants understand the following key messages before departure:

1. Be aware of your rights

Migrants should know their legal rights and how to seek help if those rights are violated.

2. Do not sign a contract you do not understand

Migrants should have a signed contract in a language they understand and should receive a copy before departure.

3. Know the contact details of the embassy and agency in the country of destination

Migrants should always have a way to contact their embassy or labour support organizations.

4. Financial management is key

Migrants should be informed about how to send and save remittances.

5. Plan for return

Even before departure, migrants should plan how they will reintegrate into their home community when they return.

Some of the good practices the MRC should consider include:

- Provide **country-specific training** depending on the destination country.
- Work with **returned migrant workers** to deliver training based on their lived experiences.
- Develop partnerships with **consulates** and **licensed recruitment agencies** to ensure that the information provided is up-to-date and accurate.
- Create **feedback loops** to continuously improve training materials and delivery methods.



► Risks of unfair and illegal practices by recruitment agencies

While many recruitment agencies operate in line with regulations, some unscrupulous agencies take advantage of migrant workers. These agencies may demand large sums of money for job placement services, often far beyond what is acceptable or legal. In some cases, these agencies may promise lucrative employment opportunities abroad, only for workers to find that the job does not exist, or the conditions are vastly different from what was promised.

Migrant workers, desperate for employment, may be reluctant to speak up about the high fees they are being asked to pay, or they may fear losing the opportunity entirely. Some agencies may even withhold important information or charge excessive fees for services such as visa processing, transportation, or accommodation, which should not be part of recruitment costs. This practice is not only exploitative but may also lead to situations where migrant workers are left stranded, with no job and no means of returning home.

It is essential that MRCs raise awareness about what constitutes fair recruitment practices and what fees are considered legitimate. International standards clearly state that workers should *not* have to pay recruitment fees or related costs. According to ILO Convention No. 181 and related guidelines, these costs should be borne by employers or recruiters, not the workers themselves. However, in practice, some countries in East Africa may legally permit or tolerate certain fees. In these contexts, MRCs should provide clear, practical guidance to help protect migrant workers. This includes:

- **Making sure workers know exactly what fees they may be asked to pay**, and when applicable, that these should be paid by employers.
- **Ensuring transparency**: Fees must be itemized and receipts provided.
- **Clarifying rules around salary deductions**, including legality, caps and consent.
- **Advising workers to avoid debt-based recruitment**: This includes taking loans to pay for job placement, which can lead to debt bondage and exploitation. Workers should be informed about financial risks, alternatives and rights related to debt recovery.
- **Highlighting risks of informal payments** to intermediaries or subagents, particularly in remote or underserved areas.

3. Legal aid, grievance mechanisms and mediation services

MRCs support migrant workers who face legal challenges or disputes with their employers. Migrant workers often encounter issues related to employment contracts, such as **contract substitution** or the **non-respect of agreed terms**, as well as challenges involving payment of wages, working conditions, termination, and even physical or emotional abuse. Due to the complex nature of labour migration, these challenges can arise before departure, during employment abroad, or even after returning home.

Migrant workers are often at risk of exploitation and abuse because of:

- Lack of familiarity with local labour laws in the country of destination and contract terms.
- Language barriers and limited access to information.
- Fear of retaliation from employers or authorities.
- Power imbalance between employers and migrant workers.
- Lack of access to justice systems or weak enforcement of labour laws in destination countries.

Providing legal aid and mediation is one of the most complex yet impactful services that MRCs can offer. Migrant workers are often unfamiliar with the labour laws of their destination country and may feel powerless when facing injustice or mistreatment. An MRC can serve as a trusted intermediary, helping workers understand their legal rights, guiding them through grievance mechanisms and, where possible, acting as a mediator between the worker and the employer or recruitment agency.

The role of an MRC in legal aid and mediation will depend on the national context, legal framework and the partnerships the centre has with government agencies, embassies, labour unions, and legal service providers. In some cases, MRCs may handle cases directly; in others, they may need to refer clients to trusted legal aid organizations or government agencies.

Legal aid and mediation services ensure that migrant workers:

- Understand their labour rights and contract terms.
- Have access to support when facing contract violations or abuse.
- Know how to seek justice or file complaints through the appropriate mechanisms.
- Receive timely assistance in cases of exploitation, discrimination, or abuse.

Common challenges faced by migrant workers

MRCs should be prepared to address a wide range of issues that migrant workers commonly face. These include:

► **Figure 9: Common challenges faced by migrant workers**

Contract and payment issues	Workplace conditions	Withholding of identity documents	Threats and retaliation	Exploitation and abuse
► Employer has not paid wages for several months. ► Employer paid initially but then stopped without explanation. ► Wages are lower than the contract specifies. ► The employer is deducting unauthorised fees from wages.	► Employer is forcing the worker to work beyond the agreed working hours. ► Employer is not providing rest days, sick leave, or holiday leave as stated in the contract. ► The nature of the work differs significantly from the original job description or agreed duties. ► Poor accommodation, unsafe working conditions, or lack of access to medical care.	► Employer is holding the worker's passport or residency permit, restricting their movement. ► Threats of reporting the worker to immigration authorities to prevent them from leaving.	► Employer threatens to terminate the contract for unjustified reasons. ► Employer threatens to report the worker to immigration authorities if they complain. ► Employer threatens to physically harm the worker or their family.	► Exploitative working conditions which may amount to forced labour, including cases of forced labour, long working hours without proper compensation. ► Sexual harassment or abuse at the workplace. ► Physical violence or threats of violence. ► Psychological abuse and isolation.

Note: ILO indicators of forced labour can be found [here](#).

What kind of support can MRCs provide?

The type of legal support an MRC can provide will depend on the local legal framework and the resources available. MRCs can assist in several key ways, including:

Contract review and legal advice

MRCs can provide contract review and legal advice, including pre-departure contract explanation covering salary, working hours, termination terms and benefits like sick leave, overtime pay and accommodation. They advise on legal rights during employment, contact employers or agencies to clarify or renegotiate contract term and guide on filing complaints through labour offices or embassies.

Direct mediation

In cases where there is a dispute between the worker and the employer, the MRC can act as a mediator to bring both parties together to discuss the issue, propose solutions that align with the labour law and contract terms and help the worker secure unpaid wages or improve working conditions.

► Good practices – Involve local community leaders in mediation efforts



MRCs run by trade unions are well-positioned to handle mediation issues, as they have experience acting as intermediaries between employers and employees. The COTU-run MRC in Nairobi has noted that they may involve community leaders when facilitating mediation between an employer and an employee. Engaging local influential figures can help reinforce the worker's position and discourage potential retaliation from the employer.

Referral to legal aid or labour authorities

Not all cases can be resolved through mediation. In such cases, the MRC can refer the worker to a government labour office, embassy or licensed legal aid organization, accompany the worker to the labour office if necessary and provide documentation and evidence to support the worker's case.

If a migrant worker reports sexual harassment or physical abuse by the employer, the MRC should immediately refer the case to the police or embassy/consulate and relevant ministries and ensure that the worker is protected.

Support for migrant workers abroad

In some cases, the MRC might receive reports from family members of a worker who is currently abroad and/or the worker themselves, through phone calls or social media.

While the MRC cannot directly intervene in another country, it can contact the embassy or consulate to report the issue, guide the worker on how to access local labour offices or support organizations and advocate for government or diplomatic intervention if needed.



► Good practices – Responding to migrant workers in distress abroad through online communication and social media

The HTS Union-run MRC (Uganda) has developed a process to support migrant workers in distress abroad, particularly domestic workers facing challenges with their employers. When a migrant worker reaches out for help via phone (for example using WhatsApp) or through their next of kin, the MRC meets with the family member to gather details and assist them in drafting a formal letter to the Ministry of Labour. The MRC submits the letter on behalf of the family and follows up closely with the Ministry. Once the Ministry becomes involved, licensed recruitment agencies are more likely to respond promptly, as they fear losing their license. This approach has been successful in facilitating the repatriation of a migrant worker who faced abuse in Saudi Arabia, showing the positive impact of proactive support and diplomatic engagement.

Follow-up and case management

MRCs should maintain detailed case files to track the progress of each case:

- Record details of the initial complaint.
- Document any communication with the employer or labour office.
- Note the outcome of mediation efforts or legal proceedings.
- Follow up with the client to ensure that the issue has been resolved.

Key considerations for addressing grievances

When addressing grievances or providing legal aid, it is essential to ensure that the process is fair, supportive and respectful of the migrant's rights and dignity. Legal aid should be tailored to meet the unique needs and circumstances of each client, considering their background, vulnerabilities and the complexity of their case. The following key considerations should guide the provision of legal aid to ensure that it is effective and accessible:

- **Confidentiality:** All cases should be handled with strict confidentiality to protect the worker's privacy and safety.
- **Non-discrimination:** Legal aid should be provided to all migrant workers, regardless of nationality, sex or migration status.
- **Empowerment:** Migrants should be encouraged to speak up and take action to protect their rights.
- **Accessibility:** Legal aid and mediation services should be accessible to migrants with low literacy levels or language barriers.
- **Sensitivity:** Cases involving gender-based violence or exploitation should be handled with care and referred to specialists if necessary.

► Figure 10: Example scenarios



4. Return and reintegration support

Another key part of the MRC's role is to support migrant workers who return to their home country after working abroad. Return and reintegration are sometimes overlooked areas of migrant support, but they are critical for ensuring that migrants can rebuild their lives and reintegrate into their communities with dignity and stability.

► Preparing for return throughout the migration cycle

Preparing for return should be integrated throughout the migration cycle, not just at the end. MRCs can help migrant workers plan by providing information and tools on financial planning, savings strategies and remittance management. They can also offer guidance on skills certification and recognition to increase future employability upon return. Additionally, support for maintaining family relationships and communication while abroad can ease reintegration. Promoting early return planning will empower migrant workers to make informed decisions about their future.

MRCs are often among the first points of contact for returnees who may arrive home with very few resources, facing both emotional and financial challenges. Returnees may have returned voluntarily or through forced repatriation, particularly in the context of large-scale deportations from countries such as Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Many returnees arrive in distress, having faced abuse, exploitation, detention or trauma. Discussions with MRC staff in the region revealed that some have been jailed or subjected to physical and sexual abuse, while others may simply feel disappointed and ashamed that their migration experience did not meet their expectations.

While many returnees face distressing circumstances, others come back with valuable experience, new skills and savings that can be used to support their families, start small businesses, or invest in housing. Returnees may also bring expanded networks and new ideas that can contribute positively to their communities and local development.

An MRC's ability to provide trauma-informed, practical support is essential for helping returnees rebuild their confidence and find new opportunities. Returnees' needs are often complex, spanning mental health support, economic reintegration and access to social services. The goal of reintegration support

is not just to address immediate needs but to help returnees regain a sense of agency and stability in their lives.

Many returnees face overlapping challenges, including:

- **Economic hardship:** Some returnees come back without any savings, job prospects, or support network.
- **Psychological stress:** Feelings of failure, shame and emotional distress from traumatic experiences during migration.
- **Health issues:** Physical injuries, chronic health problems or mental health issues stemming from poor working and living conditions.
- **Legal issues:** Unresolved disputes over wages or contract violations.
- **Social stigma:** Returnees may feel isolated or face discrimination within their communities.
- **Family breakdown:** Some returnees find that family ties have weakened or broken down during their time abroad.

These challenges can be interconnected, requiring a comprehensive response from MRCs, government agencies and community-based organizations.

Support provided

Returnees may experience a wide range of needs, some of which can be addressed by MRCs themselves, while others will require the mobilization of the MCR's network.

Emotional and psychological support

Many returnees experience mental health challenges, including post-traumatic stress from abusive work conditions, anxiety and depression related to financial insecurity, feelings of shame, disappointment and social alienation. MRC staff should be trained in trauma-informed case management (see guidelines in Annex on trauma-informed case management) to:

- Create a safe and non-judgmental space for returnees.
- Encourage returnees to express their feelings without fear of being dismissed.
- Connect returnees with trained mental health professionals or psychosocial support services.
- Facilitate peer support groups where returnees can share their experiences and rebuild a sense of community.

► Good practices – WhatsApp group for returned migrant workers



HTS-run MRC in Kampala has established a WhatsApp group for returned migrant workers, creating a space where they can exchange information. Through this platform, the MRC can share key messages, upcoming opportunities and updates relevant to the workers. Additionally, returnees are able to connect with each other, share their experiences and provide mutual support, creating a sense of community. This virtual network helps to reduce isolation and gives migrant workers the chance to seek advice and discuss challenges they may face upon returning home.

Economic reintegration and employment support

Economic and labour market reintegration is often one of the most urgent needs for returnees. MRCs can support economic reintegration by:

- Providing job placement services: this can be achieved by partnering with local businesses and employers to create job opportunities for returnees.
- Skills matching: helping returnees' recognition of skills gained abroad and how to apply them locally.
- Vocational training: linking returnees with TVET centres offering short-term training, providing opportunities for re-skilling and upskilling.
- Business grants and micro-loans: supporting returnees who wish to start small businesses through access to capital and financial literacy training, for instance, by helping them apply to such opportunities.
- Financial planning assistance: Teaching returnees how to manage debt, savings, and remittances.

► Good practices – Entrepreneurship Training for Returned Migrant Workers



In Kenya, the ILO, through the Better Regional Migration Management (BRMM) Programme, supported the COTU-run MRC in partnership with the Kenya Union of Domestic, Hotels, Educational Institutions and Hospital Workers (KUDHEIHA workers) to deliver entrepreneurship training using the ILO Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme. The training, targeting 660 returned migrants in Nairobi and Mombasa, included the Generate Your Business (GYB) and Start Your Business (SYB) modules. The programme empowered returnees to generate viable business ideas and start small enterprises. Each participant also received a cash grant of USD 150 as part of an integrated social assistance scheme to support reintegration.

Similarly, the NEA-run MRC provided entrepreneurship training to returned migrant workers in 2024 with support from IOM. The training covered topics such as business plan development and market analysis. A total of 12 returnees attended the training and two of them received grants to help start their businesses.

In Uganda, the HTS MRC provided skills training to women returned migrant workers through the ILO's FAIRWAY project.

Health and medical support

Returnees may have injuries or chronic health problems linked to poor working and living conditions abroad. MRCs should refer returnees to local healthcare providers or specialized clinics and provide information on accessing low-cost medical services or public health insurance, if available. MRCs are encouraged to ensure that women returnees have access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Family and community reintegration

Returnees often face difficulties reconnecting with family members and communities. Some may feel judged or alienated, especially if their migration experience was perceived as a failure. MRCs can:

- Provide family mediation services to rebuild trust and communication.
- Organize community outreach to increase understanding of returnees' challenges and reduce social stigma.
- Encourage local religious and community leaders to support returnees' reintegration efforts.
- Offer peer support networks where returnees can meet others with similar experiences.

Legal and administrative support

Returnees may have unresolved legal issues or documentation challenges, such as lost identification documents (for example, passports, work permits), deportation-related penalties or entry bans. MRCs should help returnees replace lost or confiscated identification documents and advise returnees on legal restrictions or bans on re-entering certain countries.

Financial literacy and remittance management

Returnees often continue to manage cross-border financial obligations, including debt repayment and family support. MRCs can provide:

- Financial literacy training to enhance their understanding of financial management.
- Guidance on setting up bank accounts and using secure remittance channels.
- Advice on managing debt and planning for future migration opportunities. MRCs can also coordinate with partners in destination countries to facilitate access to social security entitlements and advocate for the protection of migrant workers' rights.

► Figure 11 Example scenarios



Key considerations for return and reintegration support

When providing return and reintegration support, MRC staff should consider the following:

- **Individualized support:** Returnees' needs will vary widely depending on their migration experience, personal background and reason for return.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** MRC staff should be aware of social and cultural factors that may affect reintegration, such as gender dynamics and family expectations.
- **Trauma-informed approach:** Staff should be trained to provide care with sensitivity and respect, as many returnees have experienced trauma.
- **Confidentiality:** Respect the privacy of returnees and avoid sharing personal information without consent.
- **Empowerment:** Encourage returnees to take an active role in defining their reintegration goals and strategies.

5. Other services

MRCs may provide additional services depending on available resources, partnerships and migrant population needs. Two examples are employment facilitation and emergency and crisis support. Although not all MRCs are equipped to provide these services directly, they play an important role in filling gaps and meeting urgent needs when possible.

Employment facilitation

Some MRCs support migrant workers by helping them secure employment, either locally or abroad, through:

- Job matching services to link prospective migrant workers with licensed overseas recruitment agencies.
- Partnerships with local businesses and employers to find local employment for returnees.
- Skills assessments and vocational guidance to help migrants identify transferable skills and explore new career paths.
- Assistance with job applications, resume writing and interview preparation.

MRCs work closely with the following partners to navigate complex labour markets and recruitment processes:

- Government labour offices, including public employment services, and overseas employment agencies.
- Trade unions that provide labour market information and worker protections.
- Private sector partners who may have job openings or skills training opportunities.

Emergency and crisis support

MRCs may provide assistance during emergencies or crisis situations, including:

- **Emergency shelter:** Providing short-term accommodation for migrant workers facing homelessness or safety threats.
- **Food and basic supplies:** Offering food, clothing and hygiene kits for migrants in distress.

- **Medical assistance:** Covering the cost of urgent medical care or referring clients to local health providers.
- **Legal protection:** Assisting migrants who have been detained or face legal challenges in the destination country.

In some areas, migrant centres focus on humanitarian support, often with the assistance of partners such as IOM and UNHCR. For example, the MRC in Bosaso (Puntland, Somalia), provides information and vital services for migrants in transit.

ILO-supported MRCs are designed to address labour market needs, but emergencies and crisis situations can still arise, such as worker abuse, immediate danger, or extreme vulnerability.

MRCs should develop strong referral networks with relevant organizations and authorities to handle emergency situations, even if they cannot offer services directly. Effective protocols should be in place for sudden deportations, mass returns, or human trafficking and exploitation.

MRC staff should be trained to manage emergencies with sensitivity and speed, ensuring affected migrants receive immediate protection and support. In mass return cases, MRCs should coordinate with government agencies and international organizations to provide temporary shelter, food, and psychosocial support. Emergency hotlines and communication networks may also be established to provide ongoing support and guidance to affected migrants.

► Good practices – MRCs providing shelter for migrant workers in danger



In Singapore, the NGO HOME operates an MRC that includes a shelter for migrant workers facing immediate danger or exploitation. The shelter provides a safe space for workers who have experienced abuse, threats, or unsafe working conditions.

Emergency and crisis support require partnerships with:

- Government agencies (for example, labour departments, foreign affairs ministries).
- International organisations (for example, IOM, UNHCR).
- Community-based organizations (for example, shelters, legal aid services).
- Trade unions (in cases involving labour exploitation).

Referral and Partnership Mechanisms

MRCs support migrant workers but cannot provide all services directly. Strong referral and partnership networks ensure migrants receive comprehensive support. MRCs partner with government agencies, NGOs, trade unions, faith-based organizations and private service providers to fill service gaps and extend their reach.

Building strong partnerships

Partnerships are critical due to the multifaceted challenges faced by migrant workers, including legal, medical, psychological and economic issues. Strategic partnerships enable MRCs to offer a broader range of services through effective referral systems, without needing all expertise and resources internally. Key partners may include:

Developing partnerships requires active outreach, relationship-building and consistent communication. MRC staff should introduce the centre's mission and objectives to potential partners, explain the needs

► Figure 12: Potential partners



of migrant workers' needs and explore collaboration areas. Building and maintaining an effective referral network requires time and effort. Key challenges faced in developing referrals raised by MRC staff in the region include:

- Lack of available services in remote areas.
- Poor coordination between different actors.
- Mistrust between migrants and service providers (particularly government agencies).
- Resource limitations that affect the ability to track and monitor referrals.

To address these challenges, MRCs should regularly map available services, discuss with relevant stakeholders to identify required actions to take to address unmet needs, and jointly advocate for increased funding to expand service availability.

Referral mechanisms

Establishing a formal referral process is essential to ensure that migrants receive timely and coordinated support. An MRC should have a clear, documented referral pathway that defines:

- The types of services that can be referred.
- How to make a referral (for example, using a referral form – see example in Annex).
- The roles and responsibilities of the MRC and the referral partner.
- How follow-ups and case outcomes will be tracked.
- How client confidentiality will be maintained.

To make referrals effective, MRCs can develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with key partners to clarify roles, responsibilities and communication protocols. Case management systems should be used to monitor the progress of referrals and document outcomes. Importantly, feedback mechanisms should be in place to evaluate the quality of services provided by referral partners and improve the referral system over time.

In practice, several MRCs in East Africa have faced challenges in developing referral networks because they are located in remote areas with fewer available services. In contrast, MRCs in capital cities often have access to a broader range of partners and service providers. Despite this, even in rural areas, informal networks, including religious leaders, local elders and influential community members, can play a crucial role in connecting migrants to services.

Leveraging trade union networks

Trade unions have a unique advantage in supporting migrant workers through referrals. In Kenya's COTU-run MRC, they leverage members of the trade union to provide services for MRC clients. Trade union-led MRCs can leverage this network to:

- Connect migrant workers with legal assistance and grievance mechanisms.
- Connect migrant with health professionals.
- Negotiate with employers and government agencies on behalf of workers.

Informal and community-based referrals

In addition to formal referrals, informal community-based networks play a key role in facilitating access to services. Trusted individuals, such as community leaders, religious figures and returnee migrants, often serve as key sources of information and support.

Community-based referrals work best when the MRC is actively involved in community outreach and awareness-raising and when the MRC staff maintains relationships with influential community members. It is essential that there is a system for following up with community-based referrals to ensure the client receives the necessary support.

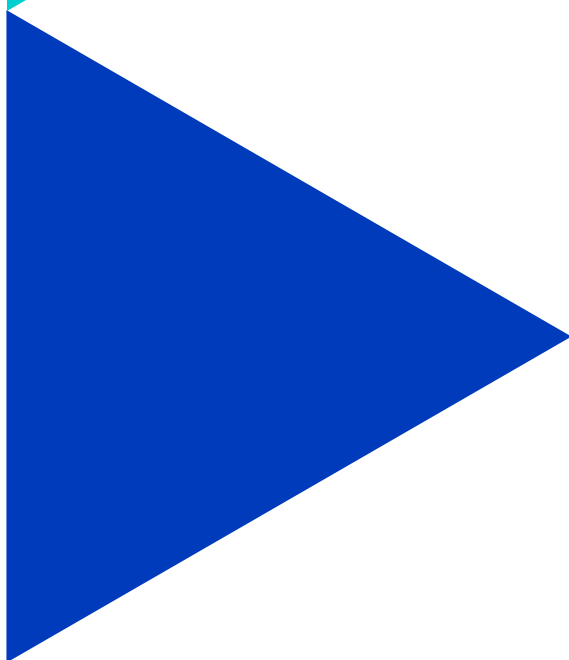
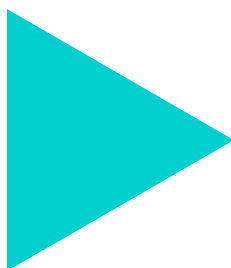
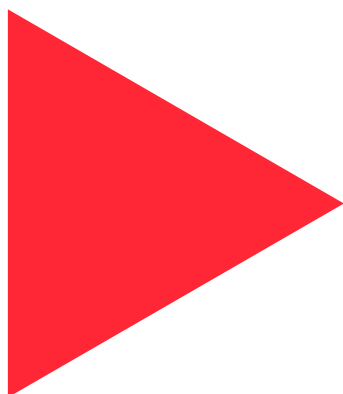
Organizing migrant workers and fostering union-to-union cooperation

MRCs play a crucial role in providing direct services to migrant workers and empowering them through union organizing. Trade union-led MRCs serve as gateways for migrant workers to access legal and social protection, engage in collective action, and become part of the broader labour movement. Key strategies include:

- **Recruitment and engagement:** MRCs act as hubs for outreach, introducing workers to the benefits of union membership, providing training on labour rights and are supported in joining trade unions.
- **Peer-to-peer organizing:** Activities such as cultural events, vocational training, and community discussions serve as entry points for worker solidarity and discussion around unionization.
- **Union-to-union cooperation:** Examples from Jordan, Malaysia and Indonesia show how MRCs can facilitate bilateral cooperation between unions in countries of origin and destination, enabling joint case handling, data sharing and coordinated advocacy.
- **Advocacy and representation:** Trade unions, in collaboration with MRCs, lead campaigns to improve working conditions and tackle exploitative practices, such as wage theft or recruitment abuses, often with cross-border support.

These practices align with key ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on freedom of association and collective bargaining. For more, see:

- [Migrant workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining](#)
- [Trade union-led Migrant Worker Resource Centres in ASEAN and Jordan](#)
- [Trade Unions in Action for Migrant Workers \(ITUC\)](#)



▶ 5

Monitoring and Evaluation



Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a critical component of effective service delivery and management for MRCs. It allows MRCs to track their progress, measure the impact of their activities, identify gaps and adjust services to better meet migrant workers' needs. A well-designed M&E system allows MRCs to provide evidence-based services, demonstrate accountability and impact to donors and stakeholders, and continuously improve service quality.

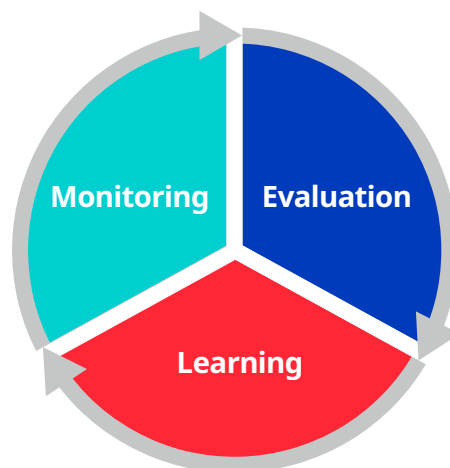
M&E requires a structured and consistent approach to ensure that data is collected, analyzed, and used effectively. This includes setting clear objectives, defining key performance indicators (KPIs), establishing mechanisms for data collection and reporting and incorporating feedback from clients and stakeholders into the improvement process.

This section outlines the key concepts and tools for setting up an effective M&E system at the MRC level.

Key M&E concepts

Understanding the following terms and concepts is essential for establishing an M&E framework.

► Figure 13 MEL cycle



Monitoring

Monitoring is the **ongoing process of collecting, analyzing, and using information** to track programme or service progress. It helps MRCs:

- Track whether activities are being implemented as planned.
- Identify bottlenecks and challenges early.
- Ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

Example: Monitoring the number of migrants accessing counselling services monthly to identify trends or gaps in service delivery.

Evaluation

Evaluation is a **systematic and objective assessment** of a programme or service to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact. Key purposes of evaluation:

- Identify what is working and what is not.
- Generate evidence to support decision-making.
- Improve future programme design and implementation.

Example: Evaluating the impact of pre-departure training by measuring migrants' understanding of contract terms and rights at work.

Learning

Learning is the process of **analyzing monitoring and evaluation** and using them to improve future operations and decision-making. It ensures MRCs to:

- Adapt to changing needs and contexts.
- Integrate client feedback into service design.
- Scale up successful approaches and phase out ineffective ones.

Example: If monitoring data shows certain pre-departure training modules are not well understood, the MRC can revise the training content or delivery method.

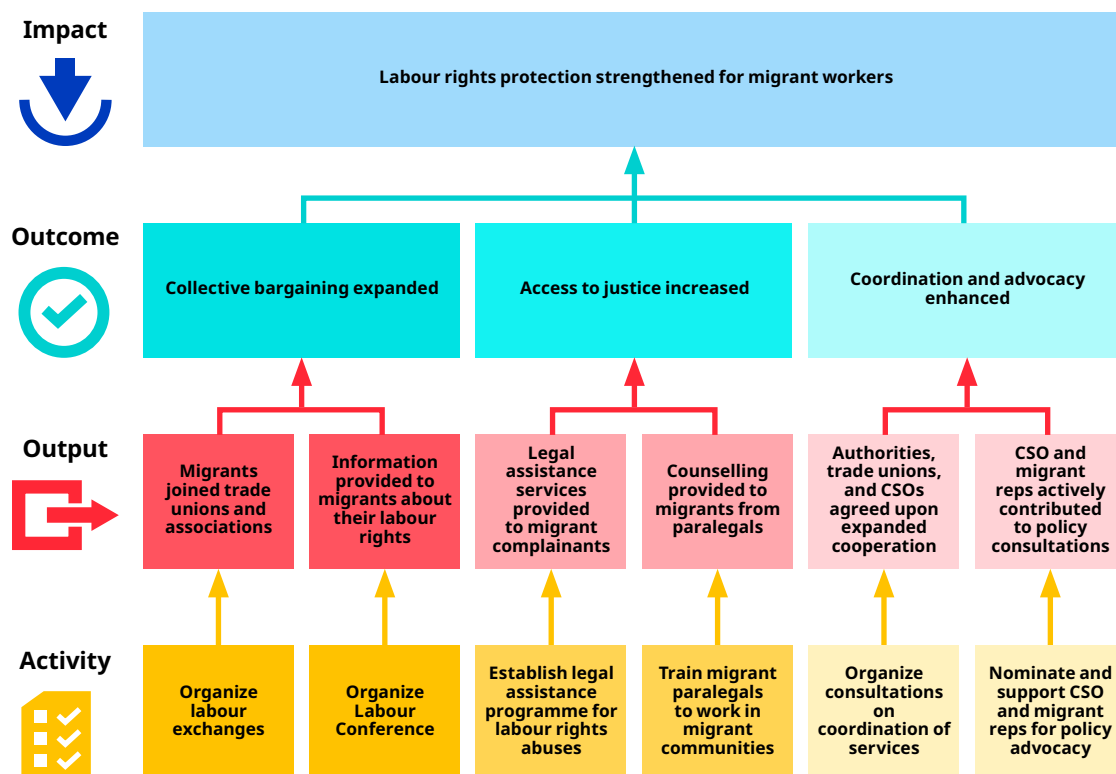
Theory of change

A Theory of Change is a **conceptual model** outlining how lead to specific outcomes and impacts. It helps MRCs:

- Define long-term goals Identify the preconditions and steps needed to achieve goals.
- Establish measurable indicators to track progress.

Example: MRCs provide accurate information on safe migration → Migrant workers are better prepared for work abroad → Lower instances of contract violations and exploitation.

► Figure 14 Theory of change of an MRC - source: ILO, 2018, Monitoring and evaluation training manual for migrant worker resource centres



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

KPIs are **specific, measurable and time-bound indicators** used to evaluate the success of a programme or service success. Types of KPIs include:

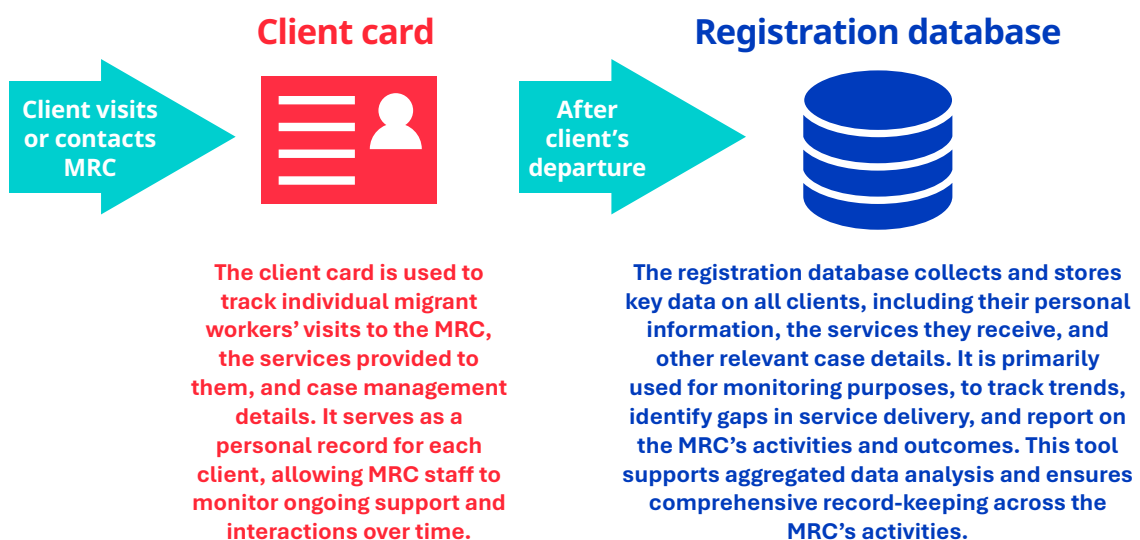
- Output indicators (for example: number of counselling sessions provided).
- Outcome indicators (for example: percentage of migrants who successfully secure legal employment abroad after visiting the MRC).
- Impact indicators (for example: reduction in exploitation or abuse cases among migrant workers).

Data collection tools

Data collection tools are essential for understanding migrant workers' needs, monitoring MRC services and improving service delivery. MRCs should establish consistent and structured data collection processes to track client profiles, services provided, and outcomes achieved.

The visual below illustrates a proposed monitoring system designed to capture data systematically while ensuring ease of use for staff.

► Figure 15 Data collection tools



Client cards

Client cards are the primary tool used by MRCs to collect information on the support services provided to migrant workers. They serve several functions:

- **Provide demographic profiles** of beneficiaries (age, sex, nationality, migration status, destination country).
- **Record family contact information** for emergencies
- **Document migration plans** and destination countries for tailored support.
- **Establish case files** and track services provided
- **Recording contact details** for follow-up interviews and impact assessment MRC staff should build trust with clients before collecting personal information. Clients who prefer anonymity can provide minimal details or use a pseudonym. Sensitive information is treated confidentially, in line with data protection standards.

A client card template is available in Annex, ensuring consistent data collection. The MRC client registration database serves a central repository for client cases and services, enabling systematic data management and analysis.

MRC client registration database

The MRC client registration database is a central repository for client cases and services, enabling systematic data management and analysis. It helps identify patterns, generate reports and improve case management.

Key database functions include:

- **Centralized tracking:** All client cases and services are stored in one place, facilitating trend monitoring and service outcome analysis.
- **Data analysis:** Reports can be generated on clients served, services provided and overall client satisfaction, helping identify outreach gaps and underserved groups.
- **Case follow-up:** Staff can set reminders and track ongoing cases.
- **Monitoring impact:** Data analysis allows MRCs to assess service effectiveness and adjust strategies accordingly.

MRCs can adapt the **MRC client registration database (Annex)** to systematically input and analyze key information, ensuring data is organized and easily retrievable for case management and reporting.

Feedback mechanisms

A robust feedback mechanism is essential to ensure MRC services meet migrant workers' needs. It enables MRCS to gather client insights assess service quality and improve operations, reinforcing a migrant-centred approach.

Purpose of the feedback mechanism

The primary objectives of a feedback mechanism are:

- **Measure client satisfaction:** Assess how well services meet migrant workers' needs.
- **Identify gaps and weaknesses:** Recognize areas for service improvement or expansion.
- **Ensure accountability:** Establish a clear process for handling complaints and suggestions.
- **Promote continuous improvement:** Use client insights to refine services and strengthen service delivery.

Methods to collect feedback

MRCs can collect feedback through various methods using a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

► Figure 16 Feedback management tools



► Sample interview questions for local MRC client feedback

MRC services: utilisation, accessibility and awareness	► What type of service did you use at the MRC? ► How did you first learn about MRC services? ► Did you face any obstacles accessing MRC services? ► Were you reluctant to access the MRC? ► Do women in your community face any additional obstacles to using the MRC?
Quality	► Did MRC services meet your needs? ► What should be improved about the MRC? (Facilities, staff, services, outreach, and so on etc.) ► Were services responsive to your needs as a woman/man (for example, sectors of employment, channels for regular migration, labour rights, social protection, and so on.)?
Outcomes and recommendations	► What have you learned about safe migration or labour rights from using the MRC's services? ► How have you applied what you have learned to protect yourself? ► Have you changed your plans or behaviour? ► Have you received any practical benefits from using the MRC's services (for example, saved money on recruitment, obtained better working conditions received compensation, and so on)? ► What additional services or information should the MRC provide to migrant workers?

Source: Source: ILO (2014). "Monitoring and evaluation guide for migrant workers resource centres"

Processing and responding to feedback

MRC staff should regularly review feedback collected through different channels and categorise it based on urgency and type of service. Feedback that requires immediate action, such as complaints about mistreatment or poor service, should be addressed promptly by the MRC's management team. Regular feedback reports should be compiled and presented during staff meetings to discuss patterns, issues, and improvements. Clients who submit complaints or suggestions should be informed promptly about the status of their feedback and the actions taken in response.



► Good practices – systematic feedback collection in the Philippines

The Philippines MRCs have successfully implemented structured feedback mechanisms, including the use of **client satisfaction surveys** and **suggestion boxes**. For example, the Naga City MRC collects feedback through standardised surveys conducted after each service interaction. Results are compiled monthly and used to adjust staffing levels, improve communication materials, and address service gaps.

Reporting on progress

Reporting on progress is critical for MRCs to assess performance and ensure accountability to stakeholders, including government agencies, donors and migrant communities. MRCs should have clear guidelines and templates for compiling and analyzing data collected through client cards, beneficiary tracking tools and other monitoring systems.

Quarterly reporting

Quarterly reporting provides an opportunity to reflect on MRC services effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. MRC managers should analyze data regularly to inform strategic decision-making and adjust programming as needed.

The Somalia **MRC quarterly reporting template** (see Annex) is a good example of a structured reporting tool, collecting key information such as:

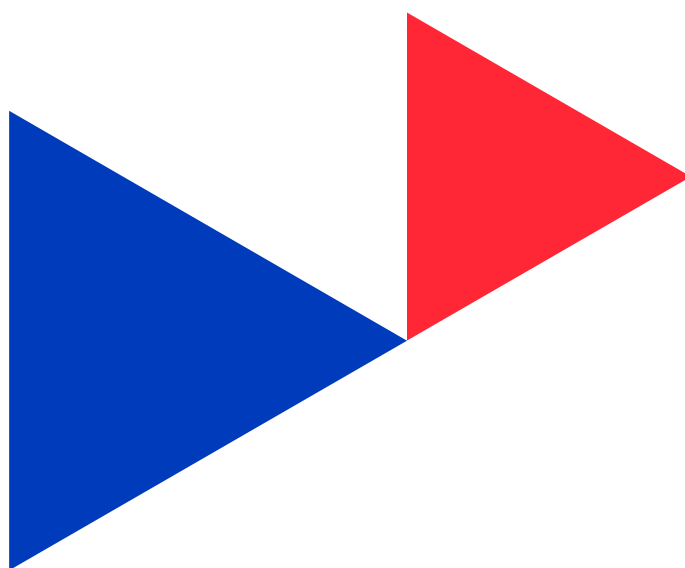
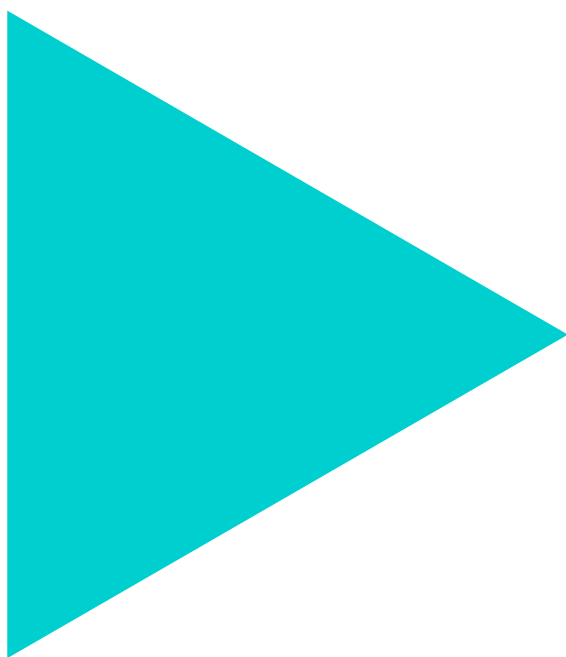
- Number of migrants served (disaggregated by sex, age, and migration status)
- Types of services provided (for example, legal aid, counselling, training)
- Profile of beneficiaries (for example, skills, education level, employment status)
- Challenges faced by clients and actions taken to address them
- Success stories and lessons learned

Data analysis can inform programming priorities, such as reallocating resources to the most in-demand services and guide staff training by identifying areas where additional skills are needed.

In addition to service-level analysis, quarterly reporting should be used strategically to assess whether the MRC is effectively reaching all relevant groups. By comparing client demographics with available migration data, MRCs can identify underserved populations (for example, certain gender groups, age brackets, or irregular migrants) and adapt outreach efforts accordingly. This ensures services are not limited to one specific group, such as returnees, but also extend to other groups in need of support, such as prospective migrants or inbound migrant workers.

Regular reporting helps detect emerging migration trends, supports evidence-based advocacy with government or donors, enables the early identification of service gaps and highlights referral needs, allowing MRCs to strengthen coordination with external service providers.

Reporting is critical to demonstrate results to donors and government stakeholders. Documenting outcomes, client satisfaction and success stories supports funding continuity and sustainability by making the case for MRC relevance and effectiveness.





Capacity strengthening and staff training



Capacity strengthening is essential for MRCs to provide effective, high-quality services to migrant workers, communities and stakeholders. MRC staff play a critical role in addressing migrants' complex needs, including legal assistance, case management, counselling and referrals. To perform these functions effectively, staff need to be well-trained and equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skills. Key training should cover both technical skills (such as case management and legal frameworks) and soft skills (such as leadership, communication, counselling and gender sensitivity). This section outlines the key training areas for MRC staff, effective strategies for building capacity and recommendations for sustaining learning and skills development over time.

Training modules

Staff at MRCs play multiple roles and need a wide range of skills and knowledge to respond effectively to the diverse needs of migrant workers. Regular and structured training is essential to ensure that staff can deliver high-quality services and adapt to evolving migration challenges.

Key training topics should include:

- Labour migration and labour law and policy frameworks (legal frameworks for labour migration in both countries of origin and destination)
- Case management and documentation
- Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI), including gender-sensitive service provision and how to support clients facing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), discrimination, or other forms of marginalization.
- Provision of psychosocial support
- Monitoring and evaluation techniques
- Security protocols and addressing threats to staff and clients
- Resource mobilization
- Leadership and management
- Responsible use of social media and digital platforms
- Basic language and cultural orientation on countries of origin and/or destination

Training can be delivered through a combination of formal sessions, peer learning and practical exercises, ensuring that staff have the necessary skills to manage complex cases and provide comprehensive support to migrants.

On-the-job guidance and mentoring are effective ways to build staff capacity. Staff turnover should be closely monitored to identify gaps and ensure knowledge retention within the MRC. Regular skills assessments should inform training programmes.

Recruiting and onboarding new staff

Orientation and structured onboarding are critical to ensure that new staff understand MRC objectives, structure and operational guidelines. New staff should receive a comprehensive orientation on:

- MRC objectives, operational guidelines and internal protocols (for example, ethical standards, reporting lines, accountability procedures)
- Migrant rights and responsibilities under national and international law
- Case management processes and referral systems
- Gender and social inclusion frameworks

- Communication and networking skills
- Partnerships with stakeholders

The [FAIRWAY Symposium on Improving Information and Services for Migrant Workers through MRCs](#) held in Uganda in September 2023 emphasized the importance of effective staff recruitment and training. The symposium highlighted the need for standardized onboarding processes and continuous skills development to maintain high service standards. The Uganda symposium emphasized the importance of building sustainable MRC capacity through:

- Strengthening collaboration and referral networks
- Investing in data tools and evidence-based decision-making
- Developing integrated training modules tailored to local contexts
- Encouraging staff retention through structured career progression and incentives

Continuous development

To keep staff updated and responsive to evolving migration challenges, continuous learning opportunities should be institutionalized. These could include:

- Regular workshops and refresher courses
- Peer learning and knowledge-sharing platforms
- Exchange programmes between MRCs within and across regions
- Online learning modules and certification programmes
- Media and communication
- Cross-training with government agencies, trade unions, and NGOs

Capacity building should be supported by partnerships with international and local organizations, including:

- Collaboration with ILO, IOM and other international organizations for technical assistance and training.
- Partnering with local universities, research institutions, and trade unions for specialized training.
- Partnering with national and local government ministries, departments and agencies to for broader input and resource mobilization support.
- Establishing peer networks and learning platforms for staff and volunteers.

► Good practices – Use existing online training materials

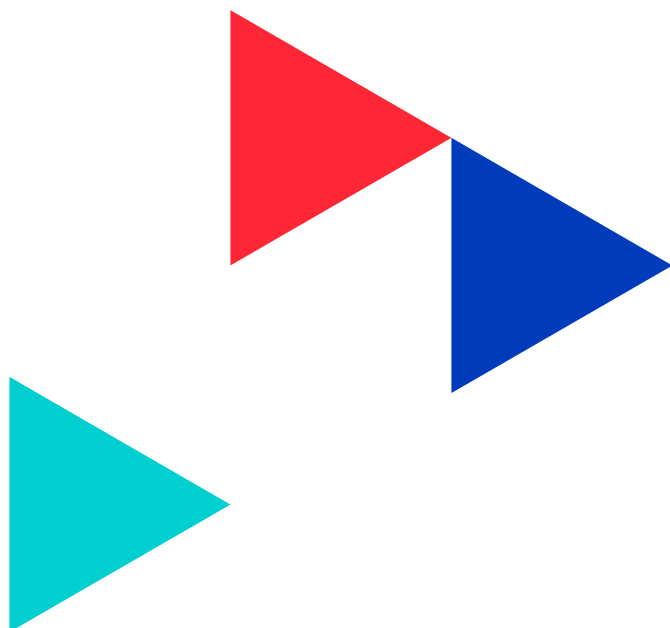


There are several free, online courses and training resources available through international organisations that can enhance the capacity of MRC staff. For instance, the IOM offers an [IOM Reintegration Handbook Online Course](#), which MRCs can utilise to strengthen their reintegration services for returning migrant workers. Similarly, the ILO offers a variety of free training resources on labour migration, migrant rights, and other relevant topics. These online materials are a cost-effective way for MRCs to provide up-to-date, specialised training for their staff, volunteers, and stakeholders involved in migration management and reintegration support.

Key considerations for capacity strengthening

To establish a strong and sustainable capacity-building framework, MRCs should integrate training and staff development into their long-term operational strategy. Key considerations to guide capacity strengthening at the MRC level include:

- **Institutionalized training:** Training programmes should be part of the MRC's annual work plan and budget to ensure sustainability. Under institutionalized training, MRCs can assess alignment with strategic goals; gaps in understanding or applying SOPs; staff proficiency with case management systems and communication tools and awareness of referral pathways to other government institutions and community groups.
- **Gender and inclusion:** Training should emphasize gender sensitivity and protection of migrant workers.
- **Staff well-being:** Staff should have access to mental health and stress management support.
- **Knowledge retention:** Training materials and case studies should be documented and shared across MRCs to prevent loss of institutional knowledge due to staff turnover.
- **Monitoring impact:** Training impact should be measured through staff feedback, case resolution rates and client satisfaction surveys.





Sustainability and resilience



Ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience are essential for maintaining MRC service quality and continuity. It is a challenge commonly raised by MRC management and therefore a source of concern. Sustainability refers to the ability of the MRC to operate effectively over time by securing financial resources, strengthening institutional capacity and adapting to changing needs and circumstances. Resilience refers to the MRC's ability to respond effectively to unexpected challenges and crises, such as health emergencies, mass deportations and geopolitical instability.

Sustainability and resilience strategies should focus on securing funding, improving operational efficiency, developing staff capacity, strengthening partnerships and incorporating innovative approaches such as digital service delivery and eco-friendly operations. Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, including the shift to remote services and the importance of emergency preparedness, have highlighted the need for MRCs to be flexible and adaptable.

Financial sustainability

Securing long-term financial sustainability is essential for the continued operation and growth of MRCs. Several MRCs in the region have no dedicated staff due to financial constraints, while others are heavily dependent on short-term donor funding, which creates vulnerability when projects or funding cycles end. To address this, MRCs should diversify their funding sources, strengthen internal financial management capacity and explore innovative financing models to ensure a stable flow of resources.

Diversification of funding sources

MRCs should aim to reduce reliance on a single funding source by securing funding from multiple sources, including:



Government funding and integration into national budgets

One of the most sustainable approaches is to integrate MRC operations into national budgets. This would ensure that MRCs are viewed as a core element of national labour migration infrastructure rather than as temporary donor-driven projects.

In East Africa, many existing MRCs are already government-run. This means the challenge is not necessarily to secure government support but to strengthen the allocation of resources to MRCs within limited national budgets. Many governments in East Africa face severe financial constraints, making it difficult for MRCs to expand services or improve facilities despite official government support. Government funding can shape MRC strategic focus and operational priorities. For example, the Areka MRC in Ethiopia is government-funded and focuses on supporting local job creation, particularly for unemployed youth, reflecting the government's agenda of addressing domestic employment challenges alongside migration issues.

Existing MRCs may engage with national policymakers and labour ministries to secure more stable funding within national labour migration plans. Presenting evidence of the MRC's impact, such as reduced cases of labour exploitation or improved access to migration-related services, can help strengthen the case for increased government funding. In parallel, building alliances with local governments and leveraging decentralized funding mechanisms could help ensure more predictable and localized funding for MRCs.

Cost-sharing and partnership models

Cost-sharing models, where multiple partners (for example, government, NGOs, trade unions and private sector actors) contribute to MRC operations, can increase financial stability:

- Develop formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with partners to secure long-term commitments for financial and in-kind contributions.
- Seek joint programming with partners, where costs are shared based on service provision responsibilities.

Income-generating activities

Generating internal income can help MRCs reduce reliance on donor funding and strengthen long-term financial sustainability. While services for migrant workers should always be provided free of charge, MRCs can explore alternative ways to generate income depending on the local context. Examples include:

- **Venue rental:** Renting out MRC meeting rooms or training spaces to external actors, such as NGOs or government agencies, for workshops, training sessions, or events.
- **Small business operations:** Establishing small businesses such as a coffee shop, restaurant, cybercafés or convenience store on MRC premises. This can create a source of revenue to support MRC operations while also providing employment opportunities for migrant workers.
- **Consultancy services:** Trade unions and civil society organizations which run MRCs may generate income by providing consultancy services to institutions requiring expertise on labour migration.

By diversifying funding sources in a manner that aligns with the MRC's mission and values, centres can enhance their financial resilience while maintaining the core principle of free services for migrant workers.

Building internal financial management capacity

Ensuring financial sustainability is not just about securing funding. It also requires strong financial management. MRCs should:

- Develop clear financial policies and procedures.
- Train staff on resource mobilization, financial management and donor reporting requirements.

- Use financial forecasting and budgeting to plan for future resource needs.
- Establish internal financial controls and regular auditing processes to increase transparency and build donor confidence.

Advocacy for financial sustainability

Sustainable funding also depends on making the case for why MRCs matter:

- **Document and share impact:** Use M&E data to demonstrate the tangible outcomes of MRC services.
- **Engage with policymakers:** Highlight how MRCs contribute to national migration goals and migrant protection frameworks.
- **Communicate success stories:** Share stories of positive client outcomes to build public and political support for increased funding.

Leveraging volunteers and community support

In several successful MRCs worldwide, volunteers play a crucial role in providing services and extending outreach while reducing operational costs. Well-trained and motivated volunteers can increase the capacity of MRCs to handle a larger volume of clients and provide a broader range of services without increasing fixed costs. Volunteers may have a variety of roles:

- **Outreach and awareness:** Volunteers can organize community outreach activities, including information sessions on safe migration and labour rights.
- **Peer support and counselling:** Former migrant workers or returnees can provide emotional and practical support to new migrants, drawing from their personal experience.
- **Language and cultural support:** Volunteers with language skills can assist in translating documents and facilitating communication between migrants and service providers.
- **Legal aid and case management:** Volunteers with legal or social work experience can support MRC staff in handling complex cases and providing legal assistance.

To maximize the contribution of volunteers, MRCs should establish a structured volunteer management system:

- Develop a **clear volunteer recruitment process** and criteria for selection.
- Provide structured **training** for volunteers, including sessions on migration law, gender sensitivity and case management.
- Create a **code of conduct** and terms of reference to clarify the scope of volunteer activities.
- Offer **mentorship and supervision** to ensure volunteers feel supported and can perform their roles effectively.
- Regularly recognize and reward volunteer contributions to maintain motivation and engagement and create incentives for volunteers, such as **certificates of recognition** or opportunities for career development.

Involving volunteers strengthens **community ownership** of the MRC, which can lead to increased political and financial support from local authorities and other stakeholders. In some cases, partnerships with universities or professional associations allow MRCs to recruit skilled volunteers (for example, law students, social workers) at no cost.

Key considerations for financial sustainability

To summarize, key considerations for building financial sustainability include:

- Develop a strategic funding plan focused on diversification of funding sources.
- Strengthen engagement with national and local governments to secure core funding.
- Establish formal partnership agreements to secure long-term cost-sharing commitments.
- Introduce small-scale income-generating activities to create self-sustaining revenue.
- Invest in staff training on financial management and donor compliance.
- Develop strong financial reporting systems to increase transparency and accountability.
- Develop a structured volunteer recruitment and management programme to increase capacity and reduce costs.

Crisis preparedness

MRCs need to be ready to continue their services during crises, not as first responders, but by maintaining support for migrant workers in coordination with relevant authorities. This requires strong partnerships and collaboration, as MRCs alone may not have the capacity to respond to disasters. Whether the crisis is a natural disaster, political instability or a health emergency, preparedness enables MRCs to adapt and sustain essential services.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the vulnerability of migrant workers during emergencies and highlighted the critical role of MRCs in providing immediate support. During the pandemic, many MRCs adapted their service delivery models to continue supporting migrant workers despite restrictions and disruptions. Some MRCs increased their use of remote service delivery and digital platforms to provide information and counselling.

Key elements of crisis preparedness for MRCs include:

- Developing and maintaining a **crisis response plan**, including clear procedures for staff and partner organizations.
- Establishing **communication channels** to disseminate information quickly during emergencies.
- Ensuring that staff are trained in **crisis management and emergency response**.
- Providing **psychosocial support** to migrants affected by crises.
- Coordinating with government agencies and international organizations to mobilize resources and support.

Digital tools and innovation

Leveraging technology has the potential to improve the efficiency, reach and impact of MRC services. Digital platforms can help MRCs deliver information, provide remote counselling and track service delivery outcomes. To date, few MRCs in East Africa use digital tools in their operations, including for outreach purposes.

While it is essential to adapt the services and outreach methods to the profiles of migrants, it is also important to keep in mind that such practices evolve quickly and that migrant workers, especially the younger ones, will be increasingly using online resources. It is therefore important not to ignore digital tools.

In Asia, many MRCs have established Facebook pages, where migrant workers actively engage by commenting on posts, asking questions and providing feedback. This has proven to be an effective tool for real-time communication and community building among migrants and service providers.

Potential digital tools include:

► **Figure 17 Potential digital tools**



In Kenya, NEA has established an online complaint submission mechanism through the NEA Integrated Management System (IMS), which includes the [Distress Reporting Form](#). This system allows migrant workers or their families to report distress cases or complaints directly. The NEA IMS is currently being upgraded to further enhance its functionality and accessibility for both migrant workers and their families.

If MRC staff do not have the required skills to create and manage a social media page, volunteers can be a valuable resource for such tasks. Many young people are familiar with social media and can offer their expertise. MRCs can also consider partnering with schools, universities, or TVET centres with IT departments to engage students for technical support and management of digital platforms.

► **Good practices – Leveraging online services to stay in touch with migrant workers**



In the Philippines, some MRCs have established a strong online presence through platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. These social media channels are used to disseminate information quickly and engage with migrant workers directly. Some MRCs also use messaging apps like Messenger, WhatsApp, and Viber to create group chats with migrant workers, allowing for real-time communication and more immediate responses to inquiries and concerns.

In addition to digital tools, **mobile-MRCs** (mobile units or temporary outreach centres) could also be considered to reach migrant workers in remote or underserved areas. These mobile-MRCs act as institutionalized extensions of traditional outreach activities and can provide information, counselling, and services to migrant workers who may not be able to travel to urban MRC locations.

Environmental sustainability

MRCs should adopt environmentally sustainable practices to reduce their environmental footprint and promote eco-friendly operations.

Key strategies include:

- Reducing paper use by adopting digital systems for record-keeping and client intake.
- Promoting energy efficiency by using LED lighting and solar energy where possible.
- Reducing waste through recycling and sustainable procurement practices.

MRCs can consider partnering with local environmental organisations to integrate eco-friendly practices into their operations. This may include providing reusable materials during training sessions and encouraging clients to minimize waste.

▶ 8

Communication and outreach



Outreach is a central function of MRCs. While MRCs in East Africa receive migrant workers who come to seek assistance, outreach activities often remain limited. Effective outreach is essential to increase the visibility and accessibility of MRC services, reach potential and current migrant workers and provide critical information to migrants and their families.

MRCs should develop a comprehensive outreach strategy that leverages multiple channels and methods to engage with migrant communities. A diverse approach ensures that information reaches all potential beneficiaries, including those in remote areas or with limited access to digital platforms. Outreach also strengthens trust and credibility among migrant communities, encouraging more migrants to seek support and guidance.

Effective outreach should also aim to reach individuals in the early stages of migration decision-making, before they engage with brokers or make financial commitments. Targeting ‘potential’ migrant workers, as well as their families and community influencers, helps raise awareness early and can prevent exploitation from the outset.

Community engagement strategies

Successful outreach begins with direct community engagement. MRCs can organize:

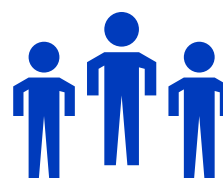
Awareness-raising workshops



Community meetings and consultations



Volunteer-based outreach programmes



Mobile outreach services



► Understanding where and how migrant workers access information on labour migration to design more effective engagement strategies

To design effective outreach strategies, MRCs should also consider **where migrant workers currently obtain their information on migration**. These sources may include informal community networks, religious or local leaders, private recruiters, internet search engines, social media platforms, as well as television and radio. Understanding these existing information channels and the narratives they promote, including common myths or misinformation, is essential to tailor MRC messaging in a way that is both relatable and corrective. This may require periodic mapping exercises or community consultations to identify popular sources and perceptions. By doing so, MRCs can proactively counteract harmful misinformation, dispel unrealistic expectations and build trust in official support systems.

Awareness-raising workshops

Awareness-raising workshops are a key method for informing potential and current migrants about migration processes, labour rights and the services provided by the MRC. These workshops should be tailored to the specific concerns of the local community. For example, in East Africa, many migrants are young women considering employment in the Gulf countries as domestic workers. However, men also migrate in large numbers for jobs in construction, security, hospitality and transport sectors. The workshops should therefore cover key issues such as contract terms, working conditions and workers' rights in these specific destinations and be tailored to reflect the gender and occupational profiles of each community, ensuring that both women and men receive relevant, targeted information.

To make the sessions more interactive and impactful, MRCs can use role-playing exercises, storytelling from returnees, videos and Q&A sessions to clarify doubts and create a safe space for open discussion. Providing practical take-home materials, such as brochures summarizing key information and contact details of the MRC, ensures that the knowledge gained from the workshops is retained and shared within the community.

Community meetings and consultations

Community meetings and consultations provide an opportunity for two-way communication between the MRC and the community. Instead of simply providing information, these meetings should be designed to gather feedback from migrants and their families about their concerns, needs and experiences. MRC staff should adopt a listening approach, allowing migrants to share their stories and challenges. This helps the MRC identify gaps in services and adapt its outreach efforts accordingly. Holding these meetings regularly at accessible locations such as community halls, schools or religious centres increases participation. Disseminating information material and the MRC's contact information can help amplify the visibility of the MRC and further expand the network. Offering refreshments and creating a welcoming environment can help migrants feel more comfortable discussing sensitive issues. Partnerships with local authorities and civil society organizations can also enhance the reach and credibility of these meetings.

Engagement with local influencers

Community leaders, faith leaders, and influential local figures play a strong role in outreach and trust-building. In many communities, especially in rural areas, people are more likely to trust and follow the advice of respected local figures than official messages from government or external organizations. MRCs can take advantage of this by identifying and engaging these key individuals as outreach partners.

► Partner with local leaders:

Local leaders, including village chiefs, religious figures and traditional elders, have the ability to reach and influence large sections of the community. MRCs should conduct orientation sessions with these leaders to provide them with accurate information on migration processes and the services offered by the MRC. Encouraging and actively supporting these leaders to speak publicly about safe migration and the benefits of using MRC services increases credibility and reach. For example, faith-based leaders can integrate migration messaging into their activities and community elders can raise awareness during village meetings. Ensuring that these leaders have access to updated information and printed materials helps them respond effectively to community queries.

► Good practices – Sensitising local officials about MRCs' activities



In Kenya, the NEA is organizing a training session with local officials in Eldoret, following the establishment of an MRC in the locality. The objective of this event is to explain the mission of the MRC, present the services provided, and share key messages with local officials so they can also disseminate the same information at their level. This is a good example of a whole-of-government approach.

► Train influential community figures

Training influential figures, such as teachers, healthcare providers and business leaders, enhances the outreach capacity of MRCs. Training sessions should cover not only the technical aspects of migration but also the social and emotional factors that affect migrants. Influential figures can act as early responders, identifying migrants who are at risk of exploitation or abuse and referring them to the MRC for further support. They can also help address misinformation within the community and facilitate the reintegration of returnees by promoting acceptance and reducing stigma.

► Encourage peer-to-peer outreach

Peer-to-peer outreach builds trust and makes information more relatable. Migrants who have successfully used MRC services can share their experiences with others through formal or informal platforms. MRCs can create “**migrant ambassador**” programmes where experienced migrants are trained to give talks, participate in community meetings and engage on social media platforms. Providing structured opportunities for peer-to-peer outreach, such as community events or discussion groups, ensures that accurate information is shared consistently.

Volunteer-based outreach programmes

Volunteers can play a key role in extending the reach and impact of MRCs. Returnees, local youth and members of faith-based organizations or community groups can be mobilized as outreach workers to spread awareness about MRC services and safe migration practices. Volunteers can also act as peer counsellors, sharing their personal migration experiences to build trust and engagement with potential migrants. Training volunteers on the basics of relevant labour migration policies and procedures, recruitment regulations and labour rights in countries of origin and countries of destination, along with the services offered by the MRC and referral pathways, is essential to ensure that the information they share is accurate and consistent. Incentivizing volunteers through certificates, training opportunities or small stipends can help maintain motivation and commitment. Moreover, volunteers can support MRC staff in organizing community events, distributing informational materials and facilitating social media engagement. To ensure sustainability and acknowledge their contributions, MRCs should also consider pathways for volunteers to transition into formal employment or access other skills development opportunities that support their long-term independence.

Mobile outreach services

Mobile outreach is a critical tool for reaching rural and underserved communities. In many parts of East Africa, migrants from rural areas face challenges in accessing centralized MRC services due to geographical distance and limited transport options. Establishing mobile MRC units, such as vans equipped with information materials, mobile registration systems and basic counselling facilities, allows MRCs to take services directly to communities. Staff conducting mobile outreach should be prepared to address a range of issues, including migration processes, labour rights and emergency support. Mobile units can also collaborate with local authorities to provide integrated services, such as health check-ups and legal aid. Scheduling regular mobile visits and ensuring that the timing aligns with local market days or community gatherings can increase visibility and participation. Mobile outreach is also an effective way to raise awareness of MRC services and ensure that communities are informed about their availability. Roadshows, market-day outreach, door-to-door visits and other localized engagement activities can significantly enhance visibility and trust.

Communication tools

Using the right communication tools increases the reach and effectiveness of outreach. MRCs should consider a mix of traditional and modern tools to engage diverse groups of migrant workers.

To maximize impact, outreach messages and delivery methods should be tailored to different segments of the migrant worker population. For example, information needs and preferences may vary depending on gender, age, migration stage (pre-decision, departure, return), rural or urban origin, literacy levels (including digital literacy) and other factors. Segmenting the audience allows MRCs to identify who within the migrant worker population should be targeted with which messages, through the channels they are most likely to access and trust.

MRCs can use a combination of the following tools:

- **Flyers, posters, branded T-shirts and placards with the services offered by MRCs and brochures:** These materials should provide easy-to-understand materials about the services offered by the MRC.

- **Radio and TV broadcasts:** MRCs can partner with local media to share information on migration, workers' rights and available support services, ideally in local dialects and using engaging formats such as jingles, to increase community reach and resonance.
- **Social media and online platforms:** Platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, TikTok, X and YouTube can be highly effective for reaching younger migrant workers.

Partnerships and collaboration

Strong partnerships are key to expanding the reach and impact of MRC outreach:

► Figure 18 Potential MRC partners



Advocacy

Advocacy helps create a more supportive policy environment for migrant workers and improve access to services. MRCs may engage in both direct and indirect advocacy efforts to influence government policies, labour regulations and public attitudes toward migration and migrant workers. Effective advocacy requires strategic planning, collaboration with stakeholders and the ability to present credible evidence to support policy changes.

Why should MRCs engage in advocacy?

Migrant workers often face significant legal, social and economic barriers in both their home and destination countries. Weak labour protections and poor monitoring and enforcement, limited access to social services, including social protection and limited recourse to justice increase their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse. Advocacy helps to address these structural challenges by pushing for systemic changes that benefit migrant workers.

How to develop an advocacy plan?

An effective advocacy strategy should be structured and goal-oriented. MRCs should develop an **Advocacy Plan** that outlines the key issues to address, the target audience, the methods of engagement and the expected outcomes. The plan should cover the following elements:

1. **Identification of the issue:** Clearly define the policy gap or problem that needs to be addressed. For example:
 - Deception by private recruitment agencies
 - Weak enforcement of labour laws in destination countries
 - Lack of social protection for migrant workers, including healthcare
 - Gaps in access to legal services for migrants
2. **Setting advocacy goals:** Establish clear and measurable objectives. For example, goals could include securing government funding for MRC operations within two years or pushing for legal reforms that strengthen the rights of migrant domestic workers.
3. **Identify key stakeholders:** Map out the decision-makers and influencers involved in the policy process. This includes:
 - Government ministries (Labour, Social Affairs, Justice, and so on).
 - Trade unions and labour organizations.
 - International organizations (ILO, IOM, UNHCR).
 - Civil society organizations.
 - Media and influential public figures.
 - Private sector actors.
4. **Build coalitions and partnerships:** Advocacy is more effective when conducted collectively. MRCs can engage with trade unions, NGOs and community groups to build a broad-based alliance. Working together allows for greater influence and resource sharing.
5. **Develop advocacy messages:** Craft clear and evidence-based messages to support the advocacy goals. Frame the issue in terms of human rights and economic benefits. Use real-life stories and case studies to make the message relatable and, where possible, providing data and research to support claims.
6. **Select appropriate advocacy methods:** Depending on the context, different advocacy methods may be effective. Each method can involve different types of efforts:
 - **Policy briefings:** Prepare concise and well-researched documents summarizing the issue and proposed solutions.
 - **Stakeholder meetings:** Organize formal meetings with policymakers, government officials and other relevant stakeholders.
 - **Public campaigns:** Use media, social media and community outreach to build public support.
 - **Community mobilization:** Encourage migrant workers and their families to participate in advocacy events, petitions or public demonstrations.
7. **Monitor, evaluate and gather feedback on advocacy outcomes:** Advocacy efforts should be tracked to assess their effectiveness. MRCs can, for instance, collect data on policy changes resulting from advocacy, increased funding or resource allocation, or changes in public attitudes toward migration and gather feedback from stakeholders and beneficiaries to inform future actions.

Sample template for advocacy plan

The following provides a simple template to be used when preparing advocacy actions.

Component	Description
Issue	Describe the policy issue or problem to be addressed.
Goal	State the specific goal (for example, passing a new labour protection law).
Target audience	List the decision-makers and influencers to engage.
Partners / allies	Identify organizations and groups that can support the advocacy effort.
Key messages	Summarize the main points to communicate and identify the most appropriate messenger(s) to deliver them (for example, trusted community figures, MRC staff, returnees).
Methods	State the tools and channels for advocacy (for example, meetings, policy briefs, media).
Timeline	Provide a clear timeframe for implementation.
Resources	Identify the budget and human resources needed. Indicate who, at the MRC level, is responsible for this activity.
Outcome indicators	Define the measures of success (for example, policy change, increased funding).

Types of advocacy actions

Advocate for improved labour rights and legal protections

MRCs can work with lawmakers and labour ministries to strengthen laws and enforcement mechanisms that protect migrant workers. This includes advocating for increased and improved labour inspections, regulation of recruitment practices, enforceable contracts, protection against unfair termination and exploitation, and elimination of discrimination.

Collaborate with trade unions and labour organizations

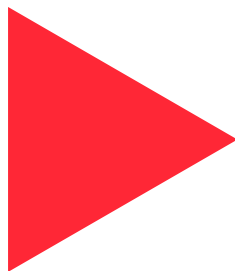
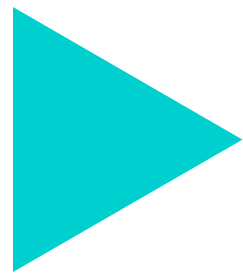
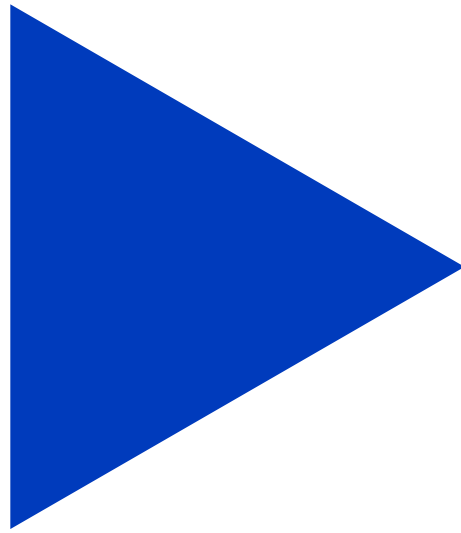
Trade unions play a key role in protecting workers' rights through organizing, advocacy and collective bargaining. MRCs that are not run by trade unions can partner with them to monitor and report cases of abuse and exploitation. Where formal labour representation exists, MRCs should encourage migrant workers to join unions and participate in collective bargaining.

Promote the inclusion of migrant workers in national social protection systems

Migrants are often excluded from social security systems, including healthcare, pensions and unemployment benefits. MRCs can advocate for the inclusion of migrant workers in national programmes and in the bilateral agreements with destination countries.

Influence international migration policy

MRCs can also participate in international forums and engage with regional bodies to influence migration-related policies at the global level. Coordinating with organizations like the ILO and IOM can strengthen the legitimacy of advocacy efforts and create opportunities for cross-border collaboration.



▶ 9

Legal and policy frameworks



Effective labour migration governance requires a strong legal and policy framework that protects the rights of migrant workers and ensures orderly, safe and beneficial migration. This section provides an overview of key international standards, national legal contexts and practical guidance on how MRCs can engage in policy development and advocacy.

Relevant international standards

International labour migration is governed by a set of international conventions, guidelines, and frameworks. MRC staff should be aware of these standards to provide accurate information to migrants. Key international instruments include:

- **ILO Conventions and guidelines:** In principle, all international labour standards (ILS) are applicable to all workers, irrespective of nationality and immigration status, unless otherwise stated in the Convention. Examples of conventions explicitly mentioning migrant workers include:
 - *ILO Convention No. 97* (Migration for Employment Convention, 1949), which regulates the conditions under which migrant workers are recruited and employed.
 - *ILO Convention No. 143* (Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975), which protects migrant workers from exploitation and promotes equal treatment.
 - *ILO Convention No. 181* (Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997), which sets standards for the operation of private recruitment agencies.
 - *ILO Convention No. 189* (Domestic Workers Convention, 2011), which provides protection for migrant domestic workers.
 - *ILO Convention No. 102* (Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952), which lays out minimum standards for social security, including provisions relevant to migrant workers' access to social protection.
 - *ILO Convention No. 190* (Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019), which addresses violence and harassment in the world of work, including for migrant workers, and highlights the need for protection from gender-based violence and abuse across all sectors.
 - [General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs](#)
 - [Guidance on Bilateral labour migration agreements](#)
- **[International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families](#)** (1990), which establishes the human rights of all migrant workers, regardless of their legal status.
- **[Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration \(2018\)](#)**, which establishes a comprehensive framework for managing migration, including principles for protecting migrants' rights and improving labour migration governance.
- **African Union (AU) and regional frameworks:**
 - The [AU Migration Policy Framework for Africa](#) guides African countries in developing national migration policies.
 - The [IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework](#) provides a framework for managing migration within the East and Horn of Africa.

Bilateral Labour Migration Agreements (BLMAs)

BLMAs and MOUs are formal arrangements between countries of origin and destination that govern the recruitment and employment of migrant workers. These agreements help standardize procedures, protect workers' rights and promote fair recruitment.

They typically outline agreed-upon working conditions and recruitment procedures, helping to reduce exploitation and ensure decent work for migrants. Some agreements include standard employment contracts as annexes to ensure consistency in terms of employment.

In recent years, many BLMAs have become publicly accessible, reflecting a broader push for transparency and accountability. Additionally, many BLMAs establish joint committees made up of representatives from both countries to monitor implementation and address disputes that may arise.

National legal contexts

Legal and policy frameworks governing labour migration differ across East African countries. Below is an overview of the key legal and policy developments in each country:

Ethiopia

- **Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 923/2016 (Amended in 2021):** This law regulates labour migration and ensures the protection of Ethiopian migrant workers. The amendments made in 2021 (Proclamation No. 1246/2021) include important updates, notably the exclusion of the requirement for 8th grade education for workers seeking overseas employment. Now, workers only need to provide a certificate of occupational competence, making it easier for a larger pool of workers to pursue opportunities abroad.
- **Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation No. 909/2015:** This law addresses human trafficking and migrant smuggling and includes provisions for the prosecution of traffickers and protection for victims, such as repatriation assistance and ensuring the rights of Ethiopian migrant workers are safeguarded.
- **Bilateral labour agreements:** Ethiopia has signed BLAs with various key destination countries, including Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Lebanon, as well as MOUs with Djibouti, Sudan and South Sudan.

Kenya

- **Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act (2011):** This Act provides a comprehensive framework for the regulation of immigration in Kenya, outlining procedures for the entry, residence, and employment of foreign nationals, including labour migrants.
- **National Employment Authority Act (2016):** This Act establishes the National Employment Authority (NEA), which promotes employment and managing the labour market, including regulating employment agencies that send workers abroad. The NEA works to protect the rights of migrant workers, oversees recruitment processes and ensures that migrant workers are treated fairly both locally and abroad.
- **Employment Act (2007):** This Act governs employment relations in Kenya, outlining the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees. It sets standards for wages, working conditions, contracts and applies to both local and migrant workers.
- **Counter-Trafficking in Persons Act (2010):** This Act addresses human trafficking, providing mechanisms to prevent trafficking, protect victims and prosecute offenders. It is integral in protecting migrant workers from exploitation and trafficking.

- **Labour Migration Management Bill (2024):** This bill aims to regulate the recruitment of migrant workers and manage labour migration in a safe and ethical manner. Key features include creating a Migrant Workers Portal, ensuring pre-departure training, strengthening county roles, mandating security bonds for recruitment agencies and ensuring contract compliance with bilateral agreements and repatriation support for mistreated workers.
- **Bilateral labour agreements:** Kenya has signed BLAs and MOUs with several destination countries, including the United Kingdom, Germany, Austria, the UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, to standardize working conditions, recruitment practices, and worker protections.
- **Data Protection Act (2019):** This Act provides a legal framework for the protection of personal data in Kenya. It governs how personal information is collected, processed, stored, and shared by recruitment agencies, government entities and other actors ensuring compliance with principles of transparency, accountability and informed consent.
- **Labour Institutions Act (2007):** This Act establishes key institutions responsible for labour administration in Kenya, including the National Labour Board, the Industrial Court (now the Employment and Labour Relations Court), the Directorate of Employment and labour inspectorates. It supports the enforcement of labour standards and plays a role in protecting migrant workers' rights through labour inspections, dispute resolution and policy coordination.

Uganda

- **Employment (Recruitment of Ugandan Migrant Workers Abroad) Regulations, 2021:** These regulations aim to protect the dignity and rights of migrant workers by setting out terms and conditions of employment. They also regulate private employment agencies and their agents, ensuring fair recruitment practices.
- **The Employment Act No. 6, 2006:** This Act governs individual employment relationships in Uganda. Specifically, Section 37 addresses migrant workers, Section 38 focuses on recruitment permits and Section 39 outlines the repatriation process for workers. The Act also includes provisions on working conditions, wages and dispute resolution.
- **Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009:** This Act prohibits trafficking in persons, creates related offences and provides for prosecution and punishment of offenders. It also sets out protections for trafficking victims, including compensation and repatriation.
- **Bilateral labour agreements and MOUs:** Uganda has signed BLAs with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar, while the agreement with Jordan is currently suspended. Negotiations with Oman are ongoing.

Somalia

Somalia has made notable progress in regulating labour migration and improving protection for migrant workers. Key developments include:

- **Regulations for private employment agencies:** Collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) ensures fair recruitment and better management of private recruitment agencies.
- **Labour migration policy:** Somalia is developing a comprehensive labour migration policy aligning with international standards.
- **Tripartite framework:** A framework involving government, employers and trade unions improves governance and protects migrant workers from exploitation, including addressing trafficking issues.
- **Data collection and stakeholder coordination:** Strengthening data collection and coordination among stakeholders ensures effective policy implementation and migrant worker protection.

South Sudan

South Sudan is in the early stages of formulating a national labour migration policy, with some key initiatives:

- **Labour migration policy development:** South Sudan is working on defining its vision, mission and guiding principles for managing labour migration. A consultation workshop identified key challenges and priorities. Efforts are being made to ensure alignment with international labour standards and promote a rights-based approach to migration governance.
- **Labour migration committee:** This committee is being established to coordinate the policy's implementation and enhance its reach.
- **Regulation of private recruitment agencies:** South Sudan is also focusing on building institutional capacity to regulate private recruitment agencies and ensure migrant workers' rights are protected.

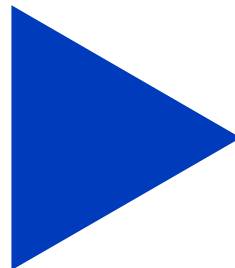
Factsheets on laws governing migrant workers in the Arab States

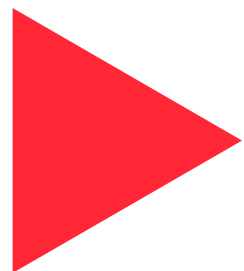
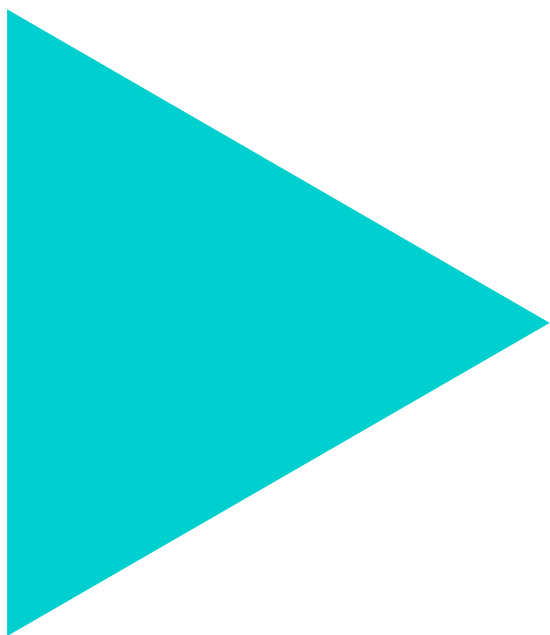
In addition to understanding national laws in countries of origin, it is essential for MRCs to be aware of the legal frameworks that govern the rights and responsibilities of migrant workers in countries of destination. This knowledge allows MRC staff to provide accurate information on employment conditions, workers' rights, complaint mechanisms and avenues for support abroad.

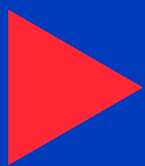
The [ILO FAIRWAY project](#) has produced a series of easy-to-read fact sheets summarizing labour migration laws and protections for migrant workers in key Arab States, including Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These fact sheets cover topics such as wages, contracts, occupational safety, and access to justice and are particularly helpful for communicating with low-literacy audiences.

The fact sheets can be accessed for the following countries:

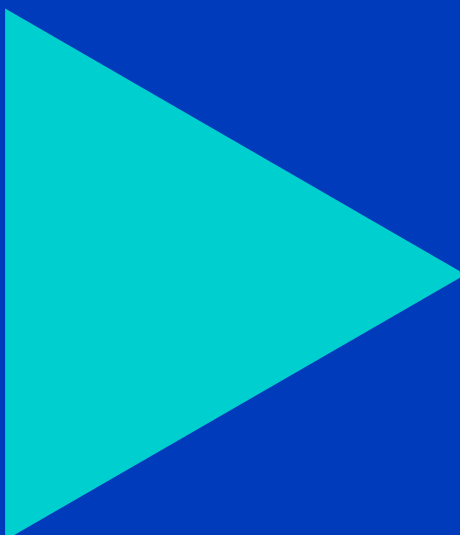
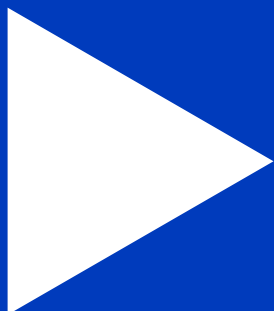
- [Bahrain](#)
- [Jordan](#)
- [Kuwait](#)
- [Lebanon](#)
- [Oman](#)
- [Qatar](#)
- [Saudi Arabia](#)
- [United Arab Emirates](#)





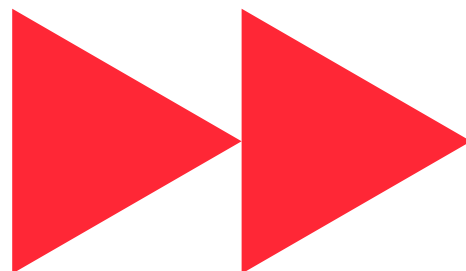


Annexes



1. Tools and templates

- 1.1. Job description MRC manager
- 1.2. Job description MRC case worker
- 1.3. Budget template
- 1.4. Referral form
- 1.5. Sample MOU template between MRC and referral agency
- 1.6. Client card simplified (option 1, adapted from Asia M&E training manual)
- 1.7. MRC Client registration form (option 2, Somalia)
- 1.8. MRC client registration database (option 1: simplified database, based on Kenya's COTU-run MRC example)
- 1.9. MRC client registration database (option 2: detailed database, based on Somalia's MRC example)
- 1.10. MRC quarterly reporting template (Somalia)



1.1. Job description MRC manager

Purpose of the role:

The MRC Manager is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC), ensuring that all services are delivered effectively and in line with national and international standards. The Manager provides strategic leadership, coordinates with stakeholders, manages the MRC team and ensures that the MRC remains responsive to the needs of migrant workers and the wider community.

Reports to: Relevant government authority or managing agency

Key responsibilities:

► Strategic Management:

- Develop and implement the MRC's strategic plan, ensuring alignment with national migration policies and international frameworks.
- Set annual targets for service delivery and client outreach and monitor progress against these targets.
- Ensure that the MRC's services remain relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of migrant workers.

► Operations and staff supervision:

- Oversee the daily operations of the MRC, including staffing, budgeting and service delivery.
- Supervise MRC staff, including case workers, legal advisors and outreach workers, and ensure they receive appropriate training and support.
- Create a positive and professional working environment, promoting teamwork and respect among staff.

► Stakeholder engagement and partnership:

- Establish and maintain relationships with government agencies, civil society organizations, trade unions and private sector actors to improve referral networks and collaboration.
- Represent the MRC at national and international meetings, advocating for the protection of migrant workers' rights.
- Develop partnerships with local organizations and community leaders to expand outreach and service provision.

► Monitoring and reporting:

- Ensure that the MRC collects and manages data effectively, using it to improve service delivery.
- Prepare periodic reports on MRC activities, achievements and challenges for government agencies, donors, and other stakeholders.
- Conduct regular staff performance reviews and support professional development.

Required Qualifications and Experience:

- Bachelor's or Master's degree in Social Work, Migration Studies, International Relations, or a related field.
- Minimum of 5 years of experience in managing social service programmes, preferably related to migration or labour issues.
- Strong leadership and management skills, with experience supervising teams and managing budgets.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with the ability to engage with diverse stakeholders.
- Understanding of national and international labour migration laws and policies.

1.2. Job description MRC case worker

Purpose of the role:

The MRC Case Worker is responsible for providing direct support to migrant workers and their families. The role involves conducting client assessments, offering counselling and case management services and connecting clients to relevant support services. The case worker plays a key role in ensuring that migrant workers receive timely and effective assistance.

Reports to: MRC Manager

Key responsibilities:

► Client Services:

- Conduct intake interviews and assessments to understand the needs and concerns of clients.
- Provide individual counselling and support to migrant workers, including legal aid, health referrals and psychosocial support.
- Develop case management plans and monitor progress, adjusting services as needed.
- Assist clients with issues related to employment contracts, unpaid wages, exploitation and abuse.

► Referrals and coordination:

- Establish and maintain relationships with legal aid organizations, medical services, trade unions and other support agencies.
- Refer clients to appropriate services and monitor the quality and effectiveness of referrals.
- Work with government agencies and consular offices to resolve complex cases.

► Documentation and reporting:

- Maintain accurate and confidential case records in the MRC's case management system.
- Document all services provided and client outcomes for monitoring and reporting purposes.
- Contribute to the preparation of quarterly reports to support policy advocacy and fundraising efforts.

► Outreach and education:

- Participate in community outreach programmes, providing information on safe migration and workers' rights.
- Conduct training sessions for migrant workers on labour rights, contract negotiation and legal protections.
- Support the organization of awareness-raising events and campaigns.

Required qualifications and experience:

- Bachelor's degree in Social Work, Psychology, Law, or a related field.
- Minimum of three years of experience in case management or social services, preferably in a migration-related context.
- Strong knowledge of labour rights, migration laws and social protection systems.
- Excellent problem-solving skills and the ability to work under pressure.
- Sensitivity to the needs and vulnerabilities of migrant workers, with a commitment to ethical and non-discriminatory practice.

1.3. MRC yearly budget template

Category	Quantity	Unit Price (in USD)	Total (in USD)
Personnel			
Salary – MRC Manager			
Salary – Case worker			
Salary – Guard			
Salary – Cleaner			
Total Personnel			
Utilities			
Electricity			
Water			
Internet connection			
Telephone			
Office supplies			
Maintenance			
Total Utilities			
Equipment and supplies			
Computer			
Printer			
LCD			
Tables			
Chairs			
Others			
Total Equipment and supplies			
Project and activities			
Training – per diem			
Training or events – transportation			
Training – refreshments			
Publication / printing of communication materials			
Training or events – Venue rental			
Equipment rental			
Total Project and activities			
GRAND TOTAL			

1.4. Referral form

Referral form			
Name of MRC		Name of partner organization	
Contact details of MRC		Contact details of partner organization	
Name of MRC staff			
Date referral made			
Details of client			
Name			
Sex			
Age			
Place of residence			
Contact details			
Needs identified			
Services accessed at MRC			
Reason for referral			
Final outcome			

Adapted from ILO, 2019, *Migrant Information Centre Operational Manual*

1.5. Sample MOU template between MRC and referral agency

Memorandum of Understanding

Between MRC _____ and Partner _____

Date _____

1. Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum of understanding (MOU) is to outline the commitments made by MRC _____ and Partner _____

to work together on the _____ *[name of the initiative or goal]* in _____ *[Date]*.

2. Duration of the MOU

This MOU will commence when it has been signed by both parties and will remain in force until *[Date]*.

3. Nature of the relationship

The relationship between MRC ____ and *[Partner name]* is *[description of nature of relationship]*.

4. Aim of initiative

The parties agree that their common aim is to *[description of aim of initiative]*. The parties agree to work together to achieve this aim, committing to actions described below.

5. Roles and responsibilities of parties

5.1 The role of MRC ____ is to *[description of role]*.

5.2 The responsibilities of MRC ____ in undertaking their role are to *[description of responsibilities]*.

5.3 The role of *[Partner name]* is to *[description of role]*.

5.4 The responsibilities of *[Partner name]* in undertaking their role are to *[description of responsibilities]*.

6. Commitments

6.1 MRC ____ agrees to *[description of commitments]*.

6.2 *[Partner name]* agrees to *[description of commitments]*.

7. Learning and dissemination of evaluation results

Both parties agree to share the results of evaluations or reviews of the initiative undertaken by either or both parties for the purpose of mutual learning. Publication or dissemination of the results will be mutually agreed by both parties at the conclusion of the initiative.

8. Amendments to this agreement

These terms can be altered on written agreement by both parties.

9. Authorization

Both parties agree to work together in a spirit of cooperation to achieve the above stated aims.

Signed:

Name and position:

MRC

Date

Signed:

Name and position:

MRC

Date

1.6. Client card simplified (option 1 - adapted from Asia M&E training manual)

Reference number:		Date of registration:		
1. Personal information				
Name:		Sex:	Date of birth:	
Address:		Telephone number:	Nationality:	
		Email:	Language:	
		Disability status:	Marital status:	
How did you hear about the MRC?				
2. Persons to contact in case of emergency				
Name:			Relationship:	
Current address:		Telephone:	Email:	
Name:			Relationship:	
Current address:		Telephone:	Email:	
3. Reason for initial visit				
4. Migration history (if relevant)				
Country/countries of destination:		Agency used:		
Date(s):		Position occupied abroad:		
5. Migration plans (if relevant)				
Which country are you planning to migrate to?		Which city are you planning to migrate to?		
What sector are you planning to work in?		Do you plan to obtain legal permission for stay and work?		
6. Support services received				
Type of service	Date received	Date received	Date received	Date received

1.7. MRC Client form – Option 2 (adapted from available tools in Somalia)

Attribute	Client's response	Remarks
Date of current visit		
Code		
Full name of client		
Sex	1. Male 2. Female	
Age		
Current location	County: District: Town:	
Phone Number		
Email		
Number times client visit		
Disability status	1. Yes 2. No If yes (Specify)	
Marital status		
Education level	1. None 5. Tertiary 2. Primary 6. Other Informal 3. Secondary	
Client category	1. Potential/intending migrant 5. Other (Specify)___ 2. Returnee 3. Family of migrants 4. Community member	
For Potential migrants		
Country of Destination		
Skills possessed	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
For Returnees only		

Attribute	Client's response	Remarks
Date of current visit		
Code		
Full name of client		
Sex	1. Male 2. Female	
Age		
Country of previous stay		
Agency used		
Year of Return		
Duration of most recent stay		
Skills acquired during most recent stay	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
For Family of Migrants only		
Country of Destination		
Year of Return		
For all Clients		
Types of support or services received (circle all that apply)	1. Pre-departure orientation or domestic work, financial education, or other skills development trainings	
	2. Awareness creation and outreach programmes	
	3. Individual or family counselling	
	4. Provide referral mechanisms based on migrants' specific needs (such as legal or health services)	
	5. Others (Please specify)	

1.8. MRC client registration database (option 1 – simplified database, based on Kenya’s COTU-run MRC example)

[illegible]

1.9. MRC client registration database (option 2 – comprehension database, based on Somalia’s example)

[illegible]

1.10. Migrant Resource Centre Quarterly Reporting Template (adapted from Somalia)

Background Information

Country: _____

Reporting Period: From _____ to _____

Service types provided at MRC.

	Number of beneficiaries/Migrant workers		
	Male	Female	Total
Basic Information			
1. Total number of clients visiting the MRC (all)			
Total number of returnees			
Total number of prospective migrant workers			
Total number of inbound migrant workers			
Total number of transit migrants			
2. Number of people with disabilities benefited from MRC			
Services accessed			
1. Information about labour migration opportunities, processes, and pre-departure orientation			
2. Training (skills, entrepreneurship, financial literacy)			
3. Individual or family counselling			
4. Case management			
5. Referral			
Other activities carried out	Activities	Number of beneficiaries	
Awareness creation and outreach			
Advocacy activities			

- 1. Summary of activities accomplished at MRC** (please mention key achievements including ongoing portfolio, intervention with different partners)
- 2. Challenges, constraints and action taken** (Please write challenges hindering the operations of MRC)

Challenges / constraints	Action taken

2. Guidance documents

2.1. Guidelines for providing services to vulnerable migrant workers subject to violence in East Africa

Migrant workers often face challenging experiences, including violence, exploitation, and a lack of access to essential services. MRCs play a critical role in ensuring that migrant workers receive coordinated, safe and culturally appropriate support. This document outlines key guidelines and best practices for providing quality, survivor-centred services to migrant workers who have experienced violence.

Language and interpretation

Effective communication is essential for providing meaningful support to survivors of violence. MRCs should ensure that services are available in languages commonly spoken by migrant workers. Interpreters, trained to handle sensitive situations, should be available to facilitate communication. While MRCs may not always have access to professional interpreters, they can rely on volunteers and other migrant workers to help with translation, provided they understand confidentiality and cultural nuances. Interpreters should also be aware of cultural norms and issues related to gender-based violence.

Cultural sensitivity

Understanding and respecting the cultural backgrounds of migrant workers is essential in service delivery. MRC staff, volunteers and service providers should undergo training on cultural norms and social practices of the migrant communities they serve. For example, it may be challenging for men to discuss their experiences, particularly in front of women. A gender-sensitive approach should be integrated into all services, ensuring that migrant workers feel understood and respected. Creating culturally appropriate safe spaces for migrant workers to seek help without judgment will build trust and encourage more survivors to come forward.

Confidentiality and privacy

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of providing services to survivors of violence. MRCs should ensure that all conversations and data collection processes are private and secure. Physical records must be kept in a secure, locked location. A private area should be available for survivors to share their story and discuss their needs. Survivors should also be informed about how their information will be used and must provide consent before any details are shared with other agencies.

Accessibility and availability of services

MRC services should be as accessible as possible. Ideally, emergency hotlines should operate 24/7 to provide immediate support. Special attention should be given to ensuring that survivors with disabilities can access services, including the provision of assistive devices, ramps and sign language interpretation where needed. Mobile outreach units that visit rural and remote areas can help reach migrant workers who may not otherwise access MRC facilities.

Shelter and safe accommodation

Migrant workers who have experienced violence may require immediate protection. MRCs should establish partnerships with local shelters and safe houses to ensure that survivors have access to secure accommodation. Shelters should be equipped to accommodate women and their children and should be located in discreet and secure areas. Providing safe transport for survivors seeking shelter is also crucial.

Legal support and justice

Navigating legal systems can be overwhelming for survivors of violence. MRCs should provide free legal aid to help survivors understand their rights and seek justice or ensure that they can refer survivors

to a reliable partner organization. Legal services should cover labour laws, migration regulations and protection orders. MRCs can also accompany survivors to legal proceedings and provide support in filing complaints and seeking compensation.

Economic support and empowerment

Empowering survivors economically helps them regain independence and avoid future exploitation. MRCs can partner with local businesses and employers to create safe job opportunities specifically for survivors, and/or link survivors with actors providing skills training and job placement support.

Training and capacity strengthening

Building the capacity of MRC staff to respond to gender-based violence cases is essential. Regular training sessions should cover trauma-informed care, cultural sensitivity and survivor-centred approaches. Staff should also be trained on identifying human trafficking cases and understanding the legal and policy frameworks that protect migrant workers.

Community engagement and outreach

Community engagement is essential to creating a supportive environment for survivors. MRCs should regularly organize awareness campaigns to inform migrant workers about available services and their rights. Partnering with community leaders, religious groups and civil society organizations will help extend the reach of these campaigns. Peer-to-peer outreach, where survivors share their experiences with others, can help reduce stigma and encourage more survivors to seek help.

2.2. Trauma-informed case management

Understanding trauma and vulnerability

Migrant workers who visit MRCs may be in highly vulnerable and distressed situations. Many have experienced exploitation, abuse, discrimination, and challenging living and working conditions. The impact of these experiences can lead to severe mental health issues such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, and social isolation.

Women migrant workers are disproportionately affected by these challenges due to their concentration in sectors such as domestic work and caregiving. They are at a higher risk of sexual harassment, violence, and exploitation. However, migrant men also face significant mental health challenges, but cultural norms and social expectations may prevent them from seeking help. It is essential for MRCs to recognise these gendered dimensions and adapt their services accordingly.

Principles of trauma-informed care

A trauma-informed approach means recognising the signs of trauma, understanding how it impacts behaviour and decision-making, and responding in a way that does not re-traumatise the individual. MRC staff should be trained to:

- Create a safe and welcoming environment where migrants feel respected and understood.
- Establish trust and safety through confidential and non-judgemental communication.
- Use active listening techniques to help clients feel heard and validated.
- Empower migrants by providing them with choices and involving them in decision-making.
- Ensure consistency and follow-through in service provision to build trust.

Gender-sensitive case management

Women and men may face different types of trauma and require different types of support. MRC staff should ensure that both men and women staff are available to handle sensitive cases, giving clients the option to choose whom they speak with. Men may hesitate to disclose trauma due to societal pressure to appear strong. MRCs are encouraged to:

- Facilitate access to women-specific support services such as counselling, legal aid, emergency shelter and healthcare.
- Develop peer support networks where women and men can meet others with shared experiences.

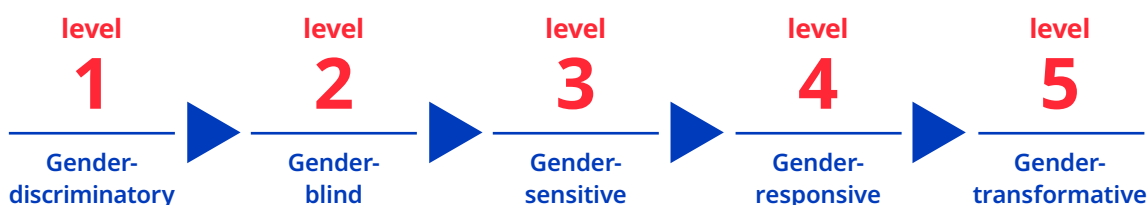
Responding to severe cases

For clients displaying suicidal thoughts, substance abuse issues, or signs of severe mental health distress, MRCs need to have a clear protocol for immediate response, including referral to mental health professionals. This primarily includes developing partnerships with local mental health organizations and offering ongoing follow-up and support to ensure the client remains safe.

2.3. Guidelines for gender-responsive programming for MRCs

Understanding gender in the context of programming

MRCs must be aware of how gender roles, identities and inequalities shape migration experiences. The level of gender integration in programming can be understood through the following continuum⁴:



► Gender scale definitions⁵

- **Gender Discriminatory:** programmes or activities that reinforce harmful and negative gender norms and actively harm women and girls.
- **Gender Blind:** programmes or activities that ignore gender differences and differing needs of women, men, boys and girls and ignore gender power dynamics, thereby potentially doing harm to women and girls.
- **Gender Sensitive:** programmes or activities that recognize different needs of women, men, boys and girls and acknowledge gender power dynamics, but do not necessarily address these beyond incorporating an understanding of these dynamics into programme or activity design.
- **Gender Responsive:** programmes or activities that include specific actions to reduce gender inequalities within communities.
- **Gender Transformative:** programmes or activities that are designed to address root causes of gender inequality within society.

MRCs should aim for gender-responsive programming at a minimum, with opportunities to integrate transformative practices where feasible.

Why gender-responsive programming matters?

Women and men, boys and girls experience migration differently. For example, women migrants may face a higher risk of sexual exploitation or domestic servitude, while men may face pressure to take on high-risk or exploitative jobs.

Gender also affects the extent to which migrant workers can access services. Social norms, caregiving responsibilities or lack of information may limit women's ability to access MRC services, while men may not feel open to coming forward due to stigma around seeking help or discussing vulnerability. In some contexts, men may perceive accessing support services as a sign of weakness, especially if services are perceived as primarily targeting women.⁴

Men and women may also require different information, for example, about working conditions, health and safety or legal rights in specific sectors. Utilization: Accelerating Change Phase III (2018-2021). https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/thematic%20note%201_gender_final.pdf

⁴ Unicef. 2024. Applying the Gender Integration Continuum to Social Protection A Guidance Note for Assessing the Level of Gender Integration in Social Protection Policies and Programmes. <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/10031/file/UNICEF-Applying-the-Gender-Integration-Continuum-to-Social-Protection-A-Guidance-Note-for-Assessing-the-Level-of-Gender-Integration-in-Social-Protection-Policies-and-Programmes.pdf>

Intersectionality means recognizing that gender does not operate in isolation. Factors such as age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity or migration status can interact to deepen vulnerability and compound discrimination. For example, a young woman with a disability may face greater barriers to accessing support than her peers. MRCs must therefore adopt an inclusive, intersectional lens to ensure that no one is left behind.

As a result, both women and men can be underserved, but for different reasons, highlighting the need for tailored, gender-responsive outreach and service delivery.

Practical implications for MRCs

While women migrant workers may face specific vulnerabilities, such as risks of gender-based violence or exploitation in domestic work, it is equally important to understand the experiences and challenges of male migrant workers. These may include hazardous labour, isolation or stigma in seeking support. MRCs should avoid assumptions that only women face risks and ensure services respond to the diverse needs of men as well.

Gender-responsive programming ensures that MRCs do not inadvertently reinforce existing inequalities, but instead contribute to safer, fairer migration experiences for all. It is not about “treating everyone the same,” but about recognizing differences and designing services that equitably meet the needs of women, men and gender-diverse individuals.

- **Design outreach strategies** that target both women and men, including in rural or informal networks where populations with particular needs may be less visible. Outreach strategies should also consider that men tend to visit MRCs less frequently and therefore require tailored efforts to reach them effectively.
- **Ensure facilities are safe and inclusive**, with private spaces, mixed staff and referral pathways for gender-based violence.
- **Collect sex- and age-disaggregated data** to understand who is accessing services and who is not.
- **Train staff on gender-responsive service delivery**, including how to identify and respond to gender-specific risks and needs. MRCs can partner with specialized organizations to provide or facilitate such training.
- **Consult both women and men** in programme design and evaluation, ensuring their voices shape priorities and solutions.
- **Coordinate** with specialized service providers, including women’s shelters, legal aid and psychosocial support.

2.4. Guidelines for child protection in MRCs

Child labour and exploitation remain significant challenges in East Africa, particularly among migrant communities. Although legal frameworks require reaching the legal age to take up employment abroad, children can be sent abroad for work under dangerous and exploitative conditions, sometimes with forged documents or under pressure from families due to poverty. MRCs play a crucial role in identifying, protecting and supporting child migrants.

MRCs can also be contacted regarding the situation of children left behind, whose parents went abroad to work. Establishing clear child protection guidelines helps ensure that MRC staff are equipped to respond effectively and sensitively to these issues. This section provides guidance based on [ILO Framework for Action on Child Labour \(2023–2025\)](#) and international standards. MRCs must also ensure that child protection measures comply with national child welfare laws and guidelines in each country.

Identification and screening

MRC staff should be trained to identify potential cases of child labour and exploitation, particularly among young migrants. Key indicators of child labour include:

- Children showing signs of malnutrition, abuse or psychological trauma.
- Lack of proper documentation or presence of forged documents.
- Minors travelling alone or with non-family members.
- Evidence of coercion, such as debts or threats from employers.

Staff should use structured screening techniques to assess whether a child is a victim of trafficking, forced labour or exploitation. Child migrants may use forged documents or lack proper identification. MRCs should collaborate with relevant government agencies to verify the identity and age of young migrants and use consistent and transparent methods for age verification, such as birth certificates or interviews with family members.

Child trafficking and exploitation often involve cross-border networks. MRCs may need to work with consulates and embassies to protect child migrants and/or coordinate with regional organizations to track trafficking patterns and protect vulnerable children.

Trauma-informed, age- and gender-sensitive case management

Child migrants are highly vulnerable to trauma and psychological distress. MRC staff should use a trauma-informed approach when interacting with child migrants, which includes:

- Providing a confidential space where children can speak openly without fear of reprisal. Not separate a child from their family unless there is a credible threat to their safety.
- Paying particular attention to the gendered dimensions of trauma: as girls are often more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, while boys may face forced labour and physical abuse.
- Encouraging children to express their feelings without fear of judgment.

MRCs should seek advice from professionals and refer the child to social services or other relevant actors specialized in child protection. Additionally, MRC staff should be aware that children who have been exploited often suffer from health issues, including malnutrition, physical injuries and mental health problems. MRCs are therefore encourage to:

- Facilitate access to medical services, including immediate treatment for injuries and illnesses.
- Offer mental health support through counsellors or psychologists trained to work with children.
- Ensure that sexual and reproductive health services are available, especially for girls.
- Provide nutritional support if needed.

Shelter and safe accommodation

Children who have been trafficked or exploited may need immediate protection. MRCs should partner with local child protection services and NGOs to provide safe shelters.

Legal support and advocacy

Children in migration often face legal barriers to accessing protection and services. MRCs should facilitate access to free legal aid to child migrants and advocate for policy reforms to improve protection for child migrants.

Education and skills development

Education is critical for breaking the cycle of exploitation and vulnerability. MRCs should:

- Facilitate access to schools and vocational training centres.
- Work with local governments to reintegrate returning child migrants into the formal education system.
- Provide alternative education options for children who cannot enter formal schools.

Prevention and awareness raising

Preventing child labour and exploitation requires long-term community engagement. MRCs have a role to play by:

- Developing awareness campaigns targeting parents and communities about the dangers of child labour.
- Collaborating with religious leaders, schools and community organizations to shift social norms.
- Engaging young people in peer education programmes to promote safe migration practices.

Monitoring and data collection

Accurate data is required to improve child protection responses. MRCs should:

- Collect and analyze data on child protection cases.
- Disaggregate data by age, gender and nationality.
- Monitor the outcomes of child protection cases to improve services.
- Ensure that data collection follows strict confidentiality and ethical guidelines.

2.5. Code of Conduct for MRC staff and visitors

The following Code of Conduct is designed to promote a safe, respectful and professional environment within the MRC. All staff, clients and visitors are required to adhere to the principles outlined below.

1. Respectful behaviour

- ▶ All individuals shall treat each other with respect and dignity, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or migration status.
- ▶ Discrimination, harassment, and any form of verbal, physical, or emotional abuse will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

2. Confidentiality and privacy

- ▶ All clients' personal and sensitive information shall be kept confidential. This includes details shared during consultations, case management, and personal interactions.
- ▶ Breaching confidentiality, whether intentional or accidental, will result in disciplinary action.

3. Professionalism

- ▶ Staff members should always conduct themselves with professionalism, displaying kindness, patience, and empathy.
- ▶ Visitors and clients are expected to behave respectfully, ensuring that the work environment remains calm and conducive to service delivery.

4. Violence and aggression

- ▶ Any act of violence or threats towards staff, other clients, or visitors will result in immediate removal from the premises and may lead to legal consequences.
- ▶ Aggressive behaviour, including physical or verbal violence, will not be tolerated.

5. Alcohol and drug use

- ▶ The use of alcohol, drugs, or any intoxicating substances on MRC premises is strictly prohibited.
- ▶ Individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be allowed to enter or remain in the MRC.
- ▶ In case a client or staff member exhibits symptoms of substance abuse, immediate action should be taken to connect them with the appropriate support services.

6. Zero tolerance for corruption

- ▶ All staff must maintain the highest level of integrity. Bribery, corruption, or accepting gifts or benefits in exchange for preferential treatment will not be tolerated.
- ▶ If any staff member or visitor is found engaging in such activities, disciplinary measures will be applied.

7. Conflict resolution

- ▶ Staff and visitors should avoid any behaviour that may lead to conflicts, including discrimination or unfair treatment of clients.
- ▶ Conflicts between staff, clients, or visitors should be resolved through peaceful dialogue and mutual understanding.
- ▶ If a resolution cannot be achieved, a designated mediator or supervisor should be contacted to manage the situation.

2.6. Anti-discrimination policy

Policy statement

We are committed to promoting an inclusive and respectful environment where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. This policy prohibits any form of discrimination, harassment or unfair treatment based on any personal characteristic such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or any other status protected by law.

Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all clients, staff, volunteers and service users of the MRC. It covers all aspects of service delivery, including but not limited to intake, consultations, training, employment and any other interactions within the organization.

Definitions of discrimination

Discrimination includes, but is not limited to:

- Direct discrimination: treating a person less favourably because of their protected characteristic.
- Indirect discrimination: applying a rule or practice that disadvantages people with a particular characteristic.
- Harassment: unwanted behaviour that violates the dignity of others and creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
- Victimization: treating someone unfairly because they have complained about discrimination or have supported someone else's complaint.

Responsibilities

Management: ensure the implementation of this policy, provide necessary resources and guidance and foster a culture of inclusion.

Staff and volunteers: Uphold the values of equality and respect, treat all individuals fairly, and report any discriminatory behaviour.

Clients: Treat each other with respect, adhering to a code of conduct that promotes an inclusive environment.

Complaint procedure

Anyone who believes they have been discriminated against should immediately report the incident to management. The MRC will investigate complaints confidentially and take appropriate action to resolve the issue.

Disciplinary action

Any individual found to have engaged in discriminatory behaviour will face appropriate disciplinary measures, which could include suspension or termination of employment or volunteer status, depending on the severity of the behaviour.

3. Country-specific resources for migrant workers

The following resources are available to help MRCs provide migrant workers with information on labour migration opportunities and processes.

Ethiopia

- ILO, Rights and Obligations of Migrant Domestic Workers.
<https://www.ilo.org/publications/rights-and-obligations-migrant-domestic-workersethiopia>
- ILO, 2020, Rights and Responsibilities of Relevant Actors on Labour Migration in Ethiopia
<https://researchrepository.ilo.org/esploro/outputs/book/Rights-and-responsibilities-of-relevant-actors/995218805102676>
- ILO, 2020, Services and Support Provided by Ethiopian Diplomatic Missions and Community Associations in the Gulf and Lebanon
https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@africa/@ro-abidjan/@sro-addis_ababa/documents/publication/wcms_798634.pdf

Kenya

- NEA, 2022, Foreign Employment Informational Guide on Safe Labour Migration
<https://nea.go.ke/web/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/A-Guide-to-Safe-Labour-Migration.pdf>
- NEA IMS (listing job opportunities abroad and licensed agencies)
<https://neaims.go.ke>

Uganda

- Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung & Uganda Hotels, Food, Tourism, Supermarkets & Allied Workers Union (HTS-Union), 2025, Migrant Domestic Workers. Know Your Rights and Obligations. An information guide for Ugandan Migrant Domestic Workers in the Middle East and Gulf Region

Upcoming

- EEIMS system (listing job opportunities abroad and licensed agencies)
<https://eemis.mglsd.go.ug/>

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

MRCs can also refer to [ILO's Frequently Asked Questions on Fair Recruitment](#).

About the MRC

What is an MRC?

A Migrant Worker Resource Centre (MRC) is a place where migrant workers and their families can go to get information and support about working abroad. MRCs provide guidance on safe migration, workers' rights and available job opportunities. They also help migrants with legal issues, counselling and emergency support.

Who can access MRC services?

MRC services are available to everyone, including potential migrants, current migrants and returnees. You can use MRC services no matter what your gender, nationality, or migration status.

What type of services does an MRC provide?

MRCs offer various services, including information on safe migration, contract and labour rights, legal guidance, counselling and support for finding training and job opportunities upon return.

Basic questions about labour migration

Why do people choose to migrate for work?

Many people migrate for work to improve their living conditions and provide a better future for their families. Some may not find work locally and so seek opportunities elsewhere. The wage gap between their home country and destination countries can also be a strong motivation. Others may desire to experience life abroad and explore new cultures. Everyone has their own reasons for migrating, influenced by personal, economic and social factors. Migrant workers should make informed decisions based on accurate, up-to-date information.

What are the main destination countries for East African migrants?

Many East African migrants go to the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar), where demand for labour is high. Some also migrate within the East Africa region to work in neighbouring countries. Others go to Europe and South Africa for work opportunities.

What are the main types of jobs for migrants?

The type of jobs available depend on your profile and experience. Many East African migrants work in domestic work, construction, hotels and restaurants, or as security guards and drivers. The type of job migrant workers do, depend on the demand in countries of destination.

What are my rights as a migrant worker?

As a migrant worker, you have the right to fair pay, safe working conditions, and access to healthcare. Your employer is not allowed to keep your passport or force you to work against your will.

Basic questions about recruitment and placement processes

How do I know if a recruitment agency is legal?

You can check with the relevant ministry (the ministry in charge of these issues varies from one country to another) or the MRC to confirm if a recruitment agency is legally registered. A legal agency should provide a written contract and explain all the job terms clearly before you sign anything. In Kenya, the list of licensed agencies can be found on the NEA website. In Uganda, the list of licensed agencies is available at: <https://eemis.mglsd.go.ug/>

Can I work in another country without a visa?

No, working without a visa allowing you to work is illegal in most countries. You could face deportation and legal problems if you work without the proper documents. Migrant workers should also be aware that it is usually not permitted to accept employment or work while holding a visitor or tourist visa.

What should I consider before signing a contract?

Before signing a contract, make sure you understand all the terms, including your salary, working hours, and any benefits like accommodation and health care. The contract should be written in a language you understand. If anything is unclear, ask the MRC for help before you sign.

Should I pay fees to a recruitment agency?

You should not have to pay high fees to get a job. In most cases, the employer should cover the recruitment costs. If you are asked to pay large amounts of money, contact the MRC to check if this is allowed.

Financial costs involved in regular migration to the Middle East**What are the common costs I might face when migrating?**

When migrating for work, you may need to pay for a passport, visa application fees, and medical check-ups. You might also need to pay for travel to and from the recruitment centre or embassy.

Who should pay for my visa and travel costs?

In most cases, the employer should cover your work visa, travel costs and accommodation. If the employer does not mention covering these costs, you should clarify this before signing the contract.

What are the risks of paying illegal recruitment fees?

Paying illegal fees can put you at risk of exploitation and debt. If you owe large sums of money to a recruiter, you might feel pressured to accept poor working conditions to repay the debt.

Risks involved in regular migration to the Middle East**What are the main risks faced by migrants?**

Migrants often face unfair treatment, such as unpaid wages, long working hours, and poor living conditions. Some employers take away passports, which restricts a migrant's ability to leave the job and come back home. Abuse, including physical and verbal violence, is also a common problem. Migrant workers should carry emergency contacts (MRC contact details, recruitment agency, embassies and consulates) when departing.

How can I protect myself from exploitation?

You can protect yourself by keeping a copy of your contract, knowing your rights and having the contact details of your country's MRC, as well as the embassy or consulate. If you face any problems, reach out to the MRC or the embassy immediately.

What should I do if my employer takes my passport?

Employers are not allowed to keep your passport. If your passport is taken from you, contact the embassy or MRC for assistance right away.

Support services in destination countries

What kind of support can I get in the destination country?

In the destination country, you can reach out to an MRC, or to your embassy or consulate for help if you face legal problems or abuse. Some countries have hotlines where you can report abuse or ask for help. MRCs can also provide information on local shelters, healthcare and legal support.

What should I do if I experience abuse?

If you are abused or mistreated, contact the embassy or consulate immediately. You can also reach out to the MRC or local authorities for help.

Can I change employers if I have a problem?

This depends on the laws of the country where you are working. Some countries allow workers to change jobs after a probation period, while others require the employer's consent. You can contact the MRC, the agency or your embassy to understand your rights.

What should I do if I am a victim of human trafficking?

If you are forced to work against your will or threatened with harm, seek help immediately. Contact the MRC, local police or your embassy.

Cultural differences and challenges in destination countries

What kind of cultural differences should I expect?

You may find differences in language, food and dress codes. Some countries have strict rules about public behaviour and gender roles. Religious practices might also be different from what you are used to. These topics are usually covered in pre-departure training sessions provided in countries of origin. You can also reach out to the MRC to know what to expect.

How can I adjust to cultural differences?

You can prepare by attending pre-departure training sessions. Talking to other migrants who have lived in the destination country can also help you understand what to expect.

What should I do if I face discrimination?

Discrimination means being treated unfairly or differently because of factors such as your race, gender, religion, nationality or social background. For example, you may be denied a job, paid less than others for the same work, or treated poorly by authorities or members of the local community. Migrant workers are often more at risk of discrimination because they may not speak the local language fluently or fully understand their rights. Some may hesitate to report discrimination because they fear losing their job or facing further problems with the local population.

However, it's important to know that you have rights as a migrant worker. Labour laws and human rights conventions protect you from unfair treatment and ensure that you are entitled to fair pay, safe working conditions and equal treatment. If you experience discrimination, you can report it to the local authorities or your embassy. If you are unsure how to handle the situation, contact the MRC for support. They can provide guidance on your legal rights and help you find a solution. The MRC can also connect you with local organizations that specialize in protecting migrant rights and offering legal assistance.

Basic questions on return and reintegration

What are the biggest challenges for returning migrants?

Returning migrants often face financial difficulties, lack of job opportunities and sometimes discrimination. Adjusting back to family life after working abroad can also be difficult. MRCs can provide valuable support during this transition. They can offer counselling services to help migrants reintegrate socially and emotionally and may also be able to provide financial literacy training to manage savings or start a small business. MRCs may also help returning migrants access job placement services, vocational training and legal support if they face disputes related to their previous employment.

What support can I get when I return home?

MRCs can provide information about available opportunities upon return, such as skills training, entrepreneurship programmes and counselling to help returned migrant workers adjust back to life at home. They might also connect you with mental health support if you need it.

What should I do if I return home without savings or a job?

Returning home without savings or a job can be very stressful and difficult. Many returning migrants face similar challenges. It can feel discouraging to start over, especially if you were supporting your family while working abroad. Having a safe place to share your experiences and meet others in similar situations can make a big difference. Talking to people who have faced the same challenges can help you feel supported and give you new ideas for moving forward. Community support groups and counselling services can also help you process your experiences and develop a plan for your next steps. If you are unsure where to start, contact the MRC for help. They can guide you to local organizations that provide financial assistance, job training, and emotional support.

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